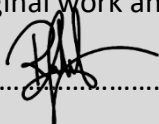




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Module code: SICH7022	Student ID number: 1803449	Educational support needs: <i>Yes/No</i>
Dissertation title: A Study of <i>Wujiu</i> in <i>Zhouyi</i> 《周易》「无咎」研究		
Supervisor: Prof. Huang Chung-Tien	Word count: 3,060	
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The Reflective Review

Initiation of the Research

The topic of my research is ‘A Study of *Wujiu* 无咎 in the *Zhouyi* 周易’. The idea of working on *Zhouyi* was something that came later because ever since I started my MA program, I had been focusing most of my attention on the *Lunyu* 論語. However, things started to change when I struggled to find a good topic to write about, especially following the rejection of my initial proposition of the research topic by my supervisor Prof. Huang Chung-Tien, as it had already been done by his previous student.

I started to look for Confucius’ sayings that refer to other classics and came across the saying that mentioned *Zhouyi*: ‘Adding some years to my life, with fifty to study the *Changes* I could really be without any great mistakes!’ (*Lunyu* 7.16 translated by Shaughnessy, 2022). Though there is an ongoing debate on the right interpretation of this passage, which I currently find impossible to address, it prompted me to alter my focus towards *Zhouyi*, particularly on exploring the idea of ‘fault prevention’. This topic is intriguing to me for two reasons. Firstly, topics about morality and ethics in classical studies have always been my subject of interest. Secondly, my supervisor is also an expert in this field, so he has the ability to provide me with development opportunities and adequate assistance. My supervisor supported this idea of mine and suggested narrowing down the research subject, requiring me to develop a specific topic within the classic.

The new topic seemed promising but came with challenges given my unfamiliarity with *Zhouyi*, a classic known for its complexity. Despite this, I remained resolute and decided to accept the challenge because *Zhouyi* is one the most important Confucian classics, and spending months studying it will greatly benefit my future studies. Therefore, to equip myself with the necessary knowledge, I utilised the remaining two weeks of my summer holiday to audit a course on *Zhouyi* delivered by my supervisor. After that, I continued catching up on the rest of the course recordings in my spare time and completed the reading of *Zhouyi Chengzhuan Zhuping* 周易程傳註評, the main material for the course. In my next module, Confucian Classics Studies, I also managed to pick up some historical development of *Zhouyi*’s studies. These also led me to identify one of the divinatory terms, *wujiu*, which is translated as ‘there will be no mistake’

(Legge, 1899) or ‘without blame’ (Lynn, 1994). This topic aligns with my initial idea of ‘fault prevention’ and remains in the realm of morality and ethics. More importantly, despite its frequent appearance in the text, *wujiu* is considered understudied both in ancient (from the Han to Qing dynasties) and recent scholarship. My supervisor affirmed my findings and encouraged me to pursue this topic, highlighting its moderate difficulty and the ample room for expression it offers. I proceeded to outline two major points I would like to address, namely what is *wujiu* and how hexagram and line statements signify *wujiu*. These points were ultimately written down in my research proposal.

Reflection

I started my dissertation work sticking to the pre-designed timeline, aiming for completion within 13 weeks. Similar to my previous essays, I commenced by doing the reading; but this time I directly dived into the main body first because, in my previous coursework, I dedicated most of my time to producing a strong introduction. However, it would be too risky and inefficient if I maintained the same pattern this time. Therefore, I broke down the timeline into three groups, namely Chapter Two writing, Chapter Three writing, and finalisation.

The preparation process for the first half of Chapter Two, exploring the significance of *wujiu*, experienced fewer challenges as I had access to sufficient philological and exegesis references, along with a reliable search engine (Academia Sinica Ancient Chinese Corpus) that helped me locate the pre-Qin texts containing *wujiu*. I completed the writing in a short period of time and sent it to my supervisor for review. He acknowledged my work and suggested I delve into more depth given that I worked on a narrowed topic. I struggled to find a way to improve my content, and, therefore, I sought my senior, Isabelle, a doctoral student in classical Chinese philology, for help. She pointed out that my paper saw the evolution of the meaning of the character *jiu* 咎 but did not explicitly explain how the evolution progressed. This prompted me to consider not only the expansion of content but also the identification of similar issues. I successfully completed the revision within the designated time frame, and the overall progress was positive up to this point.

Nevertheless, the first major challenge was in the second half of Chapter Two. As I delved into the three most influential commentaries in philosophical school (Wang Bi, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi), I discovered that they all affirmed the notion of ‘good at repairing mistakes’, promoted by the author of *Xici* 繫辭, one of the canonical commentaries of *Yijing* 易經, and they did not offer extensive interpretation for *wujiu*. Subsequently, I also consulted the work of Lai Zhide, a Ming dynasty scholar, as well as *Zhouyi Zhezong* 周易折中, a collection of commentaries compiled in the Qing dynasty, and returned with a similar result. This uniformity indicates the unanimity of the *Xici* among traditional commentators. However, this finding did not help much in my research because many questions remained unanswered, including a lot of readings of the line statement that did not comply with the concept of ‘good at repairing mistakes’. This also left me feeling disheartened as I dedicated too much time to this part without significant outcomes. To ensure timely progress, I decided to move on to the next chapter and planned to revisit this part later once I finished the next one. Nonetheless, I took this opportunity to reflect and note down the challenges I faced, intending to consult them with my supervisor, hoping for breakthrough guidance during our upcoming video conference.

As I continued to Chapter Three, analysing the line statements to see how they signify *wujiu*, I encountered difficulty due to the limited preexisting research on this topic that I could refer to, and I had no idea how to proceed, especially in terms of the methodological approach I should use. Despite this, in order to maintain progress, I started with the easiest part, which is to list down the hexagram and line statements containing *wujiu* and observe their distribution across six-line positions 爻位. Then, I proceed with interpreting those statements.

Considering that *Yijing* is known as the oldest and most sophisticated Chinese classic, interpreting its received text should be considered one of the most difficult parts of the research process. In choosing reference materials, I leant more to the traditional exegesis works, and to maintain objectivity, I did not rely on one particular commentary tradition. Instead, I selected several commentaries such as *Zhouyi Zhengyi* 周易正義, *Zhouyi Chengshizhuan* 周易程氏傳, and *Zhouyi Benyi* 周易本義 as my main references. For a new learner, Cheng Yi’s commentary is preferable not only because it was the key commentary of his era, but also because it provides a detailed explanation. On the other hand, Wang Bi’s commentary was selected as another

source of reference because he champions the metaphorical significance of the hexagrams, their statements, and line statements, and is also believed to be the foundation of Cheng Yi's reading. However, Cheng Yi doesn't completely conform with Wang Bi in some cases, so to resolve the dispute, I consulted Zhu Xi's work. While inheriting the commentary tradition of Cheng Yi, he doesn't blindly follow the philosophical reading but also agrees with the divinatory idea of *Yijing*, making it an ideal judge for this situation.

Nonetheless, there are times, albeit not many, when three commentators speak differently about one thing. In this case, I would look out for another later collection of commentaries, such as *Zhouyi Zhezong*, to consult on how they resolve this issue, or, alternatively, consult recent translations. For instance, the three commentators interpret differently on the sixth-line statement of *Daguo* 大過 hexagram, and I decided to select Zhu Xi's reading because both *Zhouyi Zhezong* and *Zhouyi Chengzhuan Zhuping* agree with it. However, there are also times when Wang Bi and Cheng Yi agree, but Zhu Xi differs, and further consultation with other sources provides alternative readings that explain better. For example, in interpreting the second-line statement of *Shike* 噬嗑 hexagram, they all interpret *miebi* 滅鼻 as 'to hurt or cut off the nose', and they also agree that the second to the fifth line of the hexagram refers to 'the executor' of the punishment. However, both Wang Bi and Cheng Yi argue that the one who suffers the damage in the nose is the one being punished, while Zhu Xi suggests otherwise by stating the damage is suffered by the executor. Concerning the second line, which should indicate 'the executor', Zhu Xi's reading sounds more logical. Yet, upon further consultation on *Zhouyi Zhezong*, it provides an alternative reading for *miebi* 滅鼻 as 'to have the nose covered', which provides a better explanation than Zhu Xi's interpretation.

After completing the reading of hexagrams and line statements that contain *wujiu*, I concluded that there are at least two meanings of *wujiu*, further solidifying the finding mentioned in Chapter Two. Yet, up to this stage of the research, two questions remained unanswered: the connection between *wujiu* and line position, and the conditions for diviners to attain *wujiu*. Initially, I planned to address these two questions using two independent steps, but my further research produced a contradictory result.

The discussion on the relationship between divinatory statements and line positions had already started as early as the era of *Xici*. Recent studies also employ statistical means to identify this correlation. However, since I only focused on a particular divinatory statement, *wujiu*, solely relying on statistical approaches did not yield significant insights. Therefore, I came up with the idea of integrating the two research questions. This approach allows me to investigate the connections between *wujiu* and line statements not only through numerical analysis but also by examining ‘the conditions’ stated in the line statements. This idea gained further support as I discovered the shared similarities in terms of ‘the conditions’ in those line statements, making the inductive analysis method applicable in this research.

Even so, the main obstacle in achieving the integration lay in defining how to classify the line statements. I searched for papers that discuss the divinatory terms not only by numerical approach but also by textual analysis, and I found a very meaningful master’s dissertation by Taiwan scholar Lu Yao-pei. As she worked on a broader topic, she studied line statements in every line position in the upper trigrams. Her work succeeded her senior’s master’s thesis on the lower trigrams. While their approach did not apply to my research, the idea of categorising based on upper and lower trigrams did offer a valuable perspective. I followed their approach and divided the table of distributions of *wujiu* into two, comparing them side by side. To my surprise, the numbers for each position are almost identical, making grouping them based on frequency possible. Furthermore, the notion of pairing the line positions in upper and lower trigrams is also theoretically supported by the idea of ‘correspond’ 應, one of the important principles in *Zhouyi*. I was very excited, so I immediately reported my findings to my supervisor and gained clearance to proceed. Ultimately, I completed the analysis and writing within two weeks.

While I successfully completed the Chapter Three draft on time, I identified one limitation, which one of the examiners on my oral presentation also pointed out: I did not include hexagram statements containing *wujiu* in my analysis in Chapter Three. Although I have explicitly stated in my research questions that I will only focus on line statements and line positions, it is natural for readers to question the exclusion of hexagram statements from the discussion when eight of them clearly have a *wujiu* statement. I noticed that some scholars suggested the difficulty of judging hexagrams because they are more subject to change than

line statements. They require holistic analysis, and it is hard to tell whether a hexagram is good or bad based on the statements or prognostications alone. However, due to the limitation of time and my knowledge, I failed to collect more evidence to support this argument. I had no choice but to acknowledge this limitation in the hope of resolving this issue in the future.

Lastly, during the preparation period for Chapter Three, the long-awaited video conference with my supervisor finally took place in mid-January. In addressing Chapter Two, my supervisor advised me to broadly discuss *wujiu*, and therefore, I was suggested not to solely rely on the traditional exegesis traditions but also to do a lot of extensive reading. Fortunately, I was already right on track because ever since I completed the commentaries reading in early January, I directly moved on to read some archaeological writing on early *Yijing* manuscripts and contemporary articles on *Yijing* prognostications. Now, the only remaining task was to consult some Western scholarship. Upon completing Chapter Three, I still had approximately four weeks before the deadline. I allocated one week time to produce the introduction and conclusion parts, leaving around two weeks for reading and writing the remaining half of Chapter Two. This allowed me to have a full week for revision before draft submission to Moodle. However, in reality, I had only about a week for reading since I had to reserve another week for writing. Despite this, since I read faster in English than in Chinese, I still managed to read and refer to some important works by notable scholars such as Edward Shaughnessy, Richard Kunst and Joseph Adler. Given more time, I could have referred to more scholarly publications, including those by Cheng Chung-ying and Dennis Schilling, especially the writings of Richard and Helmut Wilhelm, to have a better understanding of the Western *Zhouyi* scholarship and its progression over the previous century. This underscores the need to allocate more time to reading non-Chinese references in future endeavours. Nonetheless, I still benefited a lot from Shaughnessy's works; in particular, his pioneering classification of *wujiu* provided me with a direction to conclude my work in Chapter Two, thereby completing my first full draft.

Outcome

It has been more than three weeks since I submitted my first full draft and approximately a week after the oral presentation. However, I still find myself experiencing a mix of excitement and astonishment at having completed my first-ever Chinese dissertation. Given that Chinese

is not my native language, and after twelve years of absence from academia after my graduation in management, which is a completely different field from humanities studies, I saw completing a graduation dissertation as an almost impossible task. My supervisor understood my situation and initially suggested I work on a topic that would allow me to integrate my previous studies into my current research. Despite the odds, I still decided to step out of my comfort zone and challenge the new frontier with the full support and encouragement of my supervisor. With his aid, as well as the support and care I received from my teachers and friends, I finally managed to finish my work on time. I have come to realise that this task was not as hard as I initially thought as long as I approached it with the right method and a positive attitude.

Throughout the process of writing this dissertation, I found the reading and analysing parts particularly enjoyable. Being new to the field of *Zhouyi*, everything seemed fresh and challenging, and I gained a wealth of knowledge from every material that I encountered. As I read, I could quickly grasp and summarise the important points of the writing, as well as when I reflect, I could integrate new knowledge with what I have learnt previously. Therefore, I attribute this enjoyment to my comprehension ability. Additionally, my strength in planning allowed me to formulate a good plan that served as a guiding framework and balance check during the research. By doing so, I could maintain the balance between progress and quality, while not being eaten away by time pressure. Nevertheless, I found the process of converting my thoughts into words quite challenging. Though the language barrier may have been one of the issues, I personally believe that my overcautious and perfectionist attitude was the main cause. I was seriously troubled by them in my previous coursework, but with careful planning and a strong commitment to adhere to my plans, I managed to control that drive and successfully finalise my work ahead of the deadline. Additionally, I came to realise the importance of documenting every step of the research, a habit that I have yet to fully develop. This practice enables me to track my progress and easily backtrack my work if necessary.

From this research, I realised that I still lack a comprehensive understanding of *Zhouyi* as well as its recent scholarly developments. Furthermore, aside from conventional textual research approaches, I could have put more effort into exploring the potential use of other research methodologies that I could use in this research. Having established a solid foundation in traditional exegesis during this research, I plan to allocate more time to exploring contemporary

Zhouyi scholarly works and Western scholarship in my future research endeavours. Specifically, I am eager to delve into Western philosophy and understand how philosophical approaches can be applied to *Zhouyi*'s research.

Overall, I really enjoyed this whole journey of dissertation writing, and I believe it will become an important milestone in my life. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supervisor for his guidance and support, to the Academy, teachers, and friends for their encouragement and care, and to my family, who may be miles away but never fail to provide me with love and emotional support. I sincerely believe that I would not have been able to complete this study without each and every one of them.