

## The Shang-Zhou Stories in the Kan and Li Hexagrams of the Zhouyi (I Ching)

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the hexagram images and line statements of the Kan and Li hexagrams in the \*Zhouyi\*, combining them with historical events from the transition period between the Shang and Zhou dynasties, to reveal the humanistic connotations behind these two hexagrams. The Kan hexagram symbolizes water and danger, corresponding to the experience of King Wen of Zhou being imprisoned by King Zhou of Shang in Youli (羑里). It demonstrates the wisdom of King Wen, who, while in a perilous situation, still upheld his beliefs and practiced the strategy of concealing his talents and biding his time. The Li hexagram symbolizes fire and civilization, associated with the historical process by which the Western Zhou dynasty replaced the Shang dynasty through virtuous governance, warfare, and institutional construction, emphasizing the establishment of civilized order. Drawing on commentaries from various dynasties, historical classics, and excavated documents, the article argues that the Kan and Li hexagrams serve as metaphors for the power transition and cultural transformation between the Shang and Zhou dynasties. It further reflects on the civilizational differences between ancient monarchical systems and modern democratic systems.

**Keywords:** Zhouyi (I Ching); Kan hexagram; Li hexagram; danger; civilization

### I. Introduction

The Kan and Li hexagrams in the \*Zhouyi\* respectively symbolize water and fire, embodying the opposition and unity of yin and yang. The \*Tuan Zhuan\* (Commentary on the Judgment) of the Qian hexagram states: “The great brightness begins and ends, the six positions are formed according to the times, riding the six dragons to govern the heavens.” Here, “great brightness” refers to the sun, which is the image of the Li hexagram, while the “six dragons” refer to the six yang lines, which are the image of the Qian hexagram. The \*Xici Zhuan\* (Commentary on the Appended Statements) further emphasizes that “the meaning of yin and yang corresponds to the sun and moon,” indicating the important position of the Kan and Li hexagrams in yin-yang philosophy. Compared with the Qian and Kun hexagrams, the yin-yang meaning embodied in the Kan and Li hexagrams has a unique connotation, reflecting more complex humanistic relationships. The \*Xici Zhuan\* mentions: “The rise of the \*Yi\* probably occurred at the end of the Shang dynasty, during the flourishing virtue of the Zhou, or during the time of King Wen and King Zhou!” When King Wen and the Duke of Zhou composed the line statements for the Kan and Li hexagrams, they must have taken into account the major events occurring at that

time—events involving the historical changes during the transition between the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

According to existing research, the theme of the Kan hexagram is closely related to King Wen’s imprisonment in Youli. Zang Shouhu believes that “Xi Kan” (repeated Kan) refers to an underground prison, and the protagonist of this hexagram is precisely King Wen of Zhou.<sup>1</sup> Zang Shouhu also argues that the “Xi Kan” and “Kan Dan” mentioned in the hexagram resemble “a square well-like vertical pit dug downward from the middle of an upper cave with a flat bottom.”<sup>2</sup> Gu Wen-shuang similarly holds that “Xi Kan” is an underground prison and that the Kan hexagram is a collection of miscellaneous notes written in prison.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the theme of the Li hexagram, there is still some controversy in academic circles, but it is generally believed to be closely related to war, fire, or civilization. Zhang Qicheng believes that the Li hexagram is a realistic description of the Qin people’s hunting and military expeditions in the early Western Zhou period.<sup>4</sup> Qiu Chong regards the Li hexagram as a war hexagram, narrating the story of a tribe that, after being invaded, successfully took revenge under the leadership of its tribal chief.<sup>5</sup> Chen Shuo argues that “Li” symbolizes fire in the natural world, and that “Li” carries the imagery of “attachment” and “brightness,” as well as the connotations of “culture” and even “civilization.”<sup>6</sup>

This article will review the historical commentaries on the Kan and Li hexagrams of the *\*Zhouyi\**, clarify the yin-yang meaning of these two hexagrams, and consult relevant historical classics and excavated materials to uncover the Shang-Zhou stories behind the Kan and Li hexagrams, with the aim of revealing the profound significance of this ancient wisdom in the midst of historical changes.

## II. The Shang-Zhou Story in the Kan Hexagram

The Kan hexagram (☵☵) is formed by the doubling of the trigram Kan (☵). The trigram Kan (☵) takes water and pitfall as its images, indicating danger and difficulty. Hence, there is the statement in the *\*Xiang Zhuan\** (Commentary on the Image): “Water comes repeatedly” (*\*shui jian zhi\**), and in the *\*Tuan Zhuan\**: “Repeated danger” (*\*chong xian\**). Hexagrams containing the Kan trigram generally carry the meaning of danger and difficulty. For example, in the Kun hexagram (☷☷), the line “The buttocks are trapped in a tree stump, entering a dark valley, and for three years one is not seen” (initial six) and “Trapped by rocks, leaning on thorns; entering one’s house but not seeing one’s wife—inauspicious” (six in the third).

The hexagram statement reads: “There is sincerity that binds the heart” (\*you fu wei xin\*). Sincerity and trust are bound to the heart. The nine in the second place is a yang line located in the center of the lower Kan, and the nine in the fifth place is a yang line located in the center of the upper Kan. Both occupy the central positions with firmness, hence the \*Tuan Zhuan\* speaks of “not losing one’s sincerity” and the \*Xiang Zhuan\* speaks of “constantly practicing virtuous conduct.” The hexagram statement also says “Movement brings honor” (\*xing you shang\*). The \*Tuan Zhuan\* explains this as “going forward brings achievement.” Although there are layer upon layer of pitfalls and repeated dangers, as long as sincerity binds the heart, there will be smooth progress and success in undertakings.

During the Shang-Zhou period, underground prisons had two layers, possibly modeled on the image of “repeated Kan.” The imprisonment of the Western Earl (Xibo) Ji Chang in Youli is the central theme of this hexagram. The \*Miu He\* states: “The way of Heaven is one yin and one yang, one short and one long, one dark and one bright. Human affairs follow this pattern. Therefore, Tang was trapped in Lü, and King Wen was imprisoned in Youli... From ancient times to the present, there has never been a hegemon or king who could achieve greatness without first experiencing worry and hardship.”<sup>7</sup> The imprisonment of the Western Earl in Youli was a necessary step for the rise of the Western Zhou.

Initial Six: Repeated Kan. Entering the pit within the pit—inauspicious. “Dan” means a pit within a pit. Yu Fan explains it as “a small hole within the Kan,”<sup>8</sup> Wang Bi as “the bottom of the Kan,”<sup>9</sup> Cheng Yi as “the sunken place within the Kan,”<sup>10</sup> Lai Zhide as “a small Kan within the Kan,”<sup>11</sup> and Wen Yiduo directly interprets it as an underground prison.<sup>12</sup> Gan Bao also discusses “the use of criminal punishment and imprisonment” in relation to this line.<sup>13</sup> Shang-Zhou underground prisons had two layers, upper and lower. Prisoners were initially thrown into the bottom layer of the underground prison. Xibo was imprisoned in Youli due to King Zhou’s suspicion. The \*Records of the Grand Historian · Annals of Yin\* records the specific reasons for King Zhou imprisoning Xibo: the Marquis of Jiu had a beautiful daughter whom he offered to King Zhou. The girl disliked debauchery, so King Zhou became furious and killed both her and the Marquis of Jiu. The Marquis of E protested on their behalf and was also killed. When Xibo heard of this, he sighed privately in sorrow. Chonghou Hu learned of it and reported it to King Zhou, who then imprisoned Xibo in Youli.<sup>14</sup> The \*Records of the Grand Historian · Annals of Zhou\* records Chonghou Hu’s words to King Zhou: “Xibo has accumulated goodness and virtue; all the feudal lords turn to him. This will be disadvantageous to the Emperor.”<sup>15</sup> According to the \*Bamboo Annals\*: “In the twenty-first year of Emperor Xin (King

Zhou), in the spring, first month, the feudal lords paid court to Zhou. Boyi and Shuqi returned to Zhou from Guzhu. In the winter of the twenty-second year, a great hunt was held at the Wei River. In the twenty-third year, Xibo was imprisoned in Youli.”<sup>16</sup> The hearts of the people under Heaven were turning toward Zhou. Xibo conducted hunts and military training, which aroused King Zhou’s suspicion—this was the main reason for his imprisonment.

Nine in the Second: In the Kan, there is danger. Seeking small gains.

“Small gains,” in contrast to the “attainment” (release from prison) of the uppermost six, refers to securing personal safety and achieving something while still inside the underground prison. Yu Fan explains it as “relying on yin and possessing substance.”<sup>17</sup> Cheng Yi explains: “Being firm provides sufficient talent for self-protection; being centered ensures that actions are appropriate.”<sup>18</sup> Yang Wanli associates this line with the events in Youli. In his *\*Chengzhai Yizhuan\**, he writes: “Is the nine in the second not about the affair of Youli? With the virtue of firmness and resolve, practicing the way of centrality and correctness—what crime did the nine in the second commit? Encountering the danger of two yin lines and falling into their midst—this is the misfortune of a gentleman. Only by being firm yet dwelling in softness, not contending with firmness but seeking through compliance, can one achieve small success. Great success is impossible because one has not yet emerged from the midst of the two yin lines.”<sup>19</sup> While imprisoned in Youli, Xibo maintained his convictions and deduced the eight trigrams into sixty-four hexagrams, making ideological preparations for the future campaign to overthrow Shang. The *\*Records of the Grand Historian · Annals of Zhou\** records: “While imprisoned in Youli, he is said to have expanded the eight trigrams into sixty-four hexagrams.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, Xibo engaged in divination activities. Among the oracle bone inscriptions excavated at Zhouyuan, some were divined by Xibo while he was imprisoned in Youli. The characters in the Zhouyuan oracle bones are extremely small because Xibo needed to conceal his brilliance and avoid revealing his sharpness.<sup>21</sup>

Six in the Third: Coming and going amid repeated Kan—dangerous and precarious. Entering the pit within the pit. Do not act.

“Coming and going amid repeated Kan” means that both coming and going involve danger and pitfalls, because the six in the third is situated between the lower Kan and the upper Kan. Regarding “zhen” (枕), Yu Fan explains it as “to stop,”<sup>22</sup> Wang Bi as “leaning and unstable,”<sup>23</sup> and Cheng Yi as “propped up and uneasy”<sup>24</sup>—all of which are unsatisfactory. Yu Yue interprets “zhen” as “deep,”<sup>25</sup> an explanation consistent with the context of this line: the six in the third has danger and pitfalls both above and below, and is relatively deep from the bottom of the lower Kan. At this

point, it is easy to fall into the bottom of the pit; therefore, one should not act rashly. During Xibo's imprisonment in Youli, King Zhou repeatedly tested and probed him, especially by killing Bo Yikao and making his flesh into minced meat, which placed Xibo in a terrible dilemma. The *\*Di Wang Shiji\** records: "After King Zhou imprisoned King Wen, King Wen's eldest son, Bo Yikao, served as a hostage in Yin and drove the chariot for King Zhou. King Zhou cooked him into a soup and gave it to King Wen, saying, 'A sage would not eat the soup made from his own son.' King Wen took it and ate it. King Zhou said, 'Who says Xibo is a sage? He ate the soup made from his son and did not even realize it.'"<sup>26</sup> Bo Yikao came to the Shang court as a hostage and entered a dangerous situation. King Zhou had him made into minced meat soup and gave it to Xibo. Xibo was caught in a dilemma: if he obeyed King Zhou, he would be eating his own son's flesh; if he defied King Zhou, he would be killed. Xibo was skilled in divination and knew what King Zhou had done, but he pretended not to know, thereby relaxing King Zhou's vigilance and preserving himself.

Six in the Fourth: A cup of wine, two bowls of food, offered in earthenware vessels, brought in through the window—ultimately no blame.

"Zun" is a wine vessel; "gui" is a food vessel; "er" means "again" or "two"; "fou" is an earthenware vessel; "na" (in the silk manuscript version) means "to bring in"; "you" means window. "Yue" has two interpretations: one is "simple" or "frugal," originating from Yu Fan (because the fourth is a yin line and small, hence frugal);<sup>27</sup> Wang Bi, Zhu Xi, and others follow this view. The other interprets it as "shao" (勺), a ladle for scooping wine, held by Wen Yiduo and others.<sup>28</sup> The former comprehensively covers "a cup of wine and two bowls of food offered in earthenware vessels," while the latter only describes how to scoop the wine; the former seems more appropriate. The context of this line is: using a zun to hold wine, a gui to hold food, and earthenware vessels, simple items are brought in through the window—ultimately without fault. But is this describing the daily diet of a prisoner, communication of intelligence with the outside world, or the performance of a sacrificial ritual? Yu Fan says: "Zhen governs sacrificial vessels, hence there are 'zun and gui.'"<sup>29</sup> Here, "zun and gui" are utensils used for sacrifice. The *\*Book of Odes · Cai Pin\** has a similar scene: "Where shall we place the offerings? Beneath the window of the ancestral hall. Who shall preside over the sacrifice? The reverent young lady."<sup>30</sup> The *\*Zhouyi Zhezong\** quotes Pan Mengqi: "'A cup of wine and two bowls of food offered in earthenware vessels' carries the same meaning as the 'two bowls may be used for the offering' in the Sun hexagram—both speak of not emphasizing elaborate ceremonies but valuing sincerity."<sup>31</sup> "Two bowls may be used for the offering" means that two bowls of rice are sufficient for sacrifice. Cui Jing believes that while Xibo was in Youli, "although

the sacrifices were simple and frugal, his bright virtue was fragrant... King Wen practiced this way during the time of King Zhou. From Youli he offered simple sacrifices and was ultimately spared from disaster.”<sup>32</sup> The *\*Bamboo Annals\** records: “In the sixth year of Emperor Xin, King Wen first performed the Yue sacrifice at Bi. In the fortieth year, Zhou built the Lingtai.”<sup>33</sup> Since Xibo performed the Yue sacrifice at Bi in his early years and later built the Lingtai, it was only natural that he continued to perform sacrifices while imprisoned in Youli.

Nine in the Fifth: The Kan is not full. The hill has been leveled—no blame. “The Kan is not full” means the water in the pit does not overflow, in agreement with the *\*Tuan Zhuan\**’s “water flows but does not overflow”—that is, no danger is created. Yu Fan says: “To overflow means to flood. Gen means to stop. It refers to water flowing but not overflowing.”<sup>34</sup> Wen Yiduo further explains: “When water overflows the pit and valley, it causes flooding and disaster.”<sup>35</sup> “The Kan is not full” means the water does not flood and does not create danger.

“Zhi ji ping” (祗既平) has been the subject of much controversy in historical commentaries. During the Republican period, Shang Binghe conducted a rigorous study: “Zhi” was written as “ti” (禋) by Jing and Yu, meaning “peaceful”; Zheng Xuan wrote it as “zhi” (坻), meaning a small hill. When the meaning of the character cannot be determined, one should adopt the method of observing the image. Zheng Xuan treats “the Kan is not full” and “zhi ji ping” as parallel phrases, so “zhi” must be a substantive word. The nine in the fifth is the ruling line of Gen; Gen is the mountain, hence “zhi” (坻). “Zhi” is interchangeable with “di” (氏), which is the name of a famous mountain in Ba-Shu. Yu Yue says: “‘Zhi ji ping’ is the ‘di’ of ‘Di Tui’ (氏隤).” When the Di mountain collapses, the land becomes level.<sup>36</sup> From Shang’s perspective, “zhi ji ping” means the hill has been leveled and there is no longer any danger. This idea is consistent with the *\*Tuan Zhuan\**’s view of hills as “terrestrial dangers.” The *\*Bamboo Annals\** records that in the spring of the forty-third year of Emperor Xin, the Yao mountain collapsed<sup>37</sup>—this meant that the road for King Wu’s campaign against Zhou had been leveled. Zhu Xi believes that the nine in the fifth is about to emerge from danger: “Although the nine in the fifth is within the Kan, because it is yang, firm, centered, and correct, and occupies the position of honor, the time has also come for it to emerge.”<sup>38</sup> Regarding the reasons for Xibo’s release from Youli, the accounts in the *\*Records of the Grand Historian · Annals of Yin\** and *\*Annals of Zhou\** are basically consistent: Xibo’s ministers Hong Yao and others sought beautiful women, fine horses, and other rare objects, which they presented to King Zhou through his favorite minister Fei Zhong, and King Zhou then released Xibo.<sup>39</sup> The *\*Zuo Zhuan · Duke Xiang, 31st year\** offers another reason: “King Zhou imprisoned King

Wen for seven years. All the feudal lords followed him into imprisonment. King Zhou then became fearful and released him.”<sup>40</sup> King Zhou released Xibo under pressure from the feudal lords. The *\*Bamboo Annals\** records: “In the twenty-ninth year of Emperor Xin, Xibo was released. The feudal lords welcomed Xibo and he returned to Cheng.”<sup>41</sup> The feudal lords welcomed Xibo out of prison and escorted him back to Xiqi. This shows that the feudal lords were not very afraid of King Zhou, which aligns with the *\*Zuo Zhuan\**.

Uppermost Six: Bound with black ropes, placed among brambles. For three years one does not attain—inauspicious.

“Xi” means to bind. “Hui mo” refers to ropes. “Zhi” means to place. “Cong ji” refers to prison. “Three years one does not attain” means one does not get out of prison for three years. The *\*Rites of Zhou · Office of Autumn\** states: “The Director of Prisons is in charge of receiving and instructing the idle people. Those who harm others are not allowed to wear caps or ornaments and are subjected to clear punishment. They are assigned tasks and instructed. Those who can reform themselves: those with major crimes are released after three years; those with medium crimes after two years; those with minor crimes after one year. Those who cannot reform and attempt to leave the prison walls are killed.”<sup>42</sup> Those guilty of serious crimes, if they show remorse, are released after three years of imprisonment and education. If they do not reform, they are executed. Wang Bi is consistent with the *\*Rites of Zhou\**: “It is appropriate that he be imprisoned and placed in a place for reflection... Only after cultivating himself for three years can he seek restoration.”<sup>43</sup> “Three years one does not attain” does not merely mean being imprisoned for three years, but rather that within three years one has not shown remorse and will ultimately be killed—hence inauspicious. This line is similar to the uppermost nine of the Shihe hexagram: “Wearing the cangue that destroys the ears—inauspicious,” implying execution. When King Zhou released Xibo, he said: “The one who slandered Xibo was Chonghou Hu.”<sup>44</sup> “Zeng” means slander or false accusation. In reality, Chonghou Hu was not slandering or falsely accusing him. The statement “Xibo has accumulated goodness and virtue; all the feudal lords turn to him. This will be disadvantageous to the Emperor” was the truth. Imprisoning Xibo was intended to prevent this situation from developing further, to force and educate Xibo to reflect on himself so that he would no longer threaten the rule of Shang in the future; otherwise, he should be executed. After seven years of imprisonment, Xibo had not abandoned his convictions. The *\*Records of the Grand Historian · Annals of Yin\** records the consequence of releasing Xibo: “When Xibo returned, he secretly cultivated virtue and practiced goodness. Many of the feudal lords rebelled against Zhou and went over to Xibo. Xibo grew increasingly powerful, and King Zhou gradually lost his

authority.”<sup>45</sup> If King Zhou had been wise enough, he would certainly have executed Xibo at that time. It is evident that Xibo’s situation at the time was extremely perilous.

### III. The Historical Story in the Li Hexagram

The Li hexagram (☲☲) is formed by the doubling of the trigram Li (☲). The trigram Li (☲) is yin inside and yang outside; yin attaches to yang, and yang nourishes yin. The female ox is docile by nature and belongs to yin; hence the \*Tuan\* says: “The soft attaches to what is centered and correct, therefore there is smooth progress. Thus it is auspicious to raise a female ox.” The trigram Li (☲) takes the sun and fire as its images. The lower trigram of the Li hexagram uses the movement of the sun and human affairs for its line statements, while the upper trigram uses military fire and tears for its line statements. The sun and fire bring light and civilization; hence the \*Xiang\* says: “Brightness appears twice, forming Li. The great man uses successive brightness to illuminate the four directions.” In other hexagrams containing the Li trigram, the \*Tuan\* and \*Xiang\* frequently explain Li in terms of “civilization.” For example, for the Dayou hexagram (☲☲), the \*Tuan\* says: “...its virtue is firm and strong yet civilized, corresponding with Heaven and acting in accordance with the times...” while the \*Xiang\* says: “Fire above Heaven—Dayou. The superior person curbs evil and promotes good, complying with Heaven’s blessing and mandate.” For the Mingyi hexagram (☲☲), the \*Tuan\* says: “...internally civilized and externally gentle and compliant, thereby concealing great danger—King Wen did this...” while the \*Xiang\* says: “Brightness enters the earth—Mingyi. The superior person, when presiding over the multitude, uses darkness yet remains bright.” The ancient authors of the \*Zhouyi\* were King Wen and the Duke of Zhou. King Wen’s name was Chang (昌, containing “sun”), and the Duke of Zhou’s name was Dan (旦, also containing “sun”). Two “sun” characters one above the other form the image of the Li hexagram (☲☲). The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records: “When King Wu crossed the river, in midstream a white fish leaped into the king’s boat. The king bowed and took it for sacrifice. After crossing, fire came from above and descended upon the king’s house, flowing into a crow whose color was red and whose cry was solemn.”<sup>46</sup> The red crow is also called the sun bird, and the original character for Li (離) is also a kind of bird. The Western Zhou belonged to fire in the Five Elements. The Zhou’s replacement of Shang was not only fire overcoming metal, but also laid the foundation for three thousand years of civilization thereafter. When King Wen and the Duke of Zhou composed the line statements for the Li hexagram, they must have first considered the fact of the rise of the Western Zhou. [The hexagram statement “Raise a female ox” refers to the Western Zhou raising female oxen for sacrifice, while the

hexagram statement of the Jin hexagram “The Marquis of Kang uses bestowed horses to multiply” refers to the Western Zhou raising horses for warfare?]

Initial Nine: Treading, hesitant and alarmed. Be respectful of it—no blame.

“Treading” means walking. “Cuo ran” is similar to “suo suo” (fearful and cautious) in the nine in the fourth of the Lü hexagram (“Treading on the tiger’s tail, fearful and cautious—ultimately auspicious”). It describes a state of fear and unease. The \*Zhouyi Zhengyi\* explains it this way: “Cuo indicates a state of alarm and fear; the mind is not yet at peace, hence ‘cuo ran.’”<sup>47</sup> In this hexagram, the nine in the fourth is in enemy correspondence with the initial nine. The initial nine treats the nine in the fourth with respect and caution. The Fuyang Han bamboo slip \*Zhouyi\* appends a divination statement after this line: “Divining about approaching office and establishing the multitude: if one respects those below, it will be auspicious.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, “be respectful of it” means to treat the ministers below (represented by the nine in the fourth) with respect and caution. This line speaks of the ruler, at the time of sunrise, facing a complicated situation, feeling fear, and respectfully treating his ministers—thereby incurring no blame. After Ji Li was imprisoned and killed by King Wen Ding, Ji Chang became the Western Earl. He treated worthy men with courtesy. The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records that the Western Earl was “deeply benevolent, respectful to the elderly, kind to the young, and courteous to the worthy. He would not even eat at noon if he had to wait for scholars. Because of this, many scholars flocked to him.”<sup>49</sup> When King Wu fell ill and passed away, King Cheng succeeded him. The Duke of Zhou was filled with apprehension. The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records: “King Cheng was young and the realm had only recently been pacified. The Duke of Zhou feared that the feudal lords would rebel against Zhou, so he assumed the regency and administered the state.”<sup>50</sup>

Six in the Second: Yellow Li—supremely auspicious.

Yellow is the color of the center. Yellow light lies in the middle of the solar spectrum, and yellow flames have a moderate temperature among all flame colors. Hence the \*Xiang\* says: “Yellow Li is supremely auspicious—it attains the central way.” “Yellow Li” symbolizes the flourishing of civilization. This line speaks of the ruler, at the time of midday, practicing the central way, responding to the times, rebuilding order, and transforming the world—thereby achieving supreme auspiciousness. Xibo implemented virtuous governance, and the feudal lords asked him to adjudicate their disputes. The lords of Yu and Rui had a border dispute over land. They entered Western Zhou seeking Xibo’s judgment. Upon discovering that “the farmers all yielded the boundaries and the common people all yielded to their elders,”<sup>51</sup> they felt ashamed of their own behavior and decided to yield the disputed land. According to

the \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, adjudicating the dispute between Yu and Rui was the sign that Xibo had received the Mandate to become king. After King Wen passed away, the Duke of Zhou perfected the \*Zhouyi\* and established rituals and music. If rituals and music represent the institutional civilization of that time, then the \*Zhouyi\* represents eternal spiritual civilization.

Nine in the Third: The sun setting in Li. If one does not beat the earthenware drum and sing, then there will be the lament of great old age—inauspicious.

“Ri ze” means the sun is slanting westward, metaphorically indicating the decline of the ruler’s way. “Fou” is an earthenware percussion instrument. “Da die” means advanced age, seventy or eighty years old. This line speaks of the time when the sun is setting and light is about to fade. When the ruler is old and feeble, having accomplished his mission, if he does not beat the instrument and sing, and does not hand over the affairs of state to others, he will lament in sorrow, and the outcome will be inauspicious. The earthenware drum is a musical instrument of the Qin region (present-day Shaanxi). The capital of the Western Zhou was located in present-day Shaanxi. This line tells the story of the early Western Zhou rulers retiring after accomplishing their deeds. King Wen’s great enterprise was not yet complete when he fell ill and passed away. Although the Duke of Zhou was not the nominal ruler, he governed on behalf of King Cheng for seven years and was in fact the ruler. During his regency, the Duke of Zhou launched a second campaign against Yin, thereby stabilizing the Zhou house. Afterward, he returned power to King Cheng. The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records: “The Duke of Zhou administered the government for seven years. When King Cheng came of age, the Duke of Zhou returned the administration to King Cheng and faced north, taking his place among the ministers.”<sup>52</sup> The Duke of Zhou is a classic example of retiring after accomplishing great deeds.

Nine in the Fourth: Suddenly it comes—burning, dying, being discarded.

“Tu” in the \*Zhouyi Jijie\* is written as “” and means “unfilial son” or “sudden disobedience.”<sup>53</sup> This line speaks of the occurrence of rebellion. Disobedient sons and treacherous ministers suddenly appear. They are intolerable to the world and are burned, die, and are discarded. In the early years of the Western Zhou, the Rebellion of the Three Guards (also known as the Rebellion of Guan and Cai) occurred. Guan Shu was the third son of King Wen, Cai Shu was the fifth son, and the Duke of Zhou was the fourth son. When the Duke of Zhou assumed the regency, Guan Shu and Cai Shu became suspicious and spread rumors that the Duke of Zhou intended to usurp the throne. Although their mission was to supervise Wu Geng, the son of King Zhou, they colluded with Wu Geng and rebelled. The Duke of Zhou eventually

suppressed the rebellion. The *\*Records of the Grand Historian\** records: “Guan Shu, Cai Shu, and their younger brothers suspected the Duke of Zhou and, together with Wu Geng, rebelled against Zhou. The Duke of Zhou, acting on King Cheng’s orders, attacked and executed Wu Geng and Guan Shu, and banished Cai Shu.”<sup>54</sup> Guan Shu and Cai Shu were unfilial sons. Guan Shu was executed and Cai Shu was exiled, exactly matching the line statement “dying, being discarded.” Kang Shu rendered meritorious service in suppressing the rebellion and was enfeoffed as the ruler of the state of Wei, with Zhaoge as his capital. He ruled over the former royal domain of the Shang and supervised the remnants of the seven clans. The *\*Records of the Grand Historian\** records: “He gathered many of the remaining Yin people and enfeoffed King Wu’s youngest brother, Feng, as Kang Shu of Wei.”<sup>55</sup>

Six in the Fifth: Tears flow in torrents, sorrowful sighs—auspicious.

“Chu ti” means shedding tears. “Tuo ruo” describes the appearance of heavy, torrential flow. “Qi jie” means sorrowful sighing. This line speaks of the ruler’s attitude toward military fire: tears flow like rain, and he sighs in grief. Wang Bi’s *\*Zhouyi Zhu\** explains the relationship between this line and the nine in the fourth: “Being soft and riding upon the firm, one cannot control those below. Those below are firm and advance, about to harm oneself. The depth of sorrow reaches the point of torrential tears and sighs. However, one is attached to the position of honor. The fourth is the leader of the rebellion. Because the sorrow is extremely deep, the multitude will come to one’s aid. Therefore, torrential tears and sighs nevertheless bring auspiciousness.”<sup>56</sup> The Duke of Zhou was generous and benevolent. The *\*Records of the Grand Historian\** records: “From the time of King Wen, Dan was filial as a son, deeply benevolent, and different from his other brothers.”<sup>57</sup> Guan Shu, Cai Shu, and the Duke of Zhou were full brothers. When Guan Shu and Cai Shu rebelled, it was fratricidal conflict. The Duke of Zhou must have felt deep compassion. Wu Geng incited the remnants of the Shang to rebel against the Zhou house; the Duke of Zhou must have felt deep indignation. The *\*Laozi\** says: “When armies clash, the side that grieves wins.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the judgment of this line is “auspicious.”

Uppermost Nine: The king uses this to launch a campaign. There is praise. He beheads the leaders and captures those who are not of their kind—no blame. “Fei” means “not”; in the silk manuscript *\*Zhouyi\** it is written as “bu.” “Chou” means “category” or “kind.” “Huo fei qi chou” means the captives are not of their own kind; one pardons those of their own kind. The *\*Chengshi Yizhuan\** says: “One should only behead the ringleaders. Those captured are not of their own kind—thus there is no blame of cruelty.”<sup>59</sup> This line speaks of the ruler campaigning against rebels, achieving praiseworthy success. He beheads the ringleaders of the criminals but

pardons the followers—without blame. After King Cheng built Luoyi, he campaigned against the Huai Yi (in the Huai River basin) and destroyed the state of Yan (present-day Qufu, Shandong). This is “the king uses this to launch a campaign; there is praise.” The state of Yan had once been an important capital of the Shang and was the most significant rebel stronghold besides Zhaoge; hence it was completely destroyed—“beheading the leaders.” The campaign against the various small Huai Yi states was the means to destroy Yan. Xin Gongjia advised the actual commander of this eastern campaign, the Duke of Zhou: “Large difficulties are hard to attack; small ones are easy to subdue. It is better to subdue the many small ones in order to intimidate the large one.”<sup>60</sup> After King Cheng destroyed Yan, he returned to Haojing. The Duke of Zhou, speaking on behalf of King Cheng, issued the \*Duo Fang\*, using gentle methods and education to pacify the small Huai Yi states—this is “capturing those who are not of their kind.” The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records: “The Duke of Shao was Protector, and the Duke of Zhou was Mentor. They campaigned eastward against the Huai Yi, destroyed Yan, and relocated its ruler to Bogu. King Cheng returned from Yan to the ancestral capital Zongzhou and composed the \*Duo Fang\*.”<sup>61</sup> King Cheng’s eastern campaign successively conquered fifty tribes, eliminated the peripheral forces of the Shang, and expanded the influence of the Western Zhou. The Xishen (in the northeast) sent envoys to pay tribute. The \*Records of the Grand Historian\* records: “After campaigning against the Eastern Yi, the Xishen came to offer congratulations.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, King Cheng first attacked the Huai Yi, then destroyed Yan, and subsequently civilized the Huai Yi—without incurring blame.

#### IV. Conclusion

The process by which the Western Zhou replaced the Shang was arduous and dangerous, but the final outcome was bright and civilized. This historical transformation not only reflected a change in political power but also revealed the evolution of culture and institutions.

Through the interpretation of the Kan hexagram, we can see the tyranny and despotism of the late Shang rulers, especially the imprisonment of Xibo, which embodied their blind belief in the Mandate of Heaven and their arbitrary exercise of power, bringing great harm and disaster to their subjects. Although Xibo was trapped in danger, he upheld sincerity and centrality, remained firm and unyielding, and practiced the strategy of concealing his talents and biding his time, ultimately breaking through the predicament. The Li hexagram, on the other hand, symbolizes the virtuous governance and civilization of the Western Zhou. The Western Zhou

rulers emphasized rule by virtue in their governance, believing that only by cherishing their subjects and benefiting the people could they obtain the protection of Heaven. This concept not only represented a transcendence of the Shang's practice of "relying on sacrifices while slighting virtue," but also reflected a profound understanding of the ruler's responsibilities. By implementing virtuous governance, the early Zhou rulers won the hearts of the people and ultimately achieved effective state administration.

However, from the Western Zhou to the end of the Qing dynasty, whether under the feudal enfeoffment system or the commandery-county system, political power always flowed from top to bottom, with supreme power concentrated in the hands of a single monarch. Although this system promoted state governance to a certain extent, in most periods the people lived in turmoil and hardship. In stark contrast is the democratic system of separation of powers established in Britain after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which marked a major advance in political civilization. Democratic separation of powers not only effectively checked monarchical power but also respected and protected the rights of the people. The Xinhai Revolution was an important attempt in Chinese history to pursue democratic separation of powers, but the road has been tortuous and long. In modern times, a country's civilization is not only reflected in the inheritance of excellent culture but also in the construction of advanced institutions. Only by establishing a sound democratic system and achieving a reasonable distribution and effective check of power can society achieve comprehensive progress.

---

#### Footnotes

1. Zang Shouhu: "A Correct Explanation of 'Youli'", \*Documents\*, No. 4, October 1999.
2. Zang Shouhu: "A New Interpretation of the \*Kan\* Hexagram in the \*Yijing\*", \*Proceedings of the 11th National Symposium on Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture and the 10th National Symposium on Yi Studies and Science\*, July 2008.
3. Gu Wenshuang: "A Textual Study of the \*Kan\* Hexagram in the \*Zhouyi\*", \*Studies of the Zhouyi\*, No. 4, 2002.

4. Zhang Qicheng: "A New Exploration of the Line Statements of the \*Li\* Hexagram in the \*Zhouyi\*", \*Journal of Guizhou University (Social Science Edition)\*, No. 3, 1999.
5. Qiu Chong: "A New Interpretation of the \*Li\* Hexagram in the \*Zhouyi\*", \*Chuanshan Journal\*, No. 1, 2012.
6. Chen Shuo: "An Analysis of the Cultural Prototype and Transferred Meanings of 'Li' in the \*Zhouyi\*", \*Hubei Social Sciences\*, No. 1, 2017.
7. Yu Haoliang: \*Mawangdui Boshu Zhouyi Shiwen Jiaozhu\* (Collated Annotations on the Silk Manuscript \*Zhouyi\* from Mawangdui), Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1st edition, December 2013, p. 188.
8. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\* (Collected Commentaries on the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, January 2016, p. 189.
9. Wang Bi, Kong Yingda: \*Songben Zhouyi Zhushu\* (The \*Zhouyi\* with Annotations, Song Edition), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, October 2018, p. 200.
10. Cheng Yi: \*Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan\* (Mr. Cheng's Commentary on the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, May 2011, p. 164.
11. Lai Zhide: \*Zhouyi Jizhu\* (Collected Annotations on the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, September 2019, p. 366.
12. Wen Yiduo: \*Studies on the Zhouyi and Zhuangzi: A Classified Commentary on the Zhouyi\*, Bashu Publishing House, 1st edition, January 2003, p. 35.
13. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 189.
14. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, September 2013, p. 137.
15. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 151.
16. Wang Guowei: \*A Critical Annotation of the Current Text of the Bamboo Annals\*, National Library of China Publishing House, 1st edition, November 2021, p. 89.

17. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 190.
18. Cheng Yi: \*Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan\*, pp. 164-165.
19. Yang Wanli: \*Chengzhai Yizhuan\* (Mr. Chengzhai's Commentary on the \*Zhouyi\*), Jiuzhou Publishing House, 1st edition, September 2019, p. 104.
20. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 154.
21. Cao Dingyun: "The Same King Hunting with Two Kings on the Zhouyuan Oracle Bones and 'King Wen's Imprisonment at Youli'", \*Oracle Bone Script and Shang History\*, 2013 (New Series, Vol. 3).
22. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 190.
23. Wang Bi, Kong Yingda: \*Songben Zhouyi Zhushu\*, p. 201.
24. Cheng Yi: \*Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan\*, p. 165.
25. Yu Yue: \*Qunjing Pingyi\* (A Critique of the Classics), Phoenix Publishing House, 1st edition, September 2021, p. 25.
26. Huangfu Mi: \*Imperial Century\*, Qilu Press, 1st edition, January 2010, p. 40.
27. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 191.
28. Wen Yiduo: \*Studies on the Zhouyi and Zhuangzi: A Classified Commentary on the Zhouyi\*, pp. 36-37.
29. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 190.
30. Ma Ruichen: \*A Comprehensive Explanation of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs\*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, March 1989, pp. 81-82.
31. Li Guangdi: \*Zhouyi Zhezhen\* (A Compilation of Commentaries on the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, August 2022, p. 277.
32. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 191.

33. Wang Guowei: \*A Critical Annotation of the Current Text of the Bamboo Annals\*, pp. 88, 90.
34. Li Dingzuo: \*Zhouyi Jijie\*, p. 191.
35. Wen Yiduo: \*Studies on the Zhouyi and Zhuangzi: A Classified Commentary on the Zhouyi\*, p. 23.
36. Shang Binghe: \*Zhouyi Shangshi Xue\* (Mr. Shang's \*Zhouyi\* Studies), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, February 2016, p. 141.
37. Wang Guowei: \*A Critical Annotation of the Current Text of the Bamboo Annals\*, p. 91.
38. Zhu Xi: \*Zhouyi Benyi\* (Original Meaning of the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, November 2009, p. 124.
39. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, pp. 151-152.
40. Hong Liangji: \*Annotations on the Spring and Autumn Annals, Zuo Tradition\*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, October 1987, p. 630.
41. Wang Guowei: \*A Critical Annotation of the Current Text of the Bamboo Annals\*, p. 89.
42. Yang Tianyu: \*An Annotated Translation of the Rites of Zhou\*, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1st edition, July 2004, p. 539.
43. Wang Bi, Kong Yingda: \*Songben Zhouyi Zhushu\*, pp. 202-203.
44. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 152.
45. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 138.
46. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 156.
47. Wang Bi, Kong Yingda: \*Songben Zhouyi Zhushu\*, p. 206.

48. Han Ziqiang: \*A Study of the Zhouyi on Han Dynasty Bamboo Slips from Fuyang\*, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1st edition, July 2004, p. 62.
49. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 151.
50. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 169.
51. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 152.
52. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 169.
53. Li Daoping: \*Zhouyi Jijie Zuanshu\* (A Compilation and Elucidation of the Collected Commentaries on the \*Zhouyi\*), Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, March 1994, p. 309.
54. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 169.
55. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 169.
56. Wang Bi, Kong Yingda: \*Songben Zhouyi Zhushu\*, p. 207.
57. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 1833.
58. Gao Ming: \*A Collated Annotation of the Silk Manuscript Laozi\*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, May 1996, p. 243.
59. Cheng Yi: \*Zhouyi Chengshi Zhuan\*, p. 173.
60. Wang Xianshen: \*A Collected Commentary on Han Feizi\*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1st edition, July 1998, p. 180.
61. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, pp. 170-171.
62. Sima Qian: \*Records of the Grand Historian\*, p. 171.

## 《周易》坎离两卦中的殷周故事

摘要：本文通过分析《周易》坎离两卦的卦象与爻辞，结合殷周之际的历史事件，揭示了坎离两卦背后的人文内涵。坎卦象征水与险难，对应周文王被商纣囚禁于羑里的经历，展现了其身处险境仍坚守信念、韬光养晦的智慧；离卦象征火与文明，关联西周通过德政、战争及制度建设取代殷商的历史进程，强调文明秩序的建立。文章综合历代注疏、历史典籍与出土文献，论证了坎离两卦对殷周权力更迭与文化转型的隐喻，并进一步反思古代君主制度与现代民主制度的文明差异。

关键词：周易；坎卦；离卦；险难；文明

### 一、引言

《周易》坎离两卦分别象征着水与火，体现了阴阳的对立统一。乾卦《彖传》指出：“大明终始，六位时成，时乘六龙以御天。”其中，大明即太阳，为离卦之象，而六龙即六阳，为乾卦之象。《系辞传》进一步强调“阴阳之义配日月”，表明坎离两卦在阴阳哲学中的重要地位。与乾坤两卦相比，坎离两卦所体现的阴阳之义具有独特的内涵，反映了更为复杂的人文关系。《系辞传》提到：“《易》之兴也，其当殷之末世，周之盛德邪！当文王与纣之事邪！”文王与周公在为坎离两卦系辞时，一定考虑到当时发生的重大事件，这些事件涉及殷周之际的历史变迁。

根据现有研究，坎卦的主题与文王拘于羑里密切相关。臧守虎认为，习坎是一种地牢，而本卦的主人翁正是周文王。<sup>1</sup>臧守虎还认为，本卦中所说的“习坎”、“坎窞”类似于“上穴平底的中部又向下挖了一方井式的竖穴”。<sup>2</sup>谷文双也认为习坎是地牢，坎卦是一篇狱中杂记。<sup>3</sup>对离卦的主题，学术界还存在一些争议，但一般认为与战争、火或者文明密切相关。张启成认为离卦是西周初期秦人狩猎与出征的真实描述。<sup>4</sup>邱崇认为离卦是战争卦，讲述了一个部族在遭受入侵后，在部落首领带领下成功复仇的故事。<sup>5</sup>陈硕认为“离”象征自然界的火，“离”有“附丽”和“光明”的意象，以及“文化”乃至“文明”的内涵。<sup>6</sup>

本文将梳理《周易》坎离两卦的历代注疏，阐明坎离两卦的阴阳之义，并查阅相关的历史典籍与出土材料，挖掘坎离两卦背后的殷周故事，以期揭示这一古

老智慧在历史变迁中的深刻意义。

## 二、坎卦中的殷周故事

习坎(☵)，由八经卦之坎(☵)相重而成，坎(☵)取象水和坑陷，表示险难，故有《象传》之“水洊至”，水再次到来，又有《象传》之“重险”，险之又险。含有坎(☵)的卦一般都有险难的含义，例如困卦(☱☵)，初六“臀困于株木，入于幽谷，三岁不覿，(凶)”和六三“困于石，据于蒺藜；入于其宫，不见其妻，凶”。

卦辞“有孚维心”，有孚信维系在心，九二阳爻处下坎(☵)之中，九五阳爻处上坎(☵)之中，二五刚中，故有《象传》之“不失其信”和《象传》之“常德行”。卦辞“行有尚”，《象传》释为“往有功”，尽管层层坑陷，重重险难，但有诚信维系在心，故而亨通，出行有功。

商周时期地牢结构有两层，可能取象于习坎。西伯姬昌拘于羑里，是本卦主题。《繆和》曰：“凡天之道，壹阴壹阳，壹短壹长，壹晦壹明。夫人道仇之，是故汤困于吕、文王拘于羑里……故古至今，霸王之君未尝忧困而能达者，未之有也。”<sup>7</sup>西伯拘于羑里对西周兴起是必要的。

初六，习坎，入于坎窞，凶。

窞，坎中之坎。虞翻释为“坎中小穴”，<sup>8</sup>王弼释为“坎底”，<sup>9</sup>程颐释为“坎中之陷处”，<sup>10</sup>来之德释为“坎中小坎”，<sup>11</sup>闻一多直解为地牢，<sup>12</sup>干宝于本爻亦论及“刑狱之用”。<sup>13</sup>商周地牢上下两层，犯人最初可能被投入地牢下层的底部。西伯因纣王猜忌而被囚羑里，环境凶险。《史记·殷本纪》记载了纣王囚禁西伯的具体理由：九侯有好女，献给纣王，九侯之女不喜淫逸，纣王大怒并杀了她及九侯，鄂侯为此争辩，也被纣王杀害，西伯听说后私下忧叹，崇侯虎知情后向纣王告发，纣王就把西伯囚禁在羑里。<sup>14</sup>《史记·周本纪》记载了崇侯虎向纣王进言：“西伯积善累德，诸侯皆向之，将不利于帝。”<sup>15</sup>按照《竹书纪年》记载：“(帝辛)二十一年春正月，诸侯朝周。伯夷、叔齐自孤竹归于周。二十二年冬，大蒐于渭。二十三年，囚西伯于羑里。”<sup>16</sup>天下人心归周，西伯畋猎习武，从而引起纣王猜忌，这是西伯被囚的主要原因。

九二，坎，有险，求小得。

小得，相较于上六之“得”（出狱），是指在地牢中得保安康，且有所作为。虞翻释为“据阴有实”，<sup>17</sup>程颐释为“刚则才足自卫，中则动不失宜。”<sup>18</sup>杨万里把本爻与羑里之事关联起来，《诚斋易传》曰：“九二其羑里之事耶？以刚毅之德，行中正之道，九二何罪焉？逢二阴之有险而陷其中，此君子之不幸也，惟以刚居柔，勿以刚竞，而以顺求庶乎，小济可，大济不可，小得，未出二阴之中故也。”<sup>19</sup>西伯在囚禁中坚持信念，推演八卦，为未来翦商大业做好思想准备。《史记·周本纪》记载：“其囚羑里，盖益易之八卦为六十四卦。”<sup>20</sup>此外，西伯还进行占卜活动，在出土的周原卜辞中，有一些是西伯囚居羑里时所占，周原卜辞字体非常细小，因为西伯需要韬光养晦，不露锋芒。<sup>21</sup>

六三，来之坎坎，险且枕，入于坎窞，勿用。

来之坎坎，来去都是险陷，因为六三处于下坎与上坎之间。枕，虞翻释为“止”，<sup>22</sup>王弼释为“枝而不安”，<sup>23</sup>程颐释为“支倚不安”，<sup>24</sup>皆不通。俞樾训“枕”为“深”，<sup>25</sup>这种解释与本爻情境一致：六三上下都是险陷，又距下坎之底较深，这时易于跌入坎底，所以不要轻举妄动。西伯囚于羑里期间，纣王不断试探和考验西伯，尤其是杀伯邑考制肉酱，使西伯进退维谷，左右为难。《帝王世纪》记载：“纣既囚文王，文王之长子曰伯邑考质于殷，为纣御。纣烹以为羹，赐文王，曰：“‘圣人当不食其子羹。’文王得而食之，纣曰：‘谁谓西伯圣者？食其子羹尚不知也。’”<sup>26</sup>伯邑考来到殷商作为人质，进入险境，纣王把他做成肉羹赐给西伯，西伯处于两难境地：如果顺从纣王，则是吃亲生儿子；如果违抗纣王，则会被纣王诛杀。西伯擅长占卜，自知纣王所为，但假装不知，让纣王放松警惕，保全自身。

六四，樽酒，簋贰用缶，纳约自牖，终无咎。

樽，盛酒之器；簋，盛饭之器；贰，又；缶，陶制器皿；纳，帛书作“入”；牖，窗户。约，有两种解释：一是简约，最早源自虞翻（四阴小故约），<sup>27</sup>王弼、朱熹等人持此说；二是通“勺”，酌酒之斗，挹取，闻一多等人持此说。<sup>28</sup>前者全面概括“樽酒簋贰用缶”，后者仅仅描述如何取“酒”，前者似乎更妥。本爻情境是，用樽装酒，用簋盛饭，又用瓦罐，从窗户送入简约物品，最终没有过失。但这究竟是囚犯日常饮食活动、与外界沟通情报，还是举行祭祀仪式呢？虞翻曰：“震主祭器，故有‘樽簋’。”<sup>29</sup>此处“樽簋”是用于祭祀的器具。《诗经·采芣》

亦有类似情境：“于以奠之？宗室牖下；谁其尸之？有齐季女。”<sup>30</sup>在哪里放置祭品？在宗庙的窗下；谁来主持祭祀？是那恭敬的少女。《周易折中》引潘梦旂曰：“‘樽酒簋贰用缶’，与《损》之‘二簋可用享’同意，皆言不事多仪而尚诚实也。”<sup>31</sup>其中“二簋可用享”是指两簋米饭即可用来祭祀。崔憬认为西伯在羑里“虽祭祀省薄，明德惟馨……文王于纣时行此道，从羑里纳约，卒免于难。”<sup>32</sup>《竹书纪年》记载：“帝辛六年，周文王初禴于毕。四十年，周作灵台。”<sup>33</sup>既然西伯早年在毕原禴祭，晚年又建造灵台，那么在羑里坚持祭祀是理所当然的。

九五，坎不盈，祗既平，无咎。

坎不盈，坎陷之水没有盈溢，与《彖传》“水流而不盈”同意，即没有造成险难。虞翻曰：“盈，溢也。艮为止，谓水流而不盈。”<sup>34</sup>闻一多进一步解释道：“水溢出坑谷，则泛滥为患。”<sup>35</sup>坎不盈，意味着水没有泛滥，没有造成险难。

祗既平，历代注疏争议较大，民国时期尚秉和作了严密考证：祗，京虞作“禊”，安；郑玄作“坻”，小丘。字义不能确定的话，应当采取观象方式。郑玄以“坎不盈”与“祗既平”为对文，“祗”一定是实字。九五是艮的主爻，艮山为坻。而坻与氏通，氏又是巴蜀名山。俞樾云：“祗既平，即氏隤之氏。”氏山崩溃，大地即平。<sup>36</sup>从尚氏看来，祗既平，意味着山丘已平，不再有险难，这种思想与《彖传》把山丘看作“地险”是一致的。《竹书纪年》记载，（帝辛）四十三年春，峽山崩溃，<sup>37</sup>这意味着武王伐纣的道路已经平坦。朱熹认为九五即将出离险境：“九五虽在坎中，然以阳刚中正居尊位，而时亦将出矣。”<sup>38</sup>关于西伯得出羑里的缘由，《史记·殷本纪》和《史记·周本纪》记载基本一致：西伯之臣闳夭等人寻求美女、好马等奇物，通过纣王宠臣费中献给纣王，纣王释放西伯。<sup>39</sup>《左传·襄公三十一年》给出另一理由：“纣囚文王七年，诸侯皆从之囚，纣于是乎惧而归之。”<sup>40</sup>纣王释放西伯是受到诸侯的压力。《竹书纪年》记载：“（帝辛）二十九年，释西伯。诸侯逆西伯，归于程。”<sup>41</sup>诸侯迎接西伯出狱，并送他回西岐，可见诸侯并不很忌惮纣王，这与《左传》相合。

上六，系用徽纆，寘于丛棘，三岁不得，凶。

系，系缚。徽纆，绳索。寘，置。丛棘，指监狱。三岁不得，三年不得出狱。《周礼·秋官》曰：“司圜掌收教罢民。凡害人者，弗使冠饰，而加明刑焉。任之以事，而收教之。能改者，上罪三年而舍，中罪二年而舍，下罪一年而舍，其

不能改而出圜土者，杀。”<sup>42</sup>犯重罪者，如有悔改，在收监教育三年后予以释放，若不悔改，则予以诛杀。王弼与《周礼》一致：“宜其囚执，寘于思过之地。……自修三岁，乃可以求复。”<sup>43</sup>三岁不得，不只是被囚三年，而是在三年内没有悔过，最终还会被杀，因而凶险。本爻类似于噬嗑上九“何校灭耳，凶”，暗指诛杀。纣王在释放西伯时说：“谮西伯者，崇侯虎也。”<sup>44</sup>谮的意思是谗言、诬陷，实际上，崇侯虎并非谗言、诬陷，“西伯积善累德，诸侯皆向之，将不利于帝”正是事实。囚禁西伯是为了阻止这种形势进一步发展，强制并教育西伯反思自身，使其将来不再威胁殷商统治，否则就应诛杀。经过七年囚禁，西伯并没有放弃信念，《史记·殷本纪》记载了释放西伯的后果：“西伯归，乃阴修德行善，诸侯多叛纣而往归西伯。西伯滋大，纣由是稍失权重。”<sup>45</sup>如果纣王足够明智，当时必定诛杀西伯，可见西伯当时处境极其凶险。

### 三、离卦中的历史故事

离卦(☲)，由八经卦之离(☲)相重而成，离(☲)内阴而外阳，阴附着阳，阳蓄养阴；母牛性顺，属阴，故《彖》曰：“柔丽乎中正，故亨，是以畜牝牛吉也。”离(☲)取象于日和火，离卦(☲)下卦以日运和人事系辞，上卦以兵火和泪水系辞。日和火带来光明和文明，故《象》曰：“明两作，离，大人以继明照于四方。”在含有离(☲)的其他诸卦中，《彖》和《象》多以“文明”解释离(☲)，例如，对于大有卦(☲)，《彖》曰：“……其德刚健而文明，应乎天而时行……”而《象》曰：“火在天上，大有，君子以遏恶扬善，顺天休命。”对于明夷卦(☲)，《彖》曰：“……内文明而外柔顺，以蒙大难，文王以之……”而《象》曰：“明入地中，明夷。君子以莅众，用晦而明。”《周易》古经作者是文王和周公，文王名昌，周公名旦，两名“日”字在上，日日相继，为离卦(☲)之象。《史记》记载：“武王渡河，中流，白鱼跃于王舟中，王俯取以祭。既渡，有火自上复于下，至于王屋，流为乌，其色赤，其声魄云。”<sup>46</sup>赤乌亦称太阳鸟，而离本字“離”，也是一种鸟。西周在五行属火，西周取代殷商，不仅是火克金，更是为后世三千年文明打下根基。文王、周公为离卦(☲)系辞，首先考虑的当是西周兴起这一事实。【卦辞“畜牝牛”是指西周蓄养母牛，用于祭祀，而晋卦(☲)卦辞“康

侯用锡马蕃庶”是指西周蓄养马匹，用于战争？】

初九，履错然，敬之，无咎。履，步履，行走。错然，与履卦(䷉)九四“履虎尾，愬愬，终吉”之“愬愬”相似，形容恐惧不安，《周易正义》即作此解：

“错是警惧之状，其心未宁，故错然也。”<sup>47</sup>本卦九四敌应初九，初九敬慎对待九四。阜阳汉简《周易》在该爻后附有卜辞“卜临官立众，敬其下乃吉。”<sup>48</sup>可知“敬之”是指敬慎对待九四之臣下。本爻是讲在日出之时，人君应对错杂局势，感到恐惧，敬慎对待臣下，因而没有咎过。季历被文丁囚杀，姬昌立为西伯，礼贤下士，《史记》记载西伯“笃仁，敬老，慈少，礼下贤者，日中不暇食以待士，士以此多归之”。<sup>49</sup>武王病世，成王继位，周公忧惧，《史记》记载：“成王少，周初定天下，周公恐诸侯畔周，公乃摄行政当国。”<sup>50</sup>

六二，黄离，元吉。黄，中色。黄光位于太阳光谱中间，黄色火焰在各色火焰中温度居中，故《象》曰：“黄离元吉，得中道也。”“黄离”象征文明之盛。本爻是讲在日中之时，人君践行中道，回应时势，重建秩序，化成天下，因而非常吉利。西伯推行德政，诸侯请他裁决争议。虞芮两侯对边界土地有争议，进入西周寻求西伯解决，发现“耕者皆让畔，民俗皆让长”<sup>51</sup>，就对各自行为感到羞愧，决定让出边界土地。据《史记》记载，裁断虞芮之争，是西伯受命称王的标志。文王逝世后，周公完善《周易》，制礼作乐。如果说礼乐是当时的制度文明，那么《周易》就是永恒的精神文明。

九三，日昃之离，不鼓缶而歌，则大耋之嗟，凶。日昃，太阳偏西，比喻君道衰落。缶，瓦质打击乐器。大耋，年老，七八十岁。本爻是讲在日落之时，光明将尽，人君年老力衰，功成事遂，如果不敲击乐器并唱歌，如果不把政事移交他人，就会忧愁叹息，结局凶险。缶是秦地乐器，秦地即今陕西一带，西周都城在今陕西，本爻是讲西周早期君王功成身退的故事，文王功业未竟而病逝，周公虽然不是名义上的君王，但是他代替成王执政七年，是事实上的君王。在摄政期间，周公二次伐殷，从而稳固周室，之后还政于成王，《史记》记载：“周公行政七年，成王长，周公反政成王，北面就群臣之位。”<sup>52</sup>周公是功成身退的典型范例。

九四，突如其来如，焚如，死如，弃如。突，《周易集解》作“𤇗”，意为“不孝子”、“不顺忽出”。<sup>53</sup>本爻是讲发生叛乱，逆子贼臣突然出现，他们不容于世，焚烧，死亡，遗弃。西周初年发生三监之乱，又称管蔡之乱，管叔是文王第三子，

蔡叔是文王第五子，而周公是文王第四子，周公摄政，管叔、蔡叔猜忌，散布周公篡位的流言，管蔡的使命本是监视纣王之子武庚，却与武庚串通叛乱，周公最终平定了叛乱。《史记》记载：“管叔、蔡叔群弟疑周公，与武庚作乱，畔周，周公奉成王命，伐诛武庚、管叔，放蔡叔。”<sup>54</sup>管叔和蔡叔是逆子，管叔被处死，蔡叔被流放，正与爻辞“死如，弃如”相合。康叔平叛有功，被封为卫国国君，以朝歌为国都，统治殷商王畿故地，监管七族遗民。《史记》记载：“颇收殷余民，以封武王少弟封为卫康叔。”<sup>55</sup>

六五，出涕沱若，戚嗟若，吉。出涕，流出泪水。沱若，滂沱，水流盛大的样子。戚嗟，忧戚嗟叹。本爻是讲人君对兵火的态度：泪如雨下，忧伤叹息。王弼《周易注》解释了本爻与九四的关系：“以柔乘刚，不能制下，下刚而进，将来害己，忧伤之深，至于沱嗟也。然所丽在尊，四为逆首，忧伤至深，众之所助，故乃沱嗟而获吉也。”<sup>56</sup>周公敦厚仁慈，《史记》记载：“自文王在时，旦为子孝，笃仁，异于群子。”<sup>57</sup>管叔、蔡叔与周公是同父同母的亲兄弟，管叔、蔡叔叛乱，手足相残，周公对此一定很悲悯。武庚笼络殷商遗民，发动叛乱，反抗周室，周公对此一定很悲愤。《老子》曰：“抗兵相加，哀者胜矣。”<sup>58</sup>故本爻断辞为“吉”。

上九，王用出征，有嘉，折首，获匪其丑，无咎。匪，非，帛书《周易》作“不”。丑，类。获匪其丑，所获非其同类，宽恕其同类。《程氏易传》曰：“但当折取其魁首，所执获者，非其丑类，则无残暴之咎也。”<sup>59</sup>本爻是讲人君征讨叛逆，获有嘉美之功，折断罪人魁首，但赦免胁从者，没有咎过。成王在营建洛邑后征伐淮夷（在淮河流域），消灭奄国（今山东曲阜），此谓“王用出征，有嘉”。奄国曾是商朝国都，是除朝歌以外最重要的反叛据点，因而遭到彻底毁灭，可谓“折首”，而征伐淮夷一众小国则是消灭奄国的手段，辛公甲曾建言此次东伐的实际指挥者周公：“大难攻，小易服，不如服众小以劫大。”<sup>60</sup>成王在灭奄后回到镐京，周公代表成王发布《多方》，怀柔、教化淮夷小国，是谓“获匪其丑”。《史记》记载：“召公为保，周公为师，东伐淮夷，残奄，迁其君薄姑。成王自奄归，在宗周，作《多方》。”<sup>61</sup>成王东伐，先后征服了五十个部落，清除了殷商的外围势力，扩大了西周的影响力，息慎（在东北地区）遣使来朝，《史记》记载：“既伐东夷，息慎来贺。”<sup>62</sup>可见，成王先伐淮夷，后灭奄国，再化淮夷，没有咎过。

#### 四、结语

西周取代殷商的过程是艰难而危险的，但最终结果是光明而文明的。这一历史变迁不仅反映了权力的更迭，更是揭示了文化与制度的演变。

通过对坎卦的解读，我们可以看到殷商统治者在末期的暴虐与专制，尤其是对西伯的囚禁，体现了其对天命的盲信和对权力的恣意，给臣民带来极大的危害和灾难。西伯虽陷险难，但以诚守中、刚毅不屈和韬光养晦，最终突破困局。而离卦则象征着西周的德政与文明。西周统治者在治理中强调德治，认为只有爱护臣民、惠及百姓，才能获得上天的保佑。这一理念不仅反映了对殷商“恃祭轻德”的超越，更是对统治者责任的深刻理解。周初统治者通过推行德政，赢得了民心，最终实现了国家治理。

然而，从西周到清末，不论是分封制还是郡县制，政治权力总是自上而下，并且最高权力集中于君主一人。尽管这种制度在一定程度上促进了国家治理，但多数时期人民生活在动荡困苦中。与之形成鲜明对比的是，1688年英国光荣革命后确立的民主分权制度，标志着政治文明的重大进步。民主分权不仅是对君主权力的有效制约，更是对人民权利的尊重与保障。辛亥革命是中国历史上追求民主分权的重要尝试，但是这条道路是曲折而漫长的。近代以来，一个国家的文明不仅体现在优秀文化的传承上，更反映在先进制度的构建上。只有建立健全的民主制度，实现权力的合理分配与有效制约，才能推动社会的全面进步。

---

<sup>1</sup> 臧守虎：“羸里”正诂，载《文献》1999年10月第4期。

<sup>2</sup> 臧守虎：《易经·坎》卦新解，载《第十一届全国中医药文化学术研讨会、第十届全国易学与科学学术研讨会论文集》，2008年07年。

<sup>3</sup> 谷文双：《周易·坎卦》考释，载《周易研究》2002年第4期。

<sup>4</sup> 张启成：《周易·离卦》爻辞新探，载《贵州大学学报》（社会科学版）1999年第3期。

<sup>5</sup> 邱崇：《周易》离卦新释，载《船山学刊》2012年第1期。

<sup>6</sup> 陈硕：《周易》中“离”的文化原型及转义探析，载《湖北社会科学》2017年第1期。

<sup>7</sup> 于豪亮：《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年12月第1版，第188页。

<sup>8</sup> 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第189页。

<sup>9</sup> 王弼、孔颖达：《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年10月第1版，第200页。

<sup>10</sup> 程颐：《周易程氏传》，中华书局，2011年5月第1版，第164页。

<sup>11</sup> 来知德：《周易集注》，中华书局，2019年9月第1版，第366页。

<sup>12</sup> 闻一多：《周易与庄子研究·周易义证类纂》，巴蜀书社，2003年1月第1版，第35页。

<sup>13</sup> 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第189页。

<sup>14</sup> 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第137页。

<sup>15</sup> 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第151页。

- 16 王国维：《今本竹书纪年疏证》，国家图书馆出版社，2021年11月第1版，第89页。
- 17 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第190页。
- 18 程颐：《周易程氏传》，中华书局，2011年5月第1版，第164-165页。
- 19 杨万里：《诚斋易传》，九州出版社，2019年9月第1版，第104页。
- 20 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第154页。
- 21 曹定云：周原甲骨“二王”同猎与“文王囚羑里”，载《甲骨文与殷商史》2013年（新三辑）。
- 22 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第190页。
- 23 王弼、孔颖达：《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年10月第1版，第201页。
- 24 程颐：《周易程氏传》，中华书局，2011年5月第1版，第165页。
- 25 俞樾：《群经平议》，凤凰出版社，2021年9月第1版，第25页。
- 26 皇甫谧：《帝王世纪》，齐鲁书社，2010年1月第1版，第40页。
- 27 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第191页。
- 28 闻一多：《周易与庄子研究·周易义证类纂》，巴蜀书社，2003年1月第1版，第36-37页。
- 29 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第190页。
- 30 马瑞辰：《毛诗传笺通释》，中华书局，1989年3月第1版，第81-82页。
- 31 李光地：《周易折中》，中华书局，2022年8月第1版，第277页。
- 32 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第191页。
- 33 王国维：《今本竹书纪年疏证》，国家图书馆出版社，2021年11月第1版，第88、90页。
- 34 李鼎祚：《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年1月第1版，第191页。
- 35 闻一多：《周易与庄子研究·周易义证类纂》，巴蜀书社，2003年1月第1版，第23页。
- 36 尚秉和：《周易尚氏学》，中华书局，2016年2月第1版，第141页。
- 37 王国维：《今本竹书纪年疏证》，国家图书馆出版社，2021年11月第1版，第91页。
- 38 朱熹：《周易本义》，中华书局，2009年11月第1版，第124页。
- 39 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第151-152页。
- 40 洪亮吉：《春秋左传诂》，中华书局，1987年10月第1版，第630页。
- 41 王国维：《今本竹书纪年疏证》，国家图书馆出版社，2021年11月第1版，第89页。
- 42 杨天宇：《周礼译注》，上海古籍出版社，2004年7月第1版，第539页。
- 43 王弼、孔颖达：《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年10月第1版，第202-203页。
- 44 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第152页。
- 45 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第138页。
- 46 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第156页。
- 47 王弼、孔颖达：《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年10月第1版，第206页。
- 48 韩自强：《阜阳汉简周易研究》，上海古籍出版社，2004年7月第1版，第62页。
- 49 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第151页。
- 50 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第169页。
- 51 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第152页。
- 52 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第169页。
- 53 李道平：《周易集解纂疏》，中华书局，1994年3月第1版，第309页。
- 54 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第169页。
- 55 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第169页。
- 56 王弼、孔颖达：《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年10月第1版，第207页。
- 57 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第1833页。
- 58 高明：《帛书老子校注》，中华书局，1996年5月第1版，第243页。
- 59 程颐：《周易程氏传》，中华书局，2011年5月第1版，第173页。
- 60 王先慎：《韩非子集解》，中华书局，1998年7月第1版，第180页。
- 61 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第170-171页。
- 62 司马迁：《史记》，中华书局，2013年9月第1版，第171页。