

‘夷’ and the ordered motion

A redundant adagio of my approach is the practice of translating for the querent and not for the reader.

My target is to get a ‘semantic ordered solution’ to a muddled narrative of ‘things’.

This incipit is necessary to read the following story of a reasonable conjecture, squeaking enough against philological and linguistical tricks.

Nonetheless, I see that every time I juxtapose some degrees of invention and peaceful ignorance, what arise is the very fact we (yes, me and you, Mr. Shaughnessy) can’t tell any truth about this marvelous Book of Changes.

§§§

Days ago, a person get his 換 with the fourth line moving.

The text, 渙其羣元吉渙有丘匪夷所思, is variously translated as:

- «It spurts onto the crowd: very auspicious. It spurts onto their mound: it is not what one would **ordinarily** think of.» [R.A.Kunst]¹
- «Gushing over the bystanders. Most Auspicious. Gushing on to their mound. Can such things be found?» [notes: translated more literally and without rhyme, means ‘Not what is **normally** expected.’] [R.Rutt]²
- «Dispersing one’s group: supremely auspicious. Dispersion piles up; not what the **ordinary** person thinks about.» [J.A.Adler]³

While I can figure out the first 8 characters in the context of the question prompted, the last four [匪夷所思] leave something as unsatisfactory, following the ‘ordinary’ translations.

This paper move on about a definition of ‘夷’ and its implications throughout interhexagrammatic reading.

1 R.A.Kunst -The Original "Yijing": A Text, Phonetic Transcription, Translation, And Indexes, With Sample Glosses- Unpublished Thesis, 1985;

2 R. Rutt -The Book of Changes (Zhouyi)- RoutledgeCurzon, 2002;

3 A.Adler -The Original Meaning Of The Yijing- Columbia University Press, 2020;

I firstly trace some differencies among the three editions I can compare:

59.4 'received' --> 匪夷 (-li- 韻部 > 脂)⁴ 所思

59.4 Mawangdui --> 𠄎娣 (-gli?/glis- 韻部 > 脂) 所思

59.4 Chu manuscript --> 非台⁵(-g.lu/k^hlu- 韻部 > 之) 所思

While 夷 and 娣 are phonetically related so thinking to loan/borrowing relations, this is not the case among 夷 and 台.

Looking at the ancient meaning of 台⁶, while it is obviously true what Prof. Shaughnessy write: «For tai 台, which in Spring and Autumn and Warring States documents has a meaning of “I, my,” received text reads yi 夷, [...]» another relevant meaning is that around the ‘taking up and use as means for some purpose or some end’.

So that, altering the end of the previous translations or the same translation of the ‘Chu’ line, by Shaughnessy⁷, the result could be:

«Dispersing his crowds. Prime auspiciousness. Dispersing his mounds. (now) **do not rely on thoughts (inner elaborations -for further moves-)**»



I stand (temporarily) on this version, facing the argument of Marco Caboara, that in his paper “The grammaticalization of suo 所”⁸ write:

«While a verb like si 思 “to think” might allow a spatial intepretation “direct my thought towards”, as most verbs can, it is basically a verb devoting an activity not taking place in any concrete place or space. A locative interpretation where 所思 stands for “the place where I think” is therefore ruled out, and only the interpretation where 所 stands for the direct object (“what I think”) is acceptable»

Here my ‘inner’ locative take, that is likely excluded by Caboara, is in fact not given by 所思 in the phrase but from both the influence of two factors:

- a) 非台所思 follows a series of action and affirmative arguments that forms a sort of premise to an antagonist end: you’ve done, now you shouldn’t;
- b) the very fact of the statement 非台 that precede 所思, not altering the ‘thinking’ dynamics (direct my thought towards) but focusing the attention of where that rumination take place.

4 潘悟雲 Pan Wuyun old chinese phonological reconstruction and rhyme group (韻部).

5 Chu manuscript has the following script: , that is more likely to be rendered has 台. Since Zhou times, 台 it is used as borrowing for 台 [https://wjwx.ecnu.edu.cn/guwenzi]; the graph 台 is normally wrote as 

6 Dictionnaire Ricci de caractères chinois, 1999;

7 E. Shaughnessy -Unearthing the changes- Columbia University Press, 2014;

8 M. Caboara, [The grammaticalization of suo 所](#), p.5;

Two other factors seem likewise important, to put the above narrative in context:

1. reading what the fourth line of 訟 (hexagram n.6, linked by the 59.4) tells about the consequences of 'doing' (relying on thoughts as inner elaborations for further moves);
2. picking up, as background of 59 to 6, what 坤 hexagram prompt in its sentence, where is wrote 先迷後得主: «first he goes astray, later he gets it» (this translation by Harmen Mesker⁹).

The fourth line of hexagram n.6, 訟, in the translation of J.A.Adler, is the summoned (point 1.) advise:

不克訟復即命渝安貞吉

«Cannot overcome disputation, so return at once to the decree. To change and to rest in correctness is auspicious.»

So, 'rest in correctness' - 'return at once to the decree' (do not follow private and solitary plans), cause you cannot overcome disputation.

Harmen Mesker, in his notes, put things more clear to my understandings, when he adds:

«Cannot win the dispute. Returns with the accepted imperial decree and informs his subordinates. Divination about peace: auspicious.»

I can draw from a hierarchical string of relations, where not the nodes came first, but what happen by the juxtaposition of these nodes in term of the flowing of the 'correct informations' or the manner of how these informations are received and managed.

The 'orders' that put in order.

The 即命, the decree with 即 evidencing its accuracy and exactitude.

And the importance of its 'flowing', where again Harmen Mesker write:

«Yu 渝: in its ordinary meaning it means 'change', but I could not make this fit the pattern of the sentence and its context. This character also occurs at 16-6 and 17-1, and at these occurrences the MWD text uses yu 諭, 'to tell, inform, explain, notify, instruct' (from a superior to an inferior, most notably an imperial decree from the emperor to his subordinates)»

The 'order that order', that settle things and pacify, as the last three characters 安貞吉 of the phrase in 6.4 well explain.

The same three occurs only in another position, at the end of the sentence of hexagram n.2, 坤.

Where in fourth line of 訟 there is an encounter with a decree with its exactitude, here, the noble man encounter its enigmatic 'protoform' 主: 先迷後得主 («first he goes astray, later he gets it»).

If variously translated as 'master' or 'ruler', 主 lacks its insight as 'determining cause', up to what again Harmen Mesker explain, treating 主 as referring «to the topic or subject of the divination (主體)».

9 H.Mesker, [Translation Notes](#);

This is why, if ‘he goes astray’ (likely, not taking care of 59.4>6.4) later he gets it (likely, taking care of 6.4>59.4).

This is why also, that another encounter, at 55.4, is semantically daunting when we variously read:

[...] 遇其夷主: “He meets his **ordinary** master” [R.A.Kunst] or “Meeting the master **now**” [R.Rutt]

I think that, narratively, even if for my querent alone, it worth now to see 夷 under the light of 台 and its meaning area of ‘taking up and use as means for some purpose or some end’, otherwise intended as an effort to ‘put in order’ or briefly, to order (and may be grasp the exact meaning).

I have to remember here that both in oracle and bronze inscription 夷 have much to do with ‘control’ and ordering functions where it occurs as «nom personnel du Phénix, Esprit (ancêtre mythique) qui **anime et controle** le vent de l’ouest»¹⁰

Now, I could read ‘遇其夷主’ as somewhat likewise ‘meeting the cause that order’ and obviously, my initial ‘匪夷所思’ as ‘not (be) *ordered* by own thoughts’.

10 Dictionnaire Ricci, cit.