

The Right-Thought in the Kun Hexagram of the *Zhouyi*

Abstract: The Qian and Kun hexagrams are the gateway of the *Zhouyi*, symbolizing the ruler and the subjects respectively. Heaven establishes the ruler in order to bring benefits to the subjects. The Kun hexagram possesses ultimate value; it does not subordinate itself to the Qian hexagram. Both Qian and Kun stand under Heaven. The “Lord” (*zhu*) in the hexagram statement of Kun should be understood as the divine Lord, that is, Heaven. The main idea of the hexagram statement is that the subjects should obediently follow Heaven. The lower trigram of Kun is about the subjects assisting the ruler; the ruler here corresponds to the dragon of the nine in the second and nine in the fifth of the Qian hexagram. The upper trigram of Kun is about the subjects resisting the ruler; the ruler here corresponds to the dragon of the uppermost nine of the Qian hexagram. The purport of “using six” in the Kun hexagram is faith in Heaven. Faith in Heaven is the spiritual foundation for realizing individual freedom and equality among all people.

Keywords: Kun; Lord; virtuous governance; tyranny; rights

I. Introduction

The *Xici Zhuan* says: “Qian and Kun—are they not the gate of the *Yi*? Qian is a yang thing; Kun is a yin thing. Yin and yang unite in virtue, and firm and soft have their forms. Through them one embodies the operations of Heaven and Earth and penetrates the virtue of the divine and bright. Their names are mixed yet do not transgress. When one examines their categories, is it not the meaning of a declining age?” The Qian and Kun hexagrams are the gateway and key to the *Zhouyi*. They embody the revelations of the divine and the will of Heaven, and contain the laws of the rise and fall of the world and the order and chaos of all under Heaven.

Among the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Zhouyi*, Qian and Kun are the two most important. That the Qian hexagram comes before the Kun hexagram does not indicate that Qian is more important than Kun. The *Shuo Gua Zhuan* says: “Qian is the ruler; Kun is the multitude.” Accordingly, Qian represents the ruler-king and Kun represents the people. The *Zuo Zhuan · Duke Wen, 13th Year* records the Marquis of Zhu saying: “Heaven gave birth to the people and established a ruler for them in order to benefit them.”¹ The *Xunzi · Da Lüe* says: “Heaven gave birth to the people not for the sake of the ruler; Heaven established the ruler for the sake of the people.”² In this sense, the Qian hexagram is the means, while the Kun hexagram is the end.

Commentators on the **Zhouyi** throughout the ages have tended to regard the Kun hexagram as subordinate to the Qian hexagram. For example, the silk manuscript **Er San Zi** explains the uppermost six of Kun as the ruler instructing the subjects, while Wang Fuzhi explains the initial six of Kun as yang must always supervise, suppress, and even stifle yin.³ Such interpretations are no longer applicable to modern society. According to the **Shuo Gua Zhuan**, Qian is the husband and Kun is the wife. If a husband commits domestic violence against his wife, modern society allows the wife to leave her husband—that is, to divorce. If one says that domestic violence is the husband educating his wife, or that the husband should always supervise, suppress, and even stifle his wife, that would certainly be absurd.

Since the Republican period, some scholars have interpreted Qian and Kun through the lens of democratic revolution. Liu Shipai, in **The Essential Meaning of the Chinese Social Contract**, believed that the **Zhouyi** takes position as primary, yet position is not fixed. The nine in the fifth is the kingly position; the nine in the fourth “perhaps leaps in the abyss” has the image of a ruler while occupying the ministerial position; the uppermost nine is noble yet without position, referring to someone like Washington who accomplishes great deeds but does not cling to power.⁴ In reality, the Qian hexagram symbolizes the ruler-king, and each line position of Qian represents different stages the ruler experiences. Xiong Shili, in **Qian Kun Yan**, believed that the lines of the Qian hexagram symbolize the common people, long oppressed, rising up in revolution, eliminating the ruling class, and realizing democracy, while the six in the fifth of Kun symbolizes the lower people rising to seize the ruler’s position of power.⁵ Xiong Shili ignored the ruler-image of the Qian hexagram when explaining Qian and interpreted the lines as the actions of the common people, thereby inverting Qian and Kun. When explaining Kun, he ignored the meaning of humility in the six in the fifth and interpreted it as resistance and revolution, committing the same error as Nan Kuai of the Spring and Autumn period.

This article will review the historical literature on the Kun hexagram of the **Zhouyi** (including the silk manuscript **Yizhuan**), elucidate the right-thought contained in the Kun hexagram, and hope to provide some inspiration for contemporary society.

II. The Tuan Ci of the Kun Hexagram

(1) Yuan heng, li pin ma zhi zhen.

The **Tuan Ci** of the Qian hexagram is “yuan heng li zhen.” Here the emphasis is on “pin ma” (female horse). The Qian hexagram takes the dragon as its image, while the

Kun hexagram takes the female horse as its image. The **Za Gua Zhuan** says: “Qian is firm; Kun is soft.” The **Shuo Gua Zhuan** says: “Qian is vigorous; Kun is compliant.” Qian and Kun are characterized respectively by firmness and vigor on the one hand and compliance and softness on the other. Qian and Kun can respectively represent the ruler and the subjects. The ruler holds state power, while the subjects enjoy individual rights. Therefore, Qian and Kun can also respectively represent state power and individual rights.

The earliest explanation of “yuan heng li zhen” appears in the words of Mu Jiang recorded in the **Zuo Zhuan**: “Yuan is the head of the body; heng is the meeting of excellence; li is the harmony of righteousness; zhen is the trunk of affairs. Embodying benevolence is sufficient to lead others; excellent virtue is sufficient to unite with ritual; benefiting things is sufficient to harmonize righteousness; firm correctness is sufficient to handle affairs.”⁶ Mu Jiang interpreted “yuan heng li zhen” as four parallel virtues. Zhu Xi developed Mu Jiang’s words: “Yuan means great; heng means penetrating; li means appropriate; zhen means correct and firm.”⁷ Zhu Xi had already divided “yuan heng li zhen” into two groups of meaning: “great penetration” and “benefit lies in correct firmness.” Gao Heng believed that the original meaning of “yuan heng li zhen” was: “Yuan means great; heng is the heng of offering sacrifice; li is the li of benefit; zhen is the zhen of divination.”⁸ This explanation expresses a complete idea: a grand sacrifice is beneficial for divination. People serve Heaven with abundant food and receive revelation and the right way from Heaven. This was the original mode of interaction between Heaven and man.

The explanations of Mu Jiang, Zhu Xi, and Gao Heng are interconnected. Offering sacrifice is for communicating between Heaven and man: the ruler summons the dukes and marquises in the ancestral temple, offers the sacrifices to Heaven, and Heaven enjoys the fragrance of the offerings, so that Heaven and man can communicate.⁹ The nine in the fifth of the Jiji hexagram says: “The eastern neighbor slaughters an ox; it is not as good as the western neighbor’s simple Yue sacrifice, which truly receives the blessing.” Heaven enjoys people’s virtue more than abundant offerings. Divination is for upholding the right way: human reason is limited. When people encounter issues beyond the scope of their reason, they become puzzled and hesitant, and therefore need to seek help from Heaven, divine and inquire of Heaven, obtain the will of Heaven, strengthen their conviction, and uphold the right way. Therefore, “zhen” means obediently following Heaven and upholding the right way, not blind obedience to worldly people (including the ruler). The **Tuan Zhuan** of the Kun hexagram speaks of “obediently following Heaven,” and the **Wen Yan Zhuan** speaks of “following Heaven,” both referring to following Heaven. King

Wen was imprisoned and composed the *Zhouyi*; King Wen himself was a model of “yuan heng li zhen.” The *Book of Odes* records that while alive King Wen manifested bright virtue and followed Heaven, and after death he ascended to Heaven: “The Lord said to King Wen: ‘I cherish your bright virtue. You do not make loud noises or show anger; you do not rely on great severity to change things. You act without knowing and without being aware, following the rules of the Lord.’”¹⁰ “King Wen ascends and descends, at the side of the Lord.”¹¹

Mu Jiang’s words elaborated the moral implications of *yuan heng li zhen* but blurred the basic fact of *yuan heng li zhen* and obscured the interactive relationship between Heaven and man. This may be related to the strengthening of people’s self-consciousness and the weakening of faith in Heaven at that time. Confucius’s early attitude can illustrate this point: “Those whose virtuous conduct is absent hasten toward the divine and spiritual; those whose schemes and plans are far-reaching multiply divinations.”¹² In his later years Confucius’s attitude changed somewhat. He emphasized virtuous conduct but also acknowledged sacrifice and divination: “I have divined a hundred times and seventy were accurate. Only the divination at Zhouliang Mountain must follow the majority. The superior person seeks blessings through virtuous conduct; therefore he offers few sacrifices. He seeks good fortune through benevolence and righteousness; therefore he rarely divines.”¹³ If one denies sacrifice and divination and severs the relationship between Heaven and man, then virtuous conduct is not necessarily guaranteed, because virtuous conduct comes from personal conscience, and instruction from Heaven is more effective than coercion by worldly people. Knowledge and schemes are also not necessarily guaranteed, because the source of philosophy is religion and the end of science is theology. Knowledge and schemes come not only from human reason but also from heavenly revelation.

At this point, the *Tuan Ci* of this section can be elucidated as: the subjects serve Heaven with virtuous conduct, which is beneficial for inquiring of Heaven, obtaining the will of Heaven, and upholding the right way.

(2) The superior person has somewhere to go. At first confused, later obtaining the Lord—beneficial. In the southwest one obtains companions; in the northeast one loses companions. Peaceful correctness is auspicious.

The *Tuan Zhuan* says: “The superior person’s going: at first confused and losing the way, later obedient and obtaining constancy. In the southwest one obtains companions and thus travels with one’s kind; in the northeast one loses companions

and in the end there is good fortune.” The *Tuan Zhuan* explains “obtaining the Lord” as “obtaining constancy,” consistent with the *Wen Yan Zhuan*’s “later obtaining the Lord and having constancy.” Xunzi said: “The way of Heaven has constancy; it does not exist for Yao nor perish for Jie.”¹⁴ Therefore “Lord” may be related to “Heaven.”

Wang Bi explains: “The southwest is the place of nurturing; it is the same way as Kun; hence it says ‘obtaining companions.’ The northeast is the opposite of the southwest; hence it says ‘losing companions.’ As a yin thing, one must leave one’s party and go to the opposite kind, and only then obtain peaceful correctness and good fortune.”¹⁵ Kong Yingda further explains: “If explained in terms of human affairs, it is like a minister leaving his party and entering the ruler’s court, or a woman leaving her family and entering her husband’s house.”¹⁶ Cui Jing connects “in the southwest one obtains companions, in the northeast one loses companions” with “at first confused, later obtaining the Lord”: “By analogy, while in the house one obtains companions yet is still confused and loses the way; after marrying one loses companions and thus obeys and obtains constancy. Being at peace with following the correctness of Heaven is therefore called ‘peaceful correctness is auspicious.’”¹⁷

The above scholars all believe that yang is the Lord of yin, man is the Lord of woman, and the ruler is the Lord of the subject—that is, they interpret “Lord” as a human Lord. Bi Gan took King Zhou as his “Lord,” yet his outcome was not “beneficial,” which clearly contradicts the hexagram statement. The “Lord” here should be interpreted as the divine Lord. There are three reasons:

First, focusing on the original meaning of “Lord.” “Lord” (*zhu*) is a pictograph resembling a spirit tablet. Its original meaning is the divine Lord. Originally only the ruler-king possessed it, so “Lord” was later extended to mean ruler.¹⁸ Transmitted literature often has this meaning. For example, the *Li Ji* says: “When announcing a death, one says ‘The Heavenly King has ascended and returned.’ One sets up a tablet in the temple and establishes the Lord, calling it ‘Di.’”¹⁹ The ruler-king is called the Son of Heaven, that is, the son of Heaven. The ruler’s divine Lord is Heaven. August Heaven has no favorites; it assists only the virtuous.²⁰ Heaven is not the Heaven of a particular ruler but the Heaven of all people. Heaven will only protect the virtuous superior person, whether he is a ruler or a subject.

Second, focusing on the causal relationship between “obtaining the Lord” and “beneficial.” Yang being the Lord of yin is conditional. If yin wanes and yang waxes, yang can be the Lord of yin. If yang wanes and yin waxes, yang cannot be the Lord of yin. If the ruler seeks welfare for the subjects, he can be their Lord. If the ruler

seeks benefits for himself, he cannot be their Lord. If a man cherishes a woman, the woman can take the man as her Lord. If a man abuses a woman, the woman cannot take the man as her Lord. If the subjects encounter a ruler who is not benevolent, or a woman encounters a man who is not kind, they will be harmed. If the subjects and the woman find the divine Lord and learn the right way, they can judge whether the “human Lord” they encounter conforms to the right way and decide whether to obey this “human Lord.” Only then is there “benefit.” Therefore, only by interpreting “Lord” as the divine Lord can the causal relationship between “obtaining the Lord” and “beneficial” be satisfied.

Third, focusing on the consistency between “obtaining the Lord” and “losing companions.” Yin with yin is “companion.” The *Tuan Zhuan* explains “companion” as those of the same kind. “Companion” originally carries no positive or negative connotation and can be interpreted according to context as friends, peers, or factions. The character “peng” originated from “peng bei” (cowries). There is an interest relationship between companions of the same kind; this relationship is secular, material, visible, and proprietary. In the soul, the superior person awakens first, finds the divine Lord, and learns the right way. The superior person was once also lost and wandering, but compared with his companions, he is the one who knows first and awakens first. His companions are still lost in delusion, obeying a tyrant (evil man) as if he were a benevolent ruler (good man), or resisting a benevolent ruler (good man) as if he were a tyrant (evil man). The superior person obediently follows the divine Lord, upholds the right way, thereby leaves his companions, obeys the benevolent ruler (good man), and resists the tyrant (evil man). Therefore, if “Lord” is interpreted as the divine Lord, “obtaining the Lord” and “losing companions” become consistent. If “Lord” is a human Lord, after “obtaining the Lord” one can obtain secular benefits from the human Lord, while “losing companions” means losing secular benefits. Such an explanation is inconsistent with the way of Heaven and the virtue of the ruler emphasized by the *Zhouyi*.

At this point, the *Tuan Ci* of this section can be elucidated as: when the superior person sets out, at first he is confused and loses the way. Later he awakens, recognizes Heaven, learns the right way—beneficial. In the southwest he obtains companions, that is, he travels with his kind. In the northeast he loses companions and in the end there is good fortune. Obediently following Heaven and upholding correctness is auspicious.

III. The Lower Trigram of the Kun Hexagram

(1) Explanation of the Lower Trigram of the Kun Hexagram

Initial Six: Treading on frost; solid ice will arrive. The *Zhong* says: “The superior person sees the beginning and does not oppose; he follows and preserves the good.”²¹ The *Er San Zi* says: “This speaks of the time of Heaven, warning and preserving constancy.”²² This is about complying with the time of Heaven; the time of Heaven is one manifestation of the way of Heaven. The *Wen Yan Zhuan* says: “The family that accumulates goodness will surely have abundant blessings; the family that accumulates evil will surely have abundant disasters. When a minister assassinates his ruler or a son assassinates his father, it is not the result of a single morning or evening; its origin is gradual, because the distinction was not made early.” This extends the way of Heaven from nature to society. Whether in a family or a state, the accumulation of small evils will eventually produce great calamity. The *Zhouyi Jijie* cites Gan Bao: “Yin qi first stirs beneath the three springs. When yin qi stirs, it must reach the point of treading on frost; when treading on frost, it must reach the point of solid ice. This speaks of gradualness. To prevent the source of disaster, one desires to see the subtle signs early. Therefore, although yin is beneath the three springs, it is manifested as treading on frost.”²³ It is evident that respecting the way of Heaven, seeing the subtle and knowing the manifest, and preventing small errors from growing into large ones is wise.

Six in the Second: Straight, square, and great. Without practice, nothing is unfavorable. The *Er San Zi* says: “Honorable and awe-inspiring, pure and white, firm and strong, its conduct cannot be bent; without practice it is already close.”²⁴ The *Zhong* says: “Its essential point is called sincerity and worthiness.”²⁵ This speaks of virtues such as sincerity, uprightness, tenacity, and inclusiveness. The *Wen Yan Zhuan* says: “The superior person is reverent in order to straighten the inner, and righteous in order to square the outer. When reverence and righteousness are established, virtue is not solitary.” This also speaks of virtue. The *Zhouyi Jijie* cites Gan Bao: “Yin emerges onto the earth, assisting yang to complete things. This is the way of the minister and the way of the wife. The service of a minister to his ruler and the attendance of a wife to her husband are the completion of righteousness. A minister values his straightness; righteousness values its squareness; the body of earth values its greatness. Therefore it says straight, square, and great. Only after a scholar possesses the nine virtues can he follow the king’s affairs; only after a woman embodies the four teachings can she be matched with a superior person.”²⁶ It is evident that “straight, square, and great” are the necessary virtues for the subjects to serve the ruler.

Six in the Third: Containing beauty, it is beneficial to be correct. Perhaps following the king's affairs; without completion there is an end. The *Er San Zi* says: "This speaks of containing beauty; containing is also beauty."²⁷ The *Zhong* says: "Perhaps following the king's affairs; without completion there is an end—this is learning and being able to manifest it."²⁸ The *Zhong* also says: "The cultured person moves; small affairs are timely and pleasing; great affairs are smoothly completed. Knowing without exceeding the proper measure and devoting oneself to softness and harmony."²⁹ "Zhang" (章) is manifest beauty, one's own qualities, including wisdom and virtue. If the subjects possess wisdom and virtue, they can inquire of Heaven and uphold correctness. If they assist the ruler and engage in politics and achieve something, they attribute the achievement to the ruler and ensure their own good end.

(2) The Lower Trigram of the Kun Hexagram and Engaging in Virtuous Governance

The six in the third of the Kun hexagram embodies the main idea of the lower trigram. It is not only related to the other two lines of the lower trigram but also to the nine in the second and nine in the fifth of the Qian hexagram. In addition, among the other sixty-two hexagrams outside Qian and Kun, the one most related to the six in the third is the Bi hexagram.

The initial six speaks of respecting the way of Heaven, seeing the subtle and knowing the manifest, and preventing small errors from growing into large ones; it mainly concerns individual wisdom. The six in the second speaks of honesty, uprightness, tenacity, and inclusiveness; it mainly concerns individual virtue. The "beauty" of the six in the third includes the wisdom of the initial six and the virtue of the six in the second. If the subjects possess these wisdom and virtues, they can consider assisting the ruler. It is evident that the wisdom and virtue spoken of in the initial six and six in the second are the internal conditions for the subjects of the six in the third to assist the ruler.

The "perhaps following the king's affairs" of the six in the third means that the ruler being assisted must be a benevolent ruler and the politics being engaged in must be virtuous governance. The "seeing the dragon in the field" of the nine in the second of Qian and the "flying dragon in Heaven" of the nine in the fifth speak of the proper exercise of the ruler's power: the ruler listens to the opinions of the subjects, understands their needs, and takes the interests of the subjects as the sole purpose of his actions, without considering his own private interests. The *Er San Zi* explains the nine in the fifth of Qian: "When the superior person is above, the people receive

his benefit; the worthy are not obscured.”³⁰ If the ruler is benevolent and virtuous, the worthy will not go into hiding. It is evident that the virtuous governance spoken of in the nine in the second and nine in the fifth of Qian is the external condition for the subjects of the six in the third of Kun to assist the ruler.

The “perhaps following the king’s affairs” of the six in the third means being close to and supporting the ruler. The *Tuan Zhuan* of the Bi hexagram says: “Bi means to assist; those below obediently follow.” The main idea of the Bi hexagram is that the subjects below obediently follow and assist the one above. The line statement “with sincerity one supports him” indicates that the sincerity of the subjects is the internal condition for the subjects to be close to and support the ruler. The line statement “the king uses three drives” indicates that the ruler’s benevolence is the external condition for the subjects to be close to and support the ruler. The line statements “supporting from within” and “supporting from without” are the two ways for the subjects to be close to and support the ruler: the cultured belong to the inner, the martial belong to the outer; the three dukes belong to the inner, the feudal lords belong to the outer.

From this we can see that the main idea of the lower trigram of the Kun hexagram is “perhaps following the king’s affairs”—assisting a benevolent ruler and engaging in virtuous governance. It contains three layers of meaning: First, the external condition for “perhaps following the king’s affairs” is that the ruler implements virtuous governance, exercises power properly, listens to the opinions of the subjects, satisfies their needs, protects the subjects’ lives, persons, and property, safeguards the subjects’ secular life, and promotes the subjects’ material interests. Second, the internal condition for “perhaps following the king’s affairs” is that the subjects possess certain qualities, including wisdom and virtue, especially sincerity. Third, there are two ways—inner and outer—for “perhaps following the king’s affairs.” In either case, the subjects must attribute the merit to the ruler; only then can they ensure their own good end.

IV. The Upper Trigram of the Kun Hexagram

(1) Explanation of the Upper Trigram of the Kun Hexagram

Six in the Fourth: Tying up the sack; no blame and no praise. The *Zhong* says: “Also, the mouth can restrain it; there is no crime of the tongue. When speech is not timely, then close and be cautious and observe. Tying up the sack brings no blame—this is the meaning of not speaking. If one does not speak, what blame can there be? Even ink has no praise. The superior person values his caution and does not display

himself; deep and profound, he keeps his brilliance within.”³¹ This speaks of being cautious in speech. Not speaking is because the time is not right. The *Wen Yan Zhuan* says: “When Heaven and Earth change and transform, the grasses and trees flourish. When Heaven and Earth are closed, the worthy hide. The *Yi* says ‘tying up the sack’—this probably speaks of caution.” The *Wen Yan Zhuan* is basically consistent with the *Zhong*, with only slight differences. The *Zhong*’s “when speech is not timely, then close and be cautious and observe” becomes the *Wen Yan Zhuan*’s “when Heaven and Earth are closed, the worthy hide.” “Not timely” refers to “Heaven and Earth are closed,” while “close and be cautious and observe” is not only “the worthy hide” to avoid tyranny but may also be King Wu’s “observing the cracks and retreating” in preparation for revolution. The *Yi Xue Xiang Shu Lun* says: “Tying up the sack means harvesting rice and storing the harvest.”³² This is a literal explanation of “tying up the sack.”

Six in the Fifth: Yellow lower garment; supremely auspicious. The *Zhong* says: “Yellow lower garment, supremely auspicious—this is the meaning of concealing culture and not displaying it.”³³ The *Er San Zi* says: “Those of the yellow kind are modest and humble.”³⁴ This speaks of being humble in bearing, possessing talent yet not displaying it. The *Wen Yan Zhuan* says: “The superior person is yellow in the center and penetrates principle; he occupies the correct position in his body. Beauty is within him, flowing through his four limbs and issuing forth in his affairs—this is the utmost of beauty.” The silk manuscript *Yizhuan* says “concealing culture and not displaying it,” while the received *Yizhuan* says “issuing forth in his affairs.” The two explanations are completely opposite; the former better conforms to the purport of the six in the fifth. The *Chengshi Yizhuan* says: “Some may wonder why, in the Ge hexagram, the affairs of Tang and Wu are fully discussed, yet here nothing is said. Why? Rise and fall are the constant principle.”³⁵ Cheng Yi believed that this line is related to the Ge hexagram and that “yellow lower garment” is a prerequisite for revolution. The *Zhouyi Ben Yi*, when explaining this line, quotes the divination example of Nan Kuai in the *Chunqiu Zhuan*. Zifu Huibo believed that Nan Kuai was not loyal and trustworthy.³⁶ Even if the object of Nan Kuai’s resistance was a tyrant, at that time one still had to be humble and endure. The *Yi Xue Xiang Shu Lun* says: “Yellow lower garment means receiving clothing and carrying out the weaving.”³⁷ This is a literal explanation of “yellow lower garment.”

Uppermost Six: Dragons fight in the wild; their blood is black and yellow. The *Er San Zi* says: “This speaks of the great man’s broad virtue and teaching the people.”³⁸ The ruler implements virtuous governance and teaches the subjects. This explanation obviously does not match the scene of “fighting” and “blood.” The *Xiang

Zhuan* says: “Dragons fight in the wild—their way is exhausted.” The *Wen Yan Zhuan* says: “When yin doubts yang, there must be fighting, because it is suspected of having no yang.” This speaks of yin and yang fighting; when yin reaches its extreme, it changes into yang. The *Zhouyi Jijie* cites Gan Bao: “The hexagram is completed in Qian. Yin virtue exceeds and presses upon Qian to fight. Zhou thus grew evil and did not repent; Heaven’s mandate struck him. Therefore it reached the point where King Wu had the affair at Muye—this is its meaning.”³⁹ The *Zhouyi Zhezong* cites Hu Bingwen: “It does not say that yin fights with yang but says ‘dragons fight in the wild,’ using the same style of writing as in the *Chunqiu*: ‘The royal army was defeated at Mao Rong’ and ‘The Heavenly King hunted at Heyang.’”⁴⁰ Both Gan Bao and Hu Bingwen interpret “dragons fight in the wild” as the battle between the ruler and the subjects. “Dragons fight” is the fight between the dragon and the female horse. “The wild” is the activity space of the female horse. “Their blood is black and yellow” means that the blood of the dragon and the female horse mixes together, presenting the color of black and yellow. The blood of black and yellow contains the qi of yin and yang. Old yin is about to become young yang; old yang is about to become young yin. Kun is about to become Qian; Qian is about to become Kun. That is, from the blood of black and yellow, new dragons and female horses will be born.

(2) The Upper Trigram of the Kun Hexagram and Resisting Tyranny

The uppermost six of the Kun hexagram embodies the main idea of the upper trigram. It is not only related to the other two lines of the upper trigram but also to the uppermost nine of the Qian hexagram. In addition, among the other sixty-two hexagrams outside Qian and Kun, the one most related to the six in the third is the Ge hexagram.

The six in the fourth speaks of being cautious in speech; the six in the fifth speaks of being humble in bearing. The situation faced by the six in the fourth and six in the fifth is that Heaven and Earth are closed and change is imminent. The uppermost six speaks of yin and yang fighting; when yin reaches its extreme, it changes into yang—that is, ruler and subjects fight, and the subjects become the ruler. Being cautious in speech and humble in bearing are the internal conditions for the subjects to replace the ruler. That is, the six in the fourth and six in the fifth of Kun are the internal conditions for the uppermost six. If “tying up the sack” and “yellow lower garment” are understood literally, rice and clothing are the material foundation for war; then the six in the fourth and six in the fifth of Kun are still the internal conditions for the uppermost six.

The “dragons fight in the wild” of the uppermost six of Kun means that the ruler the subjects challenge must be a tyrant and the rule they resist must be tyranny. The “arrogant dragon has regret” of the uppermost nine of Qian speaks of the ruler improperly exercising power (abusing power): the ruler does not listen to the opinions of the subjects, ignores their needs, and acts not for the interests of the subjects but for his own private interests. In this case there is danger, and he may even lose his position. The *Zhong* explains the uppermost nine of Qian: “When a thing is at the top and cut off from below, it will not long occupy the great position and will have many faults.”⁴¹ If the ruler is tyrannical and does not repent in time, not only will “the worthy be below and have no support,” but the subjects will also resist the tyrant and overthrow the tyranny. It is evident that the tyranny spoken of in the uppermost nine of Qian is the external condition for the subjects of the uppermost six of Kun to resist the ruler.

The “dragons fight in the wild” of the uppermost six means the subjects resist the tyrant and overthrow the tyranny. The *Tuan Zhuan* of the Ge hexagram says: “Heaven and Earth change and the four seasons are completed. Tang and Wu’s revolution followed Heaven and responded to man.” The main idea of the Ge hexagram is consistent with the uppermost six of Kun. The line statement “with sincerity” indicates the sincerity of the subjects; this is the internal condition for the subjects’ revolution. The line statement “on the day of Si” indicates that Heaven’s mandate has arrived. The *Shangshu* says: “Xia has many crimes; Heaven’s mandate strikes it.”⁴² The *Zhouyi Jijie* cites Gan Bao: “King Wu arrayed his troops above Muye. The feudal lords who came without prior agreement numbered eight hundred states, all saying that Zhou could be attacked. King Wu said: ‘You do not yet know Heaven’s mandate; it cannot be done yet.’ He returned. Two years later, Zhou killed Bi Gan and imprisoned Ji Zi; only then did he attack.”⁴³ It is evident that “on the day of Si” is the external condition for the subjects’ revolution. The line statement “revolution spoken of three times” speaks of the three steps of revolution. The line statements “the great man changes like a tiger,” “the superior person changes like a leopard,” and “the petty person changes his face” speak of the different manifestations of the subjects in the revolution.

From this we can see that the main idea of the upper trigram of the Kun hexagram is “dragons fight in the wild”—the subjects resist the tyrant and overthrow the tyranny. It contains three layers of meaning: First, the external condition for the subjects’ revolution is that the ruler implements tyranny, seeks his own interests, ignores the voices of the subjects, and infringes upon the subjects’ lives, persons, and property.

Second, the internal conditions for the subjects' revolution are inner sincerity, cautious speech, humble bearing, and preparation of material foundations. Third, the subjects' revolution may be extremely difficult and cannot be accomplished in one step, but it will ultimately succeed. The subjects seize power, become the ruler, and implement virtuous governance.

V. Using Six in the Kun Hexagram

(1) Explanation of Using Six

Using six: It is beneficial to be eternally correct. The **Zhouyi Jizhu** says: "Using six, like using nine, here speaks in terms of the uppermost six 'dragons fight in the wild.'"⁴⁴ Just as the "using nine" of the Qian hexagram "a flock of dragons without a head" directly concerns the uppermost nine "the arrogant dragon has regret" but indirectly influences the nine in the second "seeing the dragon in the field" and the nine in the fifth "flying dragon in Heaven," the "eternally correct" of using six in the Kun hexagram also directly concerns the uppermost six "dragons fight in the wild." "It is beneficial to be eternally correct" is consistent with "it is beneficial to be correct like the female horse" and can be elucidated as: it is beneficial to eternally inquire of Heaven and eternally uphold the right way.

The **Xiang Zhuan** says: "Using six and being eternally correct—in the end there is greatness." The **Zhouyi Ben Yi** says: "At first yin, later yang; hence it says 'in the end there is greatness.'"⁴⁵ "In the end there is greatness" means yin ends with yang; when yin reaches its extreme, it changes into yang. The subjects become the ruler. The **Zuo Zhuan** says: "The **Zhouyi** has it. In Qian's Kun it says: 'Seeing a flock of dragons without a head—auspicious.'" Du Yu notes: "All six lines of Qian change."⁴⁶ Similarly, using six and being eternally correct means all six lines of Kun change, and Kun becomes Qian.

(2) Using Six and Freedom

The six lines of the Qian hexagram progress layer by layer. Although "using nine: a flock of dragons without a head" directly concerns the uppermost nine "the arrogant dragon has regret," it indirectly influences the nine in the second "seeing the dragon in the field" and the nine in the fifth "flying dragon in Heaven." The lower and upper trigrams of the Kun hexagram are formally symmetrical and opposite in content, discussing respectively engaging in virtuous governance and resisting tyranny. "Using six: eternally correct" summarizes the six lines. It not only directly concerns

the uppermost six “dragons fight in the wild” but also indirectly concerns the six in the third “perhaps following the king’s affairs.” In addition, “using six: eternally correct” also echoes the “it is beneficial to be correct” of the six in the third. Of course, compared with engaging in virtuous governance, resisting tyranny requires more courage and wisdom and therefore requires even more inquiring of Heaven and upholding the right way. If the subjects feel confused about “following the king’s affairs” or “fighting in the wild,” they must inquire of Heaven and uphold the right way. Therefore, “using six: eternally correct” is the spiritual foundation for both engaging in virtuous governance and resisting tyranny.

Whether the ruler implements virtuous governance or tyranny, whether the ruler listens to the people’s opinions and satisfies their needs—the individual is the appropriate judge. After determining that it is virtuous governance, the individual should obey the ruler. As for whether to assist the ruler and engage in virtuous governance, the individual may have doubts and needs to decide only after inquiring of Heaven. After determining that it is tyranny, the individual should resist the ruler, but often does not dare to resist lightly or does not know how to resist, and also needs to decide only after inquiring of Heaven. The individual first obeys Heaven and only secondarily obeys the ruler. If the ruler conflicts with the individual, only Heaven can decide. Both engaging in virtuous governance and resisting tyranny will receive Heaven’s approval and protection. Whether the individual can make a wise decision depends on whether the individual has faith in Heaven, inquires of Heaven, and upholds the right way. If the individual does not believe in Heaven, does not inquire of Heaven, and does not uphold the right way, he will have neither the courage nor the wisdom to resist tyranny, will suffer enslavement by the ruler, and will have no freedom. If the individual wants freedom, he must break free from the ruler’s enslavement and needs the courage and wisdom to resist tyranny; therefore he must have faith in Heaven, inquire of Heaven, and uphold the right way. It is evident that individual freedom takes faith in Heaven as its premise.

(3) Using Six and Equality

Using six means yin changes into yang, Kun changes into Qian, the female horse changes into the dragon, the subjects change into the ruler, and the ruled change into the ruler. Conversely, using nine of the Qian hexagram means Qian changes into Kun, and the ruler changes into the ruled. In this way, ruler and ruled transform into each other and alternate. The ruler arises from the ruled and ultimately returns to the ruled. There is no fixed, unchanging ruler, and therefore no privileged class or vested interests, so that all people are equal. This equality is formal equality. Although every

person has the opportunity to become the ruler, in reality not every person becomes the ruler, because each person's virtue, ability, and opportunity differ.

Equality among all people is spoken of only in terms of the mutual alternation between ruler and people; it manifests differently in virtuous governance and tyranny. In virtuous governance, equality among all people does not mean that the ruler and the people are equal in status. Essentially they are in a superior-subordinate relationship. The ruler and the people each have their own roles and functions. The people must respect and obey the ruler and yield a portion of resources (such as property and manpower) to the ruler. The ruler concentrates these resources, carries out public affairs, seeks welfare for the people, and promotes the people's material interests. In tyranny, the ruler seeks only his own interests or pursues what he considers public interests (which in fact are not what the people need and may even be what the people suffer from). At this time, the consciousness of equality prompts the people to refuse to yield their own resources, to resist, and even to replace the ruler, thereby realizing political equality.

VI. Inspirations

The way of Heaven contained in the Kun hexagram of the *Zhouyi* is that the people should obey virtuous governance—that is, obey those rulers who protect the people's lives, persons, and property; the people should resist tyranny—that is, resist those rulers who infringe upon the people's lives, persons, and property—thereby liberating themselves, obtaining freedom, and even becoming the new ruler and realizing political equality.

The *Xici Zhuan* says: "Huang Di, Yao, and Shun let their robes hang down and the world was governed; this was probably taken from Qian and Kun." Huang Di, Yao, and Shun governed through non-action, modeling themselves on the way of Qian and Kun. According to the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Yao's benevolence was like Heaven and his wisdom was like a spirit. He ordered Xi and He to follow Heaven, formulate the calendar, and inform the people to plow and plant according to the seasons. Yao asked people to recommend a successor. Someone recommended Yao's son Dan Zhu. Yao considered Dan Zhu foolish and belligerent. Yao demanded that "all the noble relatives as well as the distant and hidden be fully recommended."⁴⁷ The multitude recommended Shun, who came from humble origins. Shun was honest and filial to his parents. Yao therefore "recommended him to Heaven" "to observe Heaven's mandate."⁴⁸ During his regency, Shun was cautious in the use of punishment and opened the rivers. Yao believed that passing the throne to

Shun would benefit all under Heaven but not Dan Zhu, while passing the throne to Dan Zhu would benefit Dan Zhu but harm all under Heaven. “In the end one does not harm all under Heaven for the sake of one person.”⁴⁹ Therefore he decided to pass the throne to Shun. Shun summoned the feudal lords from the four directions in the ancestral temple, opened the gates in the four directions, and broadly listened to opinions from the four directions. He hoped to carry out Yao’s virtuous governance. On the recommendation of the multitude, Shun appointed Yu to be in charge of controlling the waters, Qi to be in charge of agriculture, Xie to be in charge of education, and Gao Yao to be in charge of punishment. Every three years there was an assessment, and after three assessments promotion or demotion was decided. All undertakings proceeded smoothly. Yu’s merit in dredging the rivers was the greatest. Shun considered his son Shang Jun insufficiently worthy and therefore “recommended Yu to Heaven.”⁵⁰ When Yao and Shun governed all under Heaven, they broadly listened to the opinions of the multitude, accepted the multitude’s recommendations, and then decided whether to appoint someone according to virtue and ability. In this way, the worthy and capable could engage in politics. Politics was enlightened, and the people were well-fed and clothed, living and working in peace and contentment. For the transition of power, Yao and Shun adopted the method of abdication. “Shan” originally referred to sacrificing to Heaven. Abdication was based on faith in Heaven. Through abdication, supreme power was peacefully transferred, and those above and below alternated mildly, thereby realizing political equality at the lowest cost. It is evident that the governance of Yao and Shun was the most ideal virtuous governance in Chinese history.

After the virtuous governance of Yao and Shun, Yu inaugurated the Xia dynasty. Later Xia Jie became decadent and corrupt and was overthrown by the revolution of Tang of Shang. The Shang dynasty flourished after Pan Geng moved the capital to Yin, but later King Zhou became tyrannical and was overthrown by the revolution of King Wu of Zhou. Before the composition of the **Zhouyi**, there had already been two cycles of the historical cycle. The **Xici Zhuan** says: “The one who composed the **Yi**—did he not have worries and concerns?” Today we are still discussing how to escape the historical cycle, which shows that the **Zhouyi** still has inspirational value for us. If the ruler implements virtuous governance, the state will enjoy long-term peace and stability. If the ruler implements tyranny, the people will rise up in revolt.

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论《周易》坤卦的权利思想

摘要：乾坤两卦是《周易》门户，分别取象君王和臣民。上天树立君王，是为臣民带来利益。坤卦具有终极价值，坤卦不从属于乾卦，乾坤两卦都在上天之下。坤卦卦辞之“主”当为神主，即上天，卦辞主旨是臣民顺承上天。坤卦下卦主旨是臣民辅佐君王，君王当是乾卦九二、九五之龙。坤卦上卦主旨是臣民反抗君王，君王当是乾卦上九之龙。坤卦用六主旨是信仰上天，信仰上天是实现个人自由和人人平等的精神基础。

关键词：坤；主；德政；暴政；权利

一、引言

《系辞传》曰：“乾坤，其《易》之门耶！乾，阳物也；坤，阴物也。阴阳合德，而刚柔有体。以体天地之撰，以通神明之德。其称名也，杂而不越。于稽其类，其衰世之意邪！”乾坤两卦是《周易》的门户和关键，体现神明的启示和上天的旨意，包含世间兴衰和天下治乱的规律。

在《周易》六十四卦中，乾坤是最重要的两卦。乾卦在坤卦之前，并不表明乾卦比坤卦重要。《说卦传》曰：“乾为君，坤为众。”据此，乾为君王，坤为民众。《左传·文公十三年》记载邾子曰：“天生民而树之君，以利之也。”¹《荀子·大略》曰：“天之生民，非为君也；天之立君，以为民也。”²在这个意义上，乾卦是手段，而坤卦是目的。

历代《周易》注家倾向于坤卦从属乾卦，例如，帛书《二三子》对坤卦上六的解释是君王教导臣民，而王夫子对坤卦初六的解释是阳须始终监管、镇压乃至窒困阴。³这种解释已然不再适用现代社会。根据《说卦传》，乾为夫，坤为妻，如果丈夫对妻子实施家庭暴力，现代社会允许妻子离开丈夫，即离婚。如果说家暴是丈夫教育妻子，或者说丈夫应当始终监管、镇压乃至窒困妻子，那一定很荒唐。

民国以降，一些学者以民主革命解释乾坤。刘师培在《中国民约精义》中认为，《周易》以位为主，而位又不是一成不变，九五为君位，九四“或跃在渊”，是以臣位而有君象，上九贵而无位，是指如华盛顿那样功成不居。⁴实际上，乾卦取象君王，而乾卦各个爻位是君王所处的不同阶段。熊十力在《乾坤衍》中认为，乾卦各爻象征庶民久受压迫、群起革命、消灭统治阶级、实现民主，坤卦六五象征下民起而夺君主之权位。⁵熊十力在解释乾卦时无视乾卦的君王取象，把

乾卦各爻解释为庶民行为，颠倒了乾坤；在解释坤卦时无视六五的谦卑含义，把六五解释为反抗和革命，与春秋南蒯犯了同样错误。

本文将梳理有关《周易》坤卦的历代文献（包括帛书易传），阐发坤卦所蕴含的权利思想，以期对当下社会有所启示。

二、坤卦象辞

（一）元亨利贞，利牝马之贞。

乾卦象辞是“元亨利贞”，这里突出“牝马”。乾卦取象龙，而坤卦取象牝马。《杂卦传》曰：“乾刚坤柔。”《说卦传》曰：“乾，健也；坤，顺也。”乾坤分别以刚健和柔顺为特征。乾坤可以分别代表君王和臣民，君王掌握国家权力，而臣民享有个人权利，故乾坤亦可分别代表国家权力和个人权利。

“元亨利贞”的最早解释见于《左传》记载的穆姜之言：“元，体之长也；亨，嘉之会也；利，义之和也；贞，事之干也。体仁足以长人，嘉德足以合礼，利物足以和义，贞固足以干事。”⁶ 穆姜之言把“元亨利贞”解释为平行的四种德行。朱熹对穆姜之言有所发展：“元，大也；亨，通也；利，宜也；贞，正而固也。”⁷ 朱熹已然把“元亨利贞”分为“大通”“利在正固”两个意群。高亨认为“元亨利贞”的最初意义是：“元，大也；亨，即享祀之享；利，即利益之利；贞，即贞卜之贞也。”⁸ 这种解释表达了一个完整意思：盛大的献祭有利于卜问。人们用丰盛的食物侍奉上天，并从上天那里获得启示和正道，这是天人之间最初的互动方式。

穆姜、朱熹和高亨的解释是相通的。享祀是为沟通天人：君王在宗庙召集公侯，把祭品献给上天，上天享受祭品香气，天人得以沟通。⁹ 既济九五曰：“东邻杀牛，不如西邻之禴祭，实受其福。”上天更享受人们的德行，而不是丰盛的祭品。贞卜是为坚守正道：人的理性是有限的，如果人们遇到超出其理性范围的问题，就会疑惑不解，犹豫不决，因而需要求助上天，贞问上天，获取天意，坚定信念，坚守正道。因此，“贞”是对上天的顺承和对正道的坚守，而不是对世人（包括君王）的盲从。坤卦《象传》之“顺承天”和《文言传》之“承天”是指顺承上天。文王拘而演《周易》，文王自身就是“元亨利贞”的典范，《诗经》记载了文王生前明德顺天，死后升天：“帝谓文王：予怀明德，不大声以色，不长夏以革。不谄不知，顺帝之则。”¹⁰ “文王陟降，在帝左右。”¹¹

穆姜之言阐发了元亨利贞的道德意蕴，却模糊了元亨利贞的基本事实，湮没了天人之间的互动关系。这可能与当时人们自我意识的强化以及上天信仰的弱化有关，孔子早年态度就能说明这点：“德行亡者，神灵之趋；知谋远者，卜筮之繁。”¹² 孔子晚年态度有所转变，强调德行，却也认可祭祀和卜筮：“吾百占而七十当，唯周梁山之占也，亦必从其多者而已矣。君子德行焉求福，故祭祀而寡也；仁义焉求吉，故卜筮而希也。”¹³ 如果否定祭祀和卜筮，割裂天人关系，那么，德行未必得到保证，因为德行来自个人良知，上天教导比世人强制更加有效；知谋也未必得到保证，因为哲学的源头是宗教，科学的尽头是神学，知谋不只来自人类理性，还来自上天启示。

至此，本节彖辞可阐发为：臣民以德行侍奉上天，有利于贞问上天，获取天意，坚守正道。

（二）君子有攸往，先迷，后得主，利。西南得朋，东北丧朋，安贞吉。

《彖传》曰：“君子攸行，先迷失道，后顺得常。西南得朋，乃与类行；东北丧朋，乃终有庆。”《彖传》以“得常”解释“得主”，与《文言传》之“后得主而有常”一致。荀子曰：“天道有常，不为尧存，不为桀亡。”¹⁴ 因而“主”可能与“天”有关。

王弼解释道：“西南致养之地，与坤同道者也，故曰得朋。东北反西南者也，故曰丧朋。阴之为物，必离其党，之於反类，而后获安贞吉。”¹⁵ 孔颖达进一步解释道：“若以人事言之，象人臣离其党而入君之朝，女子离其家而入夫之室。”¹⁶ 崔憬则把“西南得朋，东北丧朋”与“先迷，后得主”联系起来：“以喻在室得朋，犹迷于失道；出嫁丧朋，乃顺而得常。安于承天之正，故言安贞吉也。”¹⁷

以上诸家认为阳为阴主，男为女主，君为臣主，也就是把“主”解释为人主。比干以纣王为“主”，其结局不“利”，显然与卦辞不符。这里的“主”应当解释为神主，理由有三：

其一，着眼于“主”的本源意义。“主”是象形字，像神主牌位，“主”本义即神主，“主”本来只有君王才有，所以“主”又引申为君主。¹⁸ 传世文献多有此义，例如，《礼记》曰：“告丧，曰天王登假，措之庙，立之主，曰帝。”¹⁹ 君王号称天子，即上天之子，君王的神主就是上天。皇天无亲，唯德是辅。²⁰ 上天不是特定君王的上天，而是所有人的上天，上天只会佑助有德行的君子，无论他

是君王还是臣民。

其二，着眼于“得主”与“利”的因果关系。阳为阴主是有条件的，如果阴消阳长，阳就可作阴之主；如果阳消阴长，阳就不能作阴之主。君王如果为臣民谋求福祉，就可作臣民的主；君王如果为自身谋取利益，就不能作臣民的主。如果男人爱护女人，女人就可以男人为主；如果男人虐待女人，女人就不能以男人为主。如果臣民遇到的君王并不仁慈，女人遇到的男人并不善良，他们就会对臣民和女人不利。臣民和女人如果找到神主，获悉正道，就能判断所遇到的“人主”是否符合正道，并决定是否顺从这个“人主”，如此才有“利”。因此，只有把“主”解释为神主，才能满足“得主”与“利”的因果关系。

其三，着眼于“得主”与“丧朋”的一致关系。阴与阴为“朋”，《彖传》释“朋”为朋类，“朋”本无褒贬，根据语境可释为朋友、朋辈或朋党。“朋”字起源于“朋贝”，朋类之间存在利益关系，这种关系是世俗的、物质的、有形的和财产的。在灵魂上，君子率先觉悟，找到神主，获悉正道。君子也曾迷惘彷徨，相比朋类，却是先知先觉者。朋类仍在沉迷中，视暴君（恶男）为仁君（善男）而顺从之，或视仁君（善男）为暴君（恶男）而反抗之。君子顺承神主，坚守正道，从而离开朋类，顺从仁君（善男），反抗暴君（恶男）。因此，如果把“主”解释为神主，“得主”与“丧朋”就会一致。如果“主”为人主，“得主”之后可从人主那里得到世俗利益，而“丧朋”是丧失世俗利益，这种解释与《周易》强调的天道和君德不一致。

至此，本节彖辞可阐发为：君子出行，开始迷失正道，后来觉悟，认识上天，获悉正道，吉利。西南得到朋辈，即与同类出行；东北丧失朋辈，最终会有福庆；顺承上天，坚守正道，吉利。

三、坤卦下卦

（一）坤卦下卦疏解

初六，履霜，坚冰至。《衷》曰：“君子见始弗逆，顺而保穀。”²¹《二三子》曰：“此言天时，潜戒葆常也。”²²这是讲顺应天时，天时是天道的一种。《文言传》曰：“积善之家必有余庆，积不善之家必有余殃。臣弑其君，子弑其父，非一朝一夕之故，其所由来者渐矣，由辩之不早辩也。”这是把天道从自然推演至社会，不论是家还是国，积聚小恶就会酿成大祸。《周易集解》引干宝曰：“阴气

始动乎三泉之下。言阴气动矣，则必至于履霜，履霜则必至于坚冰，言有渐也。防祸之原，欲其先几，故阴在三泉，而显以履霜也。”²³ 可见，尊重天道、见微知著和防微杜渐是明智之举。

六二，直方大，不习，无不利。《二三子》曰：“尊威，精白，坚强，行之不可挠也，不习近之矣。……直者，言其不自避也；方者，言其□□□；大者，言其直或之容焉。”²⁴ 《衷》曰：“其要，诚与贤之谓也”²⁵这是讲诚信、正直、坚韧和包容等品德。《文言传》曰：“君子敬以直内，义以方外，敬义立而德不孤。”这也是讲品德。《周易集解》引干宝曰：“阴出地上，佐阳成物，臣道也，妻道也。臣之事君，妻之侍夫，义成者也。臣贵其直，义尚其方，地体其大，故曰直方大。士该九德，然后可以从王事；女躬四教，然后可以配君子。”²⁶ 可见，“直方大”是臣民侍奉君王的必要品德。

六三：含章，可贞；或从王事，无成有终。《二三子》曰：“此言含章，含亦美。”²⁷《衷》曰：“或从王事，无成有终，学而能发也。”²⁸《衷》又曰：“文人动，小事时说，大事顺成，知毋过数而务柔和。”²⁹“章”为章美，是自身素质，包括智慧和品德。如果臣民具备智慧和品德，就可以贞问上天，坚守正道。如果辅佐君王，从事政治，有所作为，就把成就归于君王，确保自身善终。

（二）坤卦下卦与从事德政

坤卦六三体现下卦主旨，它不仅与下卦其他两爻有关，还与乾卦九二、九五有关。另外，在乾坤之外的六十二卦中，与六三最相关的是比卦。

初六讲尊重天道、见微知著和防微杜渐，主要涉及个人智慧。六二讲诚实、正直、坚韧和包容，主要涉及个人品德。六三之“章”包括初六之智慧与六二之品德，如果臣民具备这些智慧和品德，就可考虑辅佐君王。可见，初六和六二所讲的智慧和品德，是六三臣民辅佐君王的内在条件。

六三“或从王事”，所辅佐的君王一定是仁君，所从事的政治必须是德政。乾卦九二“见龙在田”和九五“飞龙在天”讲君王权力的正当行使：君王听取臣民意见，了解臣民需求，所作所为以臣民利益为唯一目的，而不考虑自身私利。《二三子》释乾卦九五曰：“君子在上，则民被其利，贤者不蔽。”³⁰ 如果君王仁德，贤者就不会归隐。可见，乾卦九二、九五所讲的德政，是坤卦六三臣民辅佐君王的外在条件。

六三“或从王事”，是亲比君王。比卦《彖传》曰：“比，辅也，下顺从也。”比卦主旨是臣下顺从和辅佐君上。爻辞“有孚比之”表明臣下孚信是臣下亲比君上的内在条件。爻辞“王用三驱”表明君上仁慈是臣下亲比君上的外在条件。爻辞“比之自内”和“外比之”是臣下亲比君上的两种途径：文人属内，武夫属外；三公属内，诸侯属外。

至此可知，坤卦下卦主旨是“或从王事”，辅佐仁君，从事德政，包含三层意思：第一，“或从王事”的外在条件是君王施行德政，正当行使权力，听取臣民意见，满足臣民需求，保护臣民的生命、人身和财产，保障臣民的世俗生活，促进臣民的物质利益。第二，“或从王事”的内在条件是臣民具备一定的素质，包括智慧和品德，尤其是孚信。第三，“或从王事”的途径有内外两种，无论哪种，臣民都要把功劳归于君王，这样才能确保自身善终。

四、坤卦上卦

（一）坤卦上卦疏解

六四，括囊，无咎无誉。《衷》曰：“又口能敛之，无舌罪，言不当其时，则闭慎而观。括囊无咎，不言之胃也，不言，何咎之有？墨亦毋誉，君子美其慎而不自箸也，渊深而内其华。”³¹这是讲言语谨慎，不言是因为时机不当。《文言传》曰：“天地变化，草木蕃，天地闭，贤人隐。易曰括囊，盖言谨也。”《文言传》与《衷》基本一致，只是有些细微变化，《衷》之“言不当其时，则闭慎而观”变为《文言传》之“天地闭，贤人隐”，“不当其时”当指“天地闭”，而“闭慎而观”除了是“贤人隐”，躲避暴政，还可能是武王“观衅而退”，准备革命。《易学象数论》曰：“括囊，获稻纳稼也。”³²这是从字面上解释“括囊”。

六五，黄裳，元吉。《衷》曰：“黄裳，元吉，尉文而不发之胃也。”³³《二三子》曰：“黄色之徒，谦谦。”³⁴这是讲举止谦卑，有才华却不表现。《文言传》曰：“君子黄中通理，正位居体，美在其中，而畅于四支，发于事业，美之至也。”帛书易传“尉文而不发”，而传世易传“发于事业”，两种解释完全相反，前者更加符合六五爻旨。《程氏易传》曰：“或疑在《革》，汤、武之事犹尽言之，独于此不言，何也？废兴，理之常也。”³⁵程颐认为本爻与革卦有关，“黄裳”当是革命的前提。《周易本义》在解释本爻时引用《春秋传》南蒯筮例，子服惠伯认为南蒯不忠信。³⁶即便南蒯反抗的对象是暴君，这时也要谦卑隐忍。《易学象数论》

曰：“黄裳，授衣载绩也。”³⁷ 这是从字面上解释“黄裳”。

上六，龙战于野，其血玄黄。《二三子》曰：“此言大人之广德而施教于民也。”³⁸ 君王施行德政，教化臣民，这种解释与“战”、“血”情景明显不符。《象传》曰：“龙战于野，其道穷也。”《文言传》曰：“阴疑于阳必战，为其嫌于无阳也。”这是讲阴阳相战，阴极而变阳。《周易集解》引干宝曰：“卦成于乾。阴德过度，以逼乾战。纣遂长恶不悛，天命殛之。是以至于武王，遂有牧野之事，是其义也。”³⁹ 《周易折中》引胡炳文曰：“不言阴与阳战，而曰龙战于野，与《春秋》王师败绩于茅戎，天王狩于河阳，同一书法也。”⁴⁰ 干宝和胡炳文都把“龙战于野”指向君王与臣民之间的战斗。“龙战”是龙与牝马之间的战斗，“野”是牝马的活动空间，“其血玄黄”是指，龙和牝马的鲜血混合在一起，呈现玄黄之色，玄黄之血蕴含阴阳之气，老阴将变为少阳，老阳将变为少阴，坤将变为乾，乾将变为坤，也即从玄黄之血中将诞生新的龙和牝马。

（二）坤卦上卦与反抗暴政

坤卦上六体现上卦主旨，它不仅与上卦其他两爻有关，还与乾卦上九有关。另外，在乾坤之外的六十二卦中，与六三最相关的是革卦。

六四讲言语谨慎，六五讲举止谦卑。六四和六五所面临的形势是天地闭塞，即将变革。上六讲阴阳相战，阴极而变阳，也就是君臣相战，臣下成为君上。言语谨慎和举止谦卑是臣下取代君上的内在条件，即坤卦六四、六五是上六的内在条件。如果从字面上理解“括囊”和“黄裳”，稻谷和衣裳是战争的物质基础，那么坤卦六四、六五仍是上六的内在条件。

坤卦上六“龙战于野”，臣民所挑战的君王一定是暴君，所反抗的统治必须是暴政。乾卦上九“亢龙有悔”讲君王不当行使权力（滥用权力）：君王不听臣民意见，无视臣民需求，所作所为不是为了臣民利益，而是为了自身私利，这样就有危险，甚至失去君位。《衷》释乾卦上九曰：“物之上擲而下绝者，不久大位，必多其咎。”⁴¹ 如果君王暴虐，还不及时悔改，那么不仅“贤人在下位而无辅”，臣民还会反抗暴君，推翻暴政。可见，乾卦上九所讲的暴政，是坤卦上六臣民反抗君王的外在条件。

上六“龙战于野”，是臣民反抗暴君，推翻暴政。革卦《象传》曰：“天地革而四时成。汤武革命，顺乎天而应乎人。”革卦主旨与坤卦上六一一致。爻辞“有

孚”表示臣民孚信，这是臣民革命的内在条件。爻辞“巳日”表示天命已到。《尚书》曰：“有夏多罪，天命殛之。”⁴²《周易集解》引干宝曰：“武王陈兵孟津之上，诸侯不期而会者八百国，皆曰纣可伐矣。武王曰：‘尔未知天命，未可也。’还归。二年，纣杀比干，囚箕子，尔乃伐之。”⁴³可见“巳日”是臣民革命的外在条件。爻辞“革言三就”是讲革命的三个步骤，爻辞“大人虎变”、“君子豹变”和“小人革面”是讲臣民在革命中的不同表现。

至此可知，坤卦上卦主旨是“龙战于野”，臣民反抗暴君，推翻暴政，包含三层意思：第一，臣民革命的外在条件是君王实施暴政，谋取自身利益，漠视臣民呼声，侵犯臣民的生命、人身和财产。第二，臣民革命的内在条件是内心孚信、言语谨慎和举止谦卑，以及准备物质基础。第三，臣民革命可能异常艰难，不能一蹴而就，但最终会取得胜利，臣民夺取权力，成为君王，实行德政。

五、坤卦用六

（一）用六疏解

用六：利永贞。《周易集注》曰：“用六，与用九同，此则以上六龙战于野言之。”⁴⁴正如乾卦用九“群龙无首”直接就上九“亢龙有悔”而言，坤卦用六“永贞”也直接就上六“龙战于野”而言。“利永贞”与“利牝马之贞”一致，可阐发为：利于永远贞问上天，永远坚守正道。

《象传》曰：“用六永贞，以大终也。”《周易本义》曰：“初阴后阳，故曰大终。”⁴⁵以大终，阴以阳终，阴极而变阳，臣民变成君王。《左传》曰：“周易有之，在乾之坤曰，见群龙无首，吉。”杜预注：“乾六爻皆变。”⁴⁶同理，用六，利永贞，坤六爻皆变，坤变成乾。

（二）用六与自由

乾卦六爻层层递进，用九“群龙无首”虽然直接就上九“亢龙有悔”而言，但间接影响九二“见龙在田”和九五“飞龙在天”。坤卦下卦和上卦在形式上对称，在内容上对立，分别论及从事德政和反抗暴政，用六“永贞”综述六爻，不仅直接就上六“龙战于野”而言，还间接就六三“或从王事”而言。另外，用六“永贞”也呼应六三“可贞”。当然，相比从事德政，反抗暴政更加需要勇气和智慧，因而更加需要贞问上天，坚守正道。臣民如果对“从王事”或“战于野”感到疑惑，就要贞问上天，坚守正道，所以用六“永贞”是从事德政和反抗暴政

的精神基础。

统治者施行德政还是暴政，统治者是否听取民众意见，是否满足民众需求，个人是适当的判断者。在确定德政之后，个人应当顺从统治者，至于是否辅佐统治者，是否从事德政，个人可能存在困惑，需要在贞问上天之后才能决定。在确定暴政之后，个人应当反抗统治者，但往往不敢轻易反抗，或不知如何反抗，也需要在贞问上天之后才能决定。个人首先服从上天，其次才服从统治者，如果统治者与个人发生冲突，只有上天才能裁决。从事德政或反抗暴政都会得到上天赞许、佑助。个人能否作出英明决定，取决于个人是否信仰上天，是否贞问上天，是否坚守正道。个人要是不信上天，不问上天，不守正道，就没有勇气和智慧反抗暴政，就会遭受统治者奴役，也就没有自由；而个人要想有自由，就必须摆脱统治者奴役，就需要反抗暴政的勇气和智慧，因而必须信仰上天，贞问上天，坚守正道。可见，个人自由以信仰上天为前提。

（三）用六与平等

用六意味着阴变成阳，坤变成乾，牝马变成龙，臣民变成君王，被统治者变成统治者；相对地，乾卦用九意味着乾变成坤，统治者变成被统治者，这样，统治者与被统治者彼此转变，相互更替。统治者从被统治者中产生，并最终回归被统治者，没有固定不变的统治者，也就没有特权阶层和既得利益，从而人人平等。这种平等是形式平等，尽管每个人都有机会成为统治者，但是实际上并不是每个人都成为统治者，因为每个人的德行、才能和机遇不同。

人人平等只是就统治者与人民相互更替而言，它在德政和暴政中表现不同。在德政中，人人平等并不表示统治者与人民地位平等，本质上他们是上下关系，统治者与人民都有各自角色和作用，人民要尊重和服从统治者，并把一部分资源（如财产和人力）让给统治者，统治者集中这些资源，开展公共事务，为人民谋福利。在暴政中，统治者只为谋求自身利益，或者追求他自认为的公共利益（实际上并非人民所需，甚至是人民所苦），这时，平等意识就促使人民拒绝让出自身资源，反抗甚至取代统治者，从而实现政治平等。

六、启示

《周易》坤卦所蕴含的天道是，人民应当顺从德政，即顺从那些保障人民生命、人身和财产的统治者；人民应当反抗暴政，即反抗那些侵犯人民生命、人身

和财产的统治者，从而解放自身，获得自由，甚至成为新的统治者，实现政治平等。

《系辞传》曰：“黄帝尧舜垂衣裳而天下治，盖取诸乾、坤。”黄帝尧舜无为而治，效法乾坤之道。据《史记》记载，尧仁德像天，智慧像神，他命令羲和二氏顺应上天，制定历法，告知人民按时耕作。尧让人推举继位者，有人推举尧的儿子丹朱，尧认为丹朱愚顽好斗，尧要求“悉举贵戚及疏远隐匿者”，⁴⁷众人推举出身微贱的舜，舜为人敦厚，孝顺父母，于是尧“荐之于天”，“以观天命”。⁴⁸舜在摄政期间慎用刑罚和开通河道。尧认为，传位于舜，利于天下而不利于丹朱；而传位丹朱，则利于丹朱，而不利天下，“终不以天下之病而利一人”，⁴⁹因而决定传位于舜。舜在祖庙召集四方诸侯，开放四方门庭，广听四方意见，希望推行尧的德政，在众人推举下，舜任命禹负责治水，弃负责农耕，契负责教化，皋陶负责刑罚，每三年考核一次，经三次考核再决定升降，各项事业都很顺遂。禹疏决江河，功劳最大。舜认为其子商均不够贤能，就“荐禹于天”。⁵⁰尧舜治理天下，广泛听取众人意见，接受众人推举，然后根据品德和才能决定是否任用，如此，贤能者就能从事政治。政治昌明，人民就丰衣足食，安居乐业。对于权力过渡，尧舜采取禅让方式，“禅”本指祭天，禅让基于上天信仰。通过禅让，最高权力得以和平交接，君上和下民得以温和更替，从而以最少成本实现政治平等。可见，尧舜之治是中国历史上最理想的德政。

在尧舜德政之后，禹开启了夏朝，后来夏桀堕落腐化，被商汤革命；商朝在盘庚迁殷之后兴盛起来，后来纣王暴虐无道，被周武革命。在《周易》成书前，已有两轮历史周期率。《系辞传》曰：“作《易》者，其有忧患乎？”今天，我们仍在讨论如何跳出历史周期率，说明《周易》对我们当下仍有启发意义。如果统治者实施德政，国家就会长治久安；如果统治者实施暴政，民众就会揭竿而起。

¹ 杨伯峻《春秋左传注》，中华书局，2016年，第652页。

² 王先谦《荀子集解》，中华书局，1988年，第504页。

³ 张学智《王夫之对坤卦的阐发》，载《清华大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2012年第6期，第135页。

⁴ 刘师培《中国民约精义》，岳麓书社，2013年，第2页。

⁵ 熊十力《乾坤衍》，上海古籍出版社，2019年，第217页。

⁶ 杨伯峻《春秋左传注》，中华书局，2016年，第1059页。

⁷ 朱熹《周易本义》，中华书局，2009年，第30页。

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- ⁸ 高亨《周易古经今注》，中华书局，1984年，第110页。
- ⁹ 一些典籍记载了祭天情景，如《礼记·月令》曰：“五者备当，上帝其飨。”《诗·楚茨》曰：“苾芬孝祀，神嗜饮食。”《诗·生民》曰：“其香始升，上帝居歆。”
- ¹⁰ 方玉润《诗经原始》，中华书局，2021年，第490页。
- ¹¹ 方玉润《诗经原始》，中华书局，2021年，第474页。
- ¹² 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第185页。
- ¹³ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第186页。
- ¹⁴ 王先谦《荀子集解》，中华书局，1988年，第306页。
- ¹⁵ 王弼、孔颖达《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年，第39页。
- ¹⁶ 王弼、孔颖达《宋本周易注疏》，中华书局，2018年，第40页。
- ¹⁷ 李鼎祚《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年，第31页。
- ¹⁸ 李学勤主编《字源》，天津古籍出版社，2013年，第447页。
- ¹⁹ 孙希旦《礼记集解》，中华书局，1989年，第127页。
- ²⁰ 孔安国，孔颖达《尚书正义》，上海古籍出版社，2007年，第813页。
- ²¹ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第130页。
- ²² 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第181页。
- ²³ 李鼎祚《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年，第34-35页。
- ²⁴ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第178，181页。
- ²⁵ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第130页。
- ²⁶ 李鼎祚《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年，第35页。
- ²⁷ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第181页。
- ²⁸ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第129页。
- ²⁹ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第131页。
- ³⁰ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第180页。
- ³¹ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第131页。
- ³² 黄宗羲《易学象数论》，中华书局，2010年，第118页。
- ³³ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第131页。
- ³⁴ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第181页。
- ³⁵ 程颐《周易程氏传》，中华书局，2011年，第17页。
- ³⁶ 朱熹《周易本义》，中华书局，2009年，第46页。
- ³⁷ 黄宗羲《易学象数论》，中华书局，2010年，第118页。
- ³⁸ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第179页。
- ³⁹ 李鼎祚《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年，第38-39页。
- ⁴⁰ 李光地《御纂周易折中》，上海古籍出版社，1990年，第60页。
- ⁴¹ 于豪亮《马王堆帛书周易释文校注》，上海古籍出版社，2013年，第129页。
- ⁴² 孔安国，孔颖达《尚书正义》，北京大学出版社，1999年，第190页。
- ⁴³ 李鼎祚《周易集解》，中华书局，2016年，第302页。
- ⁴⁴ 来知德《周易集注》，中华书局，2019年，第195页。
- ⁴⁵ 朱熹《周易本义》，中华书局，2009年，第37页。
- ⁴⁶ 杜预《春秋经传集解》，上海古籍出版社，1988年，第1576-1580页。
- ⁴⁷ 司马迁撰《史记》，中华书局2013年9月第1版，第26页。
- ⁴⁸ 司马迁撰《史记》，中华书局2013年9月第1版，第28，36页。
- ⁴⁹ 司马迁撰《史记》，中华书局2013年9月第1版，第36页。
- ⁵⁰ 司马迁撰《史记》，中华书局2013年9月第1版，第52页。