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ANALYSIS OF
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THE *YIJING*
PART TWO: A
QUANTITATIVE STUDY
OF THE *YIJING*

*MARGARET J.
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TOWARDS A NEW
READING OF
HEXAGRAM 44

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TOWARDS A NEW READING OF HEXAGRAM 44 姤

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The recently published translations of the *Yijing*, 易經, by Richard John Lynn [1] and Edward Shaughnessy [2] have given us new, more reliable versions of this most central of all Chinese texts. Both have agreed that this difficult opus has multiple meanings [3]. This research note suggests an unorthodox but reasonable reading of the oldest layers of hexagram 44. The reading clearly differs from orthodox interpretations which have been current at least since Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648 CE) of the Tang dynasty [4]. It changes the entire tone of the hexagram from one of ill-omen to one of hope and joy.

For those in search of meanings earlier than those of the received traditions, especially those concentrating on the social and political milieu of the Zhou, Ed Shaughnessy has offered a new interpretation of hexagram 54, tracing in it references to a specific marriage between a ruler and his primary and secondary brides [5]. A similar approach can be applied to Hexagram 44.

The lines of the hexagram include fertility imagery: a melon entwined in vines (line five: 以杞包瓜) and wrapped fish (lines 2: 包有魚 and 4: 包无魚, 凶) [6]. These lines have been variously inter-

preted as referring to a kitchen [7].

The title of the hexagram is an unusual character 姤, usually glossed as 遇 "coming to meet" (姤, 遇也, 柔遇剛也) [8]. I believe that another reading is both reasonable and consistent with a similarly differing reading of the Judgement, 姤。女壯。勿用取女, which is usually translated as: "The woman is strong; it would not do to marry this maiden" [9]. I suggest that this character 姤 be read as 'queen' 后, as did Karlgren [10] or, more precisely, 'the bride of the ruler' (king or duke) 王后, as in the *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals) [11].

The *Zuozhuan* (and the *Chunqiu*) clearly differentiates between different kinds of marital or sexual relationships (for examples, see below). Although heirs to states were not always the sons of the preeminent wife, this was clearly the preference, the moral norm. The seriousness of this preference is shown in its inclusion in two early treaties:

In an inter-state agreement of 651 BCE, the signatories agreed that they should:

First, slay the unfilial; change not the one who has been appointed heir; exalt not a concubine to be the wife [12].

An earlier agreement reads:

Let there be no damming of irrigation water, no withholding sales of grain, no changès of heirs apparent, no promoting of concubines to replace wives, and no involvement of women in state affairs [13].

In both of these quotations, the difference in rank between the wife and the concubine is considered essential to social and political order. It is easy to understand why this is so. Many alliances between states were marked by marriages between the ruling families of the two states [14]. If the heir was the scion of both families, the alliance would continue and be reinforced by close kinship ties in the next generation, so that stability would be far more probable. However, if a concubine's son took the throne, this would shame the wife (and therefore her natal family), and the alliance could be endangered.

In our egalitarian age, we tend to treat all marriages as basically similar, but this is a gross oversimplification, one which ignores essential elements of early Chinese values. The ruler's bride (*hou* 后) was met by high officials of her new state [15], and accorded ritual honours as she became the designated progenetrix of the next heir. The heir's authority thus was derived not only through his father, the ruler, but also through the noble rank of his mother and the courtly rituals of her marriage.

For this reason, I suggest that we read the Judgement of hexagram 44 using earlier readings than usual, in a way consistent with the reception of a *hou*. Let us replace Kong Yingda's gloss of *zhuang* 壯 as *yin* 淫, "obscene or lascivious" [16]

with the *Shuowen*'s earlier gloss as *da* 大 "great" [17], as a reference to her rank rather than her sexuality or her age. Then the words 婚。女壯。勿用取女。 could be read:

The king's bride is great. Do not take such a woman by force.

[i.e., do not rape her, but approach with due deference and rituals.] [18]

Again this is an unusual reading of *qu* 取, which Liu Xinglong has shown is based on the graph for seizing a slain enemy by the ear, a forcible taking of vanquished by victor [19]. This meaning of "taking by force" is similar to oracle-bone usage of the word with animals, such as "taking horses" 取馬 and "taking cattle" 取牛. I would argue that it is also closer to another oracle-bone example 取女子林, "taking a woman in the woods", an image which suggests a meeting somewhat less formal than a state wedding [20].

We have seen that the king's bride was treated with far greater deference than were other women, and that her special rank and role as mother of the heir was considered essential to the stability of the state and its alliances. The pregnancy images of melon in vines and wrapped fish are more consistent with this reading than are injunctions against a marriage, as in later readings.

Finally, I suggest that the character of the hexagram could be *hou* 后, differentiated from an alternative reading of the time, as after, by attachment of the woman radical 女, resulting in 婚.

Recent publications, especially in the Lynn and Shaughnessy translations and the specialized Chinese-language dictionaries noted above, have moved *Yijing*

scholarship to a new plane. I look forward to lively debates in the *Oracle* and other scholarly journals as we use these sounder foundations to seek early meanings of this classic.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This research was begun when I was a Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge University. An earlier version of the article was presented at the Needham Research Institute in May 1998, and revisions were made there during July 2000. I am most grateful to Michael Loewe, Michael Nylan, and John Moffett for their detailed comments on preliminary drafts, and to Mark Lewis for discussing this way of reading the original text when I began this research in 1997. Of course I alone am responsible for errors.

The translations throughout the article are based on the version of the *Yijing* in *Wang Bi ji jiaoshi* (1980). This is the edition used by *I* below. For full citations, and characters for Chinese works, see Bibliography.

1 - Lynn, 1994.

2 - Shaughnessy, 1996. Unfortunately, these erudite translators were unable to benefit from two very useful Chinese-language dictionaries published recently: Liu Xinglong, ed.: *Xin bian jiaqu wen zidian*, Beijing: International Culture Publishing Company, 1993, and Wu Hua, ed.: *Zhouyi da cidian*, Canton: Zhong-shan [Sun Yat-sen] University Press. 1993.

3 - Lynn: "In my view, however, there is no one single *Classic of Changes* but rather as many versions of it as there are different commentaries on it." (Lynn,

p.8). Shaughnessy: "Particularly in the case of the *Yijing* one need not be terribly deconstructionist to go so far as to say that there are as many versions of it as there are different readers." (Shaughnessy, 1997a, p.223). And Zhu Xi: "Therefore, those who study the *Yi* must view these different *Yi* each independently. They should view Fu Xi's *Yi* as Fu Xi's *Yi*, a time when there was not a single statement. They should see King Wen's *Yi* as King Wen's *Yi*, the Duke of Zhou's *Yi* as the Duke of Zhou's *Yi*, and Confucius's *Yi* as Confucius's *Yi* ... If one insists on drawing them all together, one will not succeed." *Zhuzi yulei* (*Siku quanshu* ed.), 66.352a, in Shaughnessy, 1997a, p.223.

4 - Kong Yingda, *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 5: 4a-4b, in Lynn, p.415, note 1.

5 - Shaughnessy, 1997b, pp.13-30.

6 - I am indebted to Professor Michael Nylan, Bryn Mawr College, for this observation, based on her study of imagery in the *Shijing* at and after the Needham Research Institute Text reading session on an earlier version of this paper, May 1998. On fish as sexual images, see also Shaughnessy, 1997b, p.22, note 15.

7 - Lynn, pp.412-413.

8 - Lynn, p.410. *Wang Bi ji jiaoshi*, p.439.

9 - Lynn, p.412; Shaughnessy, 1996, p.53.

10 - Chinese orthography was still in a fluid state during the Zhou dynasty. For an excellent discussion of relevant issues and sources, see Wilkinson, pp.397-417. The following related characters are from Bernhard Karlgren, 1957, pp.49-50 (transliteration modified to pinyin). Word Nos.:

112a: 后 "Hou, sovereign, lord [*Shi-*

jing]; queen [*Zuozhuan*]; loan for *hou* 後 ['after', in *Liji*"].

112b: 后 "Hou, Yin bone [form] (M 351). Explanation of graph uncertain [but perhaps related to No. 972a, *si* 司 'to govern']".

112c: 适 "Hou, carefree and happy [*Shijing*]".

112d: 垢 "Gou, filth [*Shijing*]".

112e: 媾 "Gou, to meet [*Yijing*]". (The name of hexagram 44). This seems to be the only known example of this character. This reading is usually interpreted as the pushiness of a woman who initiates a meeting (Wilhelm, pp.171, 609), but it seems more likely that this referred to the kind of meeting recorded in *Chunqiu* (at note *II*, below); that is, the formal meeting between the king's bride and the high minister of her prospective spouse. This meeting seems to have been part of the welcome into the state which will become her own at marriage. The high rank of this greeting official could be a measure of the governmental importance of a ruler's bride, a part of the rituals attending this marital alliance (which must have distinguished this type of male-female relationship from more casual encounters; with "take in the woods" perhaps at the extreme opposite end of the continuum of such relationships). In this, as in so much else, King Wen set the pattern, by building a bridge of boats so that he could meet his bride, the future mother of King Wu. See *Shijing*, 'Da Ming', Mao # 236, stanzas 4 & 5. Karlgren (1950), pp.187-188; Legge, IV, pp.434-435.

112f: 詬 "Gou, kou or hou, revile, disgrace [*Zuozhuan*]". This meaning (as well as that of 112d and 112g, "hou 媾, disgrace, insult") seems at first to be the

opposite of 112a, c, and e. However, if we consider that one must have respectability (or be considered noble, and hence worthy of honours) in order to lose it, we might argue that only a queen would be fully aware of the distance between happiness (112c) and disgrace.

11 - *Chunqiu*, Duke Xian, 15th year [557 BCE], 2; Legge, pp.467, 469.

12 - Hsu Cho-yun, p.557.

13 - *Guliang zhuan*, quoted in Hsu, above, note *12*, p.557.

14 - See Watson, introduction and pp.3-4, 11, 21, 23, 30, 34, 35 (hex 44 divined), 39, 48-49, 71. Watson attributes much of the strife of the period to succession disputes; some mothers of potential heirs were quite active participants in such disputes.

15 - See note *II*, above.

16 - Kong Yingda, *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 5: 4a-4b, in Lynn, p.415, note 1.

17 - *Shuowen jiezi jizhu*, pp.79-80. Note that the only Han definition is *da*, 'great' or 'adult'; later commentators construed this as 'mature', 'flourishing', etc. Shaughnessy's translation (1996, p.53) of this word as 'mature' uses this meaning. In fairness, I must add that the *Shuowen* defines many words as *da* (conversation with Michael Loewe, 1998. I grant that this weakens my argument.)

18 - *Wang Bijijiaoshi*, p.439.

19 - Liu Xinglong, pp.160: 取象手執耳朶之形.

20 - *Ibid.*, p.161.

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Zuozhuan: see Watson.

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

Readers wishing to explore the profusion of *I Ching*-related material on the Web should check the *I Ching Bookmarks* site, run by Lorraine Patsco, which provides links to literally hundreds of websites, covering translations, articles, computerised consultations, etc. This can be found at:

<http://www.zhouyi.com>