

Guaxiang and *Guade* in the Sixty-Four Hexagrams

Compiled and summarized by D.Mair

Guade refers to interaction of trigram potencies, and *guaxiang* refers to interaction of trigram images. Here I try to show that a hexagram's theme emerges from interaction of constituent trigrams, which I take to symbolize aspects of experience. (See my "Summary of Trigram Qualities" elsewhere on this site.) Since the inter-trigram dynamics are open to many trains of association, I rely on line statements, judgments and hexagram names to provide a guiding thread. I give initials of sources of direct borrowings. Quoted passages are taken from the hexagram judgments, the "Treatise on Images," or the "Treatise on the Judgments."

The relation between inner and outer trigrams can progress from the latent to the manifest; it can contrast inner qualities with behavior; it can be an encounter of self with circumstances, or it can be two aspects of a circumstance. My choice among these draws upon mainstream commentary.



1 Qian, The Creative: Creative action operates across a continuum from the immanent to the transcendent. One level of spirit is open and transparent to another. From the viewpoint of Qian as it creates new possibilities, obstructions of matter resemble filmy outlines in an X-ray picture. [DM] (Qian over Qian)



2 Kun, The Receptive: Nestled within the matrix lies a history: countless acts of earlier nurturance make its present fertility possible. The seedbed rests on a more fundamental nurturance. [DM] (Kun over Kun)



3 Zhun, Difficulty at the Beginning: "Movement in the midst of danger" "Chaos prevails at the beginning of creation." (Kan over Zhen)



4 Meng, Youthful Folly: That which is inwardly unpredictable meets with an unmoving formation. [ZH]/ In this single situation we face two aspects of causality---the knots of

dispositional formations (like the five skandhas in Buddhism), and the uncontrollable flow of change. A lot of learning needs to get done.[DM] (Gen over Kan)



5 Xu, Waiting: “Danger lies ahead. Being firm and strong, one does not fall into it.” (Kan over Qian)



6 Song, Conflict: “Heaven and earth go their opposite ways: the image of Conflict.”\ Creativity is turned to dangerous uses in times leading up to when armies meet.[LLS] (Qian over Kan)



7 Shi, Army: An unpredictable force is contained among people who inhabit the land. Armed might comes from the people. [ZH] “A dangerous thing is being done with devotion.” (Kun over Kan)



8 Bi, Holding Together: An unpredictable force is spread over the land, yet it remains close to the people. Small local leaders can remain close to the people.[ZH] “Those below are devoted and obedient.” (Kan over Kun)



9 Xiaoxu, The Taming Power of the Small: The gentle tames the firm.[ZX] (Xun over Qian)



10 Lü, Treading [Conduct]: Gladly treading after the great pathmakers, showing proper respect. This is a hexagram of propriety.[DM]/ “Distinction between the high and low settles the will of the people.” (Qian over Dui)



11 Tai, Peace: “The lowly depart, the great approach.” “Heaven and earth interact stably.”
(Kun over Qian)



12 Pi, Stagnation: “Heaven and earth do not unite.” “The great depart, the lowly approach.”
(Qian over Kun)



13 Tongren, Fellowship with Men: Finite relations are holding forth a vision of open relations.[DM] (Qian over Li)



14 Dayou, Possession in Great Measure: Vision is raised up to survey the field of open relations. Highlighted relations can now be seen as non-exclusive.[DM] (Li over Qian)



15 Qiān, Modesty: “The modest man occupies a low place, yet he cannot be passed over.”/ Something which is lofty by nature occupies a lowly place; the meek shall be raised up to inherit the earth.[JC] The modest one carries on the work without claiming achievement. There will be one who completes it in his stead. {ZH} (Kun over Gen)



16 Yu, Enthusiasm: “Devotion to movement.” “The former kings made uplifting music and offered it with splendor to the Deity.” (Zhen over Gen)



17 Sui, Following: The heart’s stirrings grow gladly. Being still like a lake, one can follow the heart’s promptings.[DM] “The superior man at nightfall goes inside for rest and recuperation.” (Dui over Zhen)



18 Gu, Work on What Has Been Spoiled: A ritual vessel long unused, containing poisonous spoilage. [SDP]\ The Gentle comes up against the Unmoving and cannot penetrate. The formation does not lend itself to subtle adjustments, and the homeostatic field is thrown out of equilibrium.[DM] (Gen over Zhen)



19 Lin, Approach: Being down among the people, one learns to give of oneself and to make a place for the people.[DM] (Kun over Dui)



20 Guan, Contemplation: Well-grounded self-mastery gives a vantage point from which to view the land's breadth and to spread transforming influence---this is the vantage point of will.[DM]/ Contemplation "affords the people a view of the divine way... Thus the holy man edifies by means of the divine way." (Xun over Kun)



21 Shihe, Biting Through: Clear discrimination (*li*) which is backed up by commanding force makes for social enforcement.[ZX]/ Here a civil pattern is backed up by authority. But when discrimination is out of balance we have paranoiac enforcement.[DM] (Li over Zhen)



22 Bi, Grace: "The superior man is shows discernment in civil affairs, but does not attempt to judge major cases." Within the structure there is an adorning pattern.[DM] (Gen over Li)



23 Bo, Splitting Apart: "Those above can only make their house secure by giving generously to those below." Here we have an established order, an *ancien regime*, whose leaders are staying in their enclave. The formation will crumble if sets itself up as something separate from the ground.[DM] (Gen over Kun)



24 Fu, Renewal: Enfolded within perfect stillness, new life quickens. This is what happens

during a spiritual retreat, when “gates are closed, so businessmen and travelers cannot pass through.”[SJ] (Kun over Zhen)



25 Wuwang, Innocence: The moment’s impulse is conditioned by a sense of open possibility; action resonates for the moment with creative forces. For now our direction feels supremely right, but this may prove to be naive, leading to rude surprises, unless we carry through.[DM] “The kings of old let new growth be in keeping with the time, so as to foster and nourish all beings.” (Qian over Zhen)



26 Daxu, The Taming Power of the Great: “The superior man acquaints himself with many sayings of antiquity and deeds of past great men.”\ This is self-domestication of one’s energies. During the formation of character, it is hard to get the open field of creative relations (*qian*) inside oneself. When we find someone who has it inside, we know a great deal of work has been done. The steadiness of this mountain has a reward at the peak, as seen in the sixth line.[DM] Look how far the bird in Sixth Yang has gone on ‘the thoroughfare of heaven’! [OR] (Gen over Qian)



27 Yi, Nourishment: The appetitive impulses drive the personality. Once the personality is formed, the impulses cannot get outside of it. Which impulse dominates will depend upon dimensions of the personality structure.[DM] “Pay heed to the taking of nourishment, and to what a man seeks to fill his mouth with.” (Gen over Zhen)



28 Daguo, Preponderance of the Great: This is a time of excess---a pond with plenty of large fish. Although the weight of gridlocked abilities threatens to drag the structure down, to some extent people can neutralize each other’s destructive potentials. It takes a tough person to get through, and getting through toughens a person.[DM] (Dui over Xun)



29 Xi-Kan, The Abysmal, Water: Dangers keep coming. Right while one is in danger, one

needs to practice dealing with danger. Also, a person's psyche needs to have something analogous to strategic terrain---making parts of oneself fairly inaccessible to others.[ZH] (Kan over Kan)



30 Li, The Clinging, Fire: “Brightness flares up in two places. By perpetuating brightness, the great man illuminates the four quarters of the world.” (Li over Li)



31 Xian, Wooing, Influence: Through resonance of feelings, this one's solidity is augmented by that one's fruitfulness and self-giving.[DM] (Dui over Li)



32 Heng, Duration: “Gentle and in motion.” This is gentle penetration coupled with furthering circumstances. Due to its integrity (all lines in resonance), it receives stimuli that allow it to change and endure.[DM] (Zhen over Xun)



33 Dun, Retreat: Beyond the structural confines of our social lives, we hear a call of freedom. Some things we do within the structure are paradoxically directed at getting out of it. Heaven over mountain portrays the otherness of that free realm, compared to where we are now. This image is also the setting of a distant hermitage.[DM] (Qian over Gen)



34 Da Zhuang, The Power of the Great: Circumstances rouse and drive on the core of strong creativity. The question becomes, can it steer itself toward creative exercise of strength? The ability to feel one's way toward a set of furthering circumstances means that strength is coming into its own. Otherwise, even great strength may be used in a brittle way.[DM] (Zhen over Qian)



35 Jin, Progress: Devoted ones make a foundation for brilliant ones to put themselves forward.

This is the way of the courtier---disciplining oneself in the way of strategic advance. This requires both graceful accommodation and display of talent.[DM] (Li over Kun)



36 Mingyi, Darkening of the Light: “The light has sunk into the earth.” “Beautiful and clear within, yielding and gentle without, hence undergoing great difficulty.”\ Notice how the second quote uses the inter-trigram dynamic in two ways at once.[DM] (Kun over Li)



37 Jiaren, The Family: “Wind comes from the fire.”\ The family makes its way in the world sustained by the ties of its hearth-fire. The close understanding between family members allows them to compensate for each other.[DM] (Xun over Li)



38 Kui, Opposition: “All beings stand in opposition to one another: what they do takes on order thereby.”\ An individuating principle is at work here: artless giving meets the discriminating eye; this one offers something, and the other views things according to a certain pattern.[DM] (Li over Dui)



39 Jian, Adversity: “There is danger ahead. To see danger and know how to stand still, that is wisdom.”\ Now one has come to a stop, and must weather the eroding flow. The personality is already formed; it is hard to learn better ways to face the onslaught of circumstance. When the changeable flow was within, it could learn by conforming its flow to experience, as in #4.[DM]\ (Kan over Gen)



40 Xie, Deliverance: “Through movement one escapes danger...when thunder and rain set in, the seed pods of trees and plants burst open.”\ The pent-up flow is released by the triggering impulse. The sense of having been pent-up relates back to #3.[DM] (Zhen over Kan)



41 Sun, Decrease: What is below gives of itself; what is above comes to rest. In other words, give of yourself until you arrive at stillness. This is based on a combination of trigram potencies, more than on the image of a mountain rising above a marsh. If we look at the line statements, we see that this whole hexagram is about letting go and getting back to the essence. I believe the rewards mentioned in the lines are inherent---they happen naturally as a result of letting go. They are not the prerogatives of those above, extracted from those below. To interpret them thus would depart from the main theme. Hence I do not subscribe to the Treatise's words: "What is below is decreased; what is above is increased." [DM] (Gen over Dui)



42 Yi, Increase: What could have been gentle, rooted growth is now spurred from within (by *zhen*) to penetrate (*xun*) the instrumentality of the outside world. This becomes the way of irreversible progress.[DM] (Xun over Zhen)



43 Guai, Break-Through: Traditional interpretations have a patriarchal bias in favor of yang, so they see the yin line as a 'small man' who wields undue influence at court. Some commentators see this as a justified rebellion---upwelling forces are ready to burst the dikes while the court diverts itself with gaiety. But given the cryptic lines, it could just as well be a struggle to raise the level of self-expression. One's expression of vitality (*dui*) breaks through to a higher plane of meaning (*qian*). One could even say that the shamanness (*dui*) draws our creativity (*qian*) upward toward an elusive goal. [WB; DM] (Dui over Qian)



44 Gou, Encounter: Many commentators see the main theme as temptation. But given the potencies of the trigrams, I see a theme that is kinder to yin. A rooted growth-process below (*xun*) encounters a new dimension of existence (*qian*). Or, the unbounded play of energy, abstracted from any certain locality (*qian*), meets a life that is focused on inward, rooted growth (*xun*).[DM](Qian over Xun)



45 Cui, Gathering Together: "To bring great offerings creates good fortune." Abundant fruits from the land are being offered up. In order to gather together the spirits of one's ancestors,

those who make the offering must gather their own spirits together.[ZX] (Dui over Kun)



46 Sheng, Pushing Upward: “Within the earth, wood grows, the image of Pushing Upward. Thus the superior man of devoted character heaps up small things to achieve something high and great.” (Kun over Xun)



47 Kun, Oppression; Dire Straits: “The superior man stakes his life on following his will.” We have come to a proving ground where men show their mettle. Commentators say that the marsh is suffering from loss of water. Or perhaps the man in danger experiences the lushness of the marsh as an abundance of difficulties.[DM] (Kan over Dui)



48 Jing, The Well: “The superior man encourages the people at their work, and exhorts them to help one another.” Xun is the trigram of work. Here one’s work penetrates deeply and brings a needed resource for the community. Water is mastered here and does not flow uncontrollably.[DM] (Kan over Xun)



49 Ge, Revolution: “On your own day you will know perfect trust.” A latent vision of civil patterns exists, and it will have its flowering.[DM] (Dui over Li)



50 Ding, The Cauldron: “The superior man consolidates his mandate by making his position correct.” ‘Consolidate’ refers to building a base of power. ‘Making one’s position correct’ means having the discrimination to stand for something right. Out of this work emerges a symbol of state power that people look to and identify with.[DM] (Li over Xun)



51 Zhen, Shock, Thunder: “Thunder repeated... Thus in fear and trembling the superior man undertakes to improve himself.” (Zhen over Zhen)



52 Gen, Keeping Still, Mountain: “Mountains standing one beyond the other. Thus the superior man does not allow his thoughts to go beyond his situation.”\ This captures the double meaning of deliberative poise and sedimentation which will affect the future. The treatise says “When it is time to stop, stop; when it is time to act, act.” Cheng Yi sees this as inner quiet followed by steady, reliable action, which he calls ‘to be unmoving in one’s movement.’[DM] (Gen over Gen).



53 Jian, Gradual Progress: “On a mountain, a tree: the image of Gradual Progress. Thus the superior man abides in worthiness and virtue, in order to improve the mores.”\ For a tree growing on a mountain, every inch is patiently achieved. Growth here takes balance and tenacity. The mountain lends its height; the tree’s roots stabilize the slope. [DM] (Xun over Gen)



54 Guimei, The Marrying Maiden: “Thunder over the lake... Thus the superior man understands the imperfect in a perspective of eternity.” “If heaven and earth do not unite, all creatures fail to flourish. The Marrying Maiden means the end and beginning of humanity.” In joy she moves and gives of herself.[ZX] (Zhen over Dui)



55 Feng, Fullness, Abundance: “Brilliance in movement, hence Abundance... ‘Be not sad, be like the sun at midday.’ One should give light to the whole world.” (Zhen over Feng)



56 Lü, The Wanderer: Across a landscape which is the aftermath of history we are drawn to something we see: thus we become travelers. The sedimentation of history becomes an inner landscape which momentary consciousness must traverse like a traveler. Attention consumes its momentary object, making a circle of light, then it moves further along the slope.[DM] (Li over Gen)



57 Xun, The Gentle, Wind: “Gentle penetration repeated, to extend the life-force further.”
This line can also be translated “Gentle penetration repeated, in order to spread its commands abroad.” (Xun over Xun)



58 Dui, The Joyous, Marsh: “When one leads the way for the people joyously, they forget their drudgery; when one confronts difficulty joyously, the people forget that it ends in death. The greatest thing in being joyous is that people urge each other onward.” (Dui over Dui)



59 Huan, Dispersion: “‘It furthers one to cross the great water.’ To ride on wood is effective.”
“The wind drives over the water... Thus the kings sacrificed to the Lord and built temples.” The water is not separate from us, yet it swallows our claims to individual agency. Our life-force is ongoing and must go beyond us. We may use it to shape a vessel, which we then send forth on the currents of the world. We can entrust it to faith, as practiced in our community temple. Or we can cast it to the winds.[DM] (Xun over Kan)



60 Jie, Limitation, Control: “Joyous in passing through danger, finding proportion by occupying the right place.” Under threat of being ‘swamped,’ one learns the importance of voluntary limitation.[DM] (Kan over Dui)



61 Zhongfu, Inner Trust: “Joyous and gentle: thereby truly the country is transformed... ‘River dolphins, good fortune.’ The power of trust extends even to river dolphins.” This one is full of feeling, and that one exerts a gentle influence.[DM] (Xun over Dui)



62 Xiaoguo, Preponderance of the Small: The formation is roused by movement. It is not fitting to make convulsive changes. It is better to enact one’s commitments ritually, with a bit

more emphasis than usual. If one identifies with a bird, it should be a songbird hopping on near branches, not a solitary flier heading toward a foreboding peak. Strangely enough, birds and mountains are closely associated in this text.[DM] (Zhen over Gen)



63 Ji Ji, After Completion: The *qi* is settled in the *dantian* (alchemical field), and the *jing* (bodily essence/sperm) is circulating through all tissues.[LYM] One has internalized a vision and gotten across the great water. It is time to consolidate gains. But even one who achieves the elixir still has an infinite way to go, for he must help others to cross over the dangers still ahead.[DM] (Kan over Li)



64 Wei Ji, Before Completion: The *qi* is unsettled, flaring up and scattering; the *jing* is leaking downward, and has not been reversed.(LYM) Time to set out and cross the danger at hand, with a vision ahead of you as your guide.[DM] (Li over Kan)

Initials of Sources: JC--Justin Cheng; LLS--Li Lin Seet; DM--Denis Mair; OR--Ouzi Rotem; SJ--Si Jia; SDP--Su Dongpo; WB---Wang Bi; ZH--- Zhang Huang; ZX---Zhu Xi; LYM--Liu Yimin