Further Implications of the Sequence

To understand the symmetries between the upper canon (Hexagrams #1-30) and the lower canon (#31-64), we need to distinguish two categories of trigrams. *Qian*, *kun*, *kan* and *li* (heaven, earth, water and fire) are what I call elemental trigrams. They do not change when inverted. In Chinese they are called *zhenggua* [cardinal trigrams], because they occupy the four quarters of the Fuxi octagonal arrangement. *Xun*, *dui*, *gen* and *zhen* (wind, marsh, mountain and thunder) are named after natural processes. They change when inverted: for example, when *dui* is inverted it changes to *xun*. In Chinese they are called *weigua* [non-cardinal] because they occupy the four diagonal sides of the Fuxi octagonal arrangement. Below I will discuss implications of how the *zhenggua* and *weigua* are distributed in the upper and lower canons.

1. According to Wei Boyang's *Cantongqi*, the whole sequence symbolizes an alchemical process. Heaven and Earth (#1 and #2) at the beginning are the crucible in which all further reactions will happen. At the end of the upper canon, we come to Water and Fire (#29 and #30), which represent purified substances that will undergo further reactions. The lower canon ends with fire and water mixed together in #63 and #64. According to Wei, this represents completion of the elixir. Wei identifies *li* with mercury and *qi* (vital energy); he identifies *kan* with the metal lead and *jing* (bodily essence).

2. If we follow Wei's symbolism for fire and water, then having *li* below *kan* (as in #63) is a mark of attainment, because it means ones *qi* is settled. By getting down into the *dantian*, *qi* energizes the *jing* (bodily essence) and causes it to perfuse all through the body's tissues. Undisciplined *qi* is flighty and is scatters upward; unmastered *jing* leaks downward along with the body's fluids (i.e., semen). When disciplined *qi* gets down beneath *jing*, a process of interfusing begins which reaches higher and higher levels. Thus #64 Not-Yet-Across comes after #63 Already-Across, because a new stage of attainment always awaits.

3, The upper canon is the place for purifying the elements of fire and water. To purify them, they must be kept separate. Hence fire and water trigrams do not appear in adjacent figures until we reach the pure hexagrams at #29 and #30. (For instance, the *kan* in nos. 3-8 is separate from the *li* in nos. 13-14.) By contrast, the lower canon is the place for mixing fire and water, hence the *kan* and *li* trigrams appear in adjacent figures leading up to a thorough mixing at #63 and #64. Thus nos. 35-38, which contain the

fire trigram, are next to nos. 39-40, which contain water. Also nos. 47-48, containing water, are next to nos. 49-50, containing fire. This was noted by the Ming commentator Lai Yuancheng in his *Du yi ou tong*.[1]

4, There is only one place in the lower canon where fire is slightly separated from water. Note that the fire of #55 Fullness and #56 Traveler is separate from the water of #59 Dispersion and #60 Limitation. But this separation still fits well with our theme. Why? Because the two intervening hexagrams, #57 The Gentle and #58 The Joyous, are the pure hexagrams of self-tempering and self-offering. What better hexagrams to bring fire and water together! The overall theme of the lower canon is that fire and water are mixed through tempering (along the human way). Thus in the short segment #55-#60, this theme is reprised in miniature.

5. The upper canon emphasizes the elemental side of things, hence it is bracketed by the pure hexagram pairs of Heaven with Earth (#1 and #2) and Water with Fire (#29 and #30). The lower canon emphasizes self-tempering and self-offering, hence it begins with Feeling [“Wooing”] and Endurance (#31 and #32), which contain the four “natural process” trigrams (*dui* with *gen* appear in #31, and *xun* with *zhen* appear in #32). All four natural process trigrams---*xun, dui*, *gen* and *zhen*---are also found in #61 and 62, which immediately precede the mixed fire and water of #63 and 64. Such proximity of *xun* and *dui* to #63 suggests that they have a role in tempering and mixing fire and water.

6. Jin Shengtan says that the upper canon represents the “Dao of Heaven,” and the lower canon represents the “Dao of Humanity.” No wonder only the lower canon has hexagrams which touch directly on loving relationships: #31 Feeling; #37 Family; #38 Opposition; #44 Encounter; and #54 Marrying Maiden. Hexagram #53 Development has a Judgment which reads “The maiden is given in marriage. Good fortune, perseverance furthers.” Situations in the lower canon have many nuances of personal frustration and travail---#36 Darkening of the Light and #39 Hardship and #47 Impasse. It has departures from a fixed center or abode---#56 Traveller and #59 Dispersion. It has settling down and settling in---#52 Keeping Still and #33 Retreat. It has a hexagram of cautious moderation, #60 Moderation, and a hexagram of wild intensity, #55 Fullness. The kind of tempering one passes through along this “Dao of Humanity” is not just *qigong*. It is a full spectrum of character-building experiences--- the dual proving ground of body and self-nature.

7. The phrase *wu-hui* [no regret] appears 7 times in the *Yijing*, both in the upper and

lower canons. The phrase *hui-wu* [regret goes away] appears 19 times in the *Yijing*, exclusively in the lower canon.[2] Acting without regret can be done by anyone who sets out with resolution. But to feel regret and finally get beyond it---this sort of "self-indictment" is only possible when one passes through the character-building complexities of the Human Dao. The situations in the upper canon are like building blocks of human experience: they lead us onto the human way, but they are still stark states. They tend to involve a commitment to principle, or a grappling with some salient moral fact. This is the "elemental" quality of the upper-canon situations. Cheng Yi tells us that #6 Contention can be overcome, if only the parties to it will first practice "self- indictment." But "self-indictment" can only be practiced well after one has walked the Human Dao; then one can revisit Contention, bringing what he has learned from the stations further along.

8. There are many signs that self-tempering and self-offering are key themes of the lower canon.

a. The wind and marsh (*xun* and *dui*) trigrams each appear 12 times in the lower canon, but only 4 times in the upper canon. (In contrast, the heaven and earth [*qian* and *kun*] trigrams each appear 12 times in the upper canon, but only 4 times in the lower.) [3]
b. There is an eight-hexagram segment (#43-44 through #49-50) roughly at the middle of the lower canon, in which *dui* then *xun* combine with each of the four elemental trigrams in turn. In #43 and #44, *dui* then *xun* combine with *qian* (heaven); in #45 and #46, *dui* then *xun* combine with *kun* (earth); in #47 and #48, *dui* then *xun* combine with *kan* (water); in #49 and #50, *dui* then *xun* combine with *li* (fire). Note that the order of "elemental" trigrams in this segment---*qian, kun, kan* and *li*---reprises the order of pure hexagrams in the upper canon---Heaven, Earth, Fire, and Water. This is an example of holographic structure, in which small segments echo the patterns of larger segments.
c. The two hexagrams that relate most directly to self-tempering appear in the lower canon. One is #48 Well, in which the self-mastery of *xun* goes deep and brings up a resource which can be used by all. The other is #50 Cauldron, in which the self-mastery of *xun* fuels a fire or vision and thereby contributes something to a community. In both Well and Cauldron, the top lines are not a foray into dubious territory (as top lines tend to be in other hexagrams). Rather, the top lines are a culmination of the work, where real accomplishment is finally brought forth for use (hence the well-winch must not be hidden, and the rim of the cauldron gleams like jade when we ladle

out the long-awaited contents). Both Well and Cauldron are preceded by companion hexagrams of trouble and unsettlement. The Well is preceded by #47 Impasse, an ordeal which drives us to dig in and redeem something out of our predicament. The Cauldron is preceded by #49 Revolution, which is an uncertain time out of which more workable arrangements can be forged.

9, Notice that the pair of figures #47-#48 (Impasse-Well) and #49-#50 (Revolution-Cauldron) fall right at the middle of the lower canon. There are eight figures before this pair, and eight figures after.

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Notes:

1. *Du yi ou tong*, in *Xu xiu si ku quan shu*, Jing bu, Vol…, pp.447-524.

2. This fact was noted by Xie Baosheng, p.28, *Yijing zhi mi shi ruhe dakai de*. Beijing Press, 1995.

3. Note also that of the 16 inter-*zhenggua* hexagrams (those made by combining the *qian*, *kun*, *kan*, and *li* trigrams among themselves), 12 appear in the upper canon, and four appear in the lower. Of the 16 inter-*weigua* hexagrams, 12 appear in the lower canon, and four appear in the upper.