

The Four Terms

An Analysis
By Jim Cleaver

The Four Terms

- The most distinctive feature of the hexagram statements is the presence of four 'divinatory' terms.
- Sometimes called the 'Four Virtues' (四德 Sì Dé)
(yuan=ren/humanity, heng=li/rites, li=yi/morality, zhen=zhi/wisdom)
- They are also considered synonymous with the four seasons
(four directions, numerals 1-4, and anything there are four of)
- The four characters are: **yuán**, **hēng**, **lì** and **zhēn**.
- They are the among most common characters in the Yi, collectively occurring 304 times, nearly half of which are in the Judgment texts.
- Indeed the four comprise the entire Judgment for H: 1,
- and thus constitute the first four words of the book.

The Four Terms (cont.)

- Many hexagrams begin with these as, or in, their opening statement (suggesting their ancient origins)
- eight contain all four: H: 1, 2, 3, 17, 19, 25, // 45, 49
- five contain three terms: H: 30, // 31, 58, 62, 63
- ten contain two terms: H: 14, 18, 21, 26, // 34, 36, 37, 46, 47, 50
- eighteen contain one (usu. heng): H: 4, 7, 9, 15, 22, 24, 27 //
H: 32, 33, 36, 37, 40, 45, 51, 55, 59, 60, 64
- Most will contain some of the four within the Judgment, and often several times.
- Only six Judgment texts do not contain any of the four
H: 20, 35, 38, 44, 48, 52.

Translating the Four Terms

Translations must work singly, as two word pairs yuan-heng & li-zhen, and as a four word phrase – yuan-heng-li-zhen.

Char	Term	Wilhelm (1950)	Cleaver (1998)	Gotshalk (1999)	Rutt (2002)
元	Yuán	sublime	initial(ly)	grand	supreme
亨	Hēng	success	sacrifice	sacrifice	offering
			is a prerequisite, or the basis for a:		
利	Lì	furthering	favorable	beneficial	favorable
		through			
貞	Zhēn	perseverance	divination	divination	divination

Translating the Four Terms (cont.)

- Yuan-heng could be a noun, the name of a particular type of sacrifice, which I might translate as a “foundational or originating sacrifice”
- It could also be translated as a verb “initiate the sacrifice” or “begin with a sacrificial offering” (something to initialize an endeavor)
- My point is that perhaps some sort of “sacrifice” is appropriate, if not necessary, for there to be a successful outcome.
- BN: p.238/318 (2003) translates Y-H-L-Z as ‘great sacrificial offerings, a favorable divination’ or ‘it is favorable to divine’
- 享 xiǎng (note similarity to heng) offering (as in a sacrificial offering)
- (occurs in H: 41.0*) (is very close to heng both graphically and in meaning)
- * This is probably a mistake and should be hēng.
- I considered *hēng* to be Judgment Text language, while *xiǎng* is Line Text terminology.
- The other two occurrences of xiang are in line texts: 42.2 & 47.2

Four Terms Table

J: = Judgment Text

L: = Line Text (see top rows Hexagram 1 & 33)

Six hexagrams without any of the four terms in the Judgment text. (20 // 35, 38, 44, 48, 52)

*Three hexagrams in which xiang occurs (heng & xiang are almost identical) (41.0, 42.2, 47.2) These are noted in the Heng column.

Hexagram	Yuán 元	Hèng 亨	Lì 利	Zhēn 貞	Occurs
1	J: 1.0 L:	J: 1.0 L:	J: 1.0 L: 1.2, 1.5	J: 1.0 L:	J: 4+ L: 2+6x
2	2.0 2.6	2.0	2.0, 2.0 2.2, 2.7	2.0, 2.0 2.3, 2.7	6+ 5+11x
3	3.0	3.0	3.0, 3.0 3.1, 3.1, 3.4	3.0 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 3.5	5+ 7+12x
4		4.0	4.0 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6	4.0	3+ 4+7x
5		5.0	5.0 5.1	5.0 5.5	3+ 2+5x
6	6.5		6.0, 6.0	6.3, 6.4 7.0	2+ 3+5x 1+
7			7.5	7.5 8.0, 8.4	2+3x 2+ 2+4x
8	8.0			8.0 8.2, 8.4	2+ 2+4x
9		9.0		9.6	1+ 1+2x
10	10.6	10.0		10.2, 10.5	1+ 3+4x
11	11.5	11.0		11.3, 11.6	2+ 3+4x
12		12.1, 12.2	12.0	12.0 12.1	2+ 3+5x
13		13.0	13.0, 13.0	13.0	4+ 0+8x
14	14.0	14.0 14.3	14.6		2+ 2+4x
15		15.0	15.4, 15.5, 15.5, 15.6 16.0	15.2	1+ 5+6x 1+
16				16.2, 16.5	2+3x
17	17.0	17.0 17.6	17.0 17.3	17.0 17.1, 17.3, 17.4	4+ 5+9x
18	18.0	18.0	18.0		3+ 1+4x
19	19.0	19.0	19.0 19.2, 19.3	19.0 19.1	4+ 3+7x 0+
20			20.2, 20.4	20.2	3+3x
21		21.0	21.0 21.4	21.4, 21.5	2+ 3+5x
22		22.0	22.0	22.3	2+ 1+3x
23			23.0 23.5	23.1, 23.2	1+ 3+4x
24		24.0	24.0		2+ 1+3x
25	24.1 25.0	25.0	25.0, 25.0 25.2, 25.6	25.0 25.4	5+ 3+8x
26	26.4	26.6	26.0, 26.0 26.1, 26.3, 26.3	26.0 26.3	3+ 6+9x
27			27.3, 27.6	27.0 27.3, 27.5	1+ 4+5x
28		28.0	28.0 28.2		2+ 1+3x
29		29.0			2+ 0+1x
30		30.0	30.0	30.0	3+ 1+4x
31	30.2	31.0	31.0	31.0 31.4	3+ 1+4x
32		32.0	32.0, 32.0 32.1	32.0 32.1, 32.3, 32.5	4+ 4+8x

Four Terms Table (cont.)

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*Three hexagrams in which xiang occurs (heng & xiang are almost identical) (41.0, 42.2, 47.2) These are noted in the Heng column.

Hexagram	Yuán 元	Hēng 亨	Lì 利	Zhēn 貞	Occurs
33	J: 33.0 L:	J: 33.0 L:	J: 33.0 L: 33.6	J: 33.0 L: 33.5	J: 3+ L: 2+ 5x
34			34.0 34.6	34.0 34.2, 34.3, 34.4	2+ 4+ 6x
35			35.5 36.0 36.5 37.0	35.1, 35.2, 35.4, 35.6 36.0 36.3, 36.5 37.0	0+ 5+ 5x 2+ 3+ 5x 2+ 1+ 3x
37				37.0 37.2	0+ 1+ 1x
38	38.4			39.0, 39.0, 39.0 39.6	4+ 1+ 5x
39			40.0 40.6	40.2, 40.3	1+ 3+ 4x
40			41.0 41.5	41.0 41.2, 41.6	3+ 1 5+ 8x + 1
41	41.0 41.5	41.0* xiàng 亨	41.2, 41.6	41.2, 41.6	2+ 5+ 7x + 1
42	42.1, 42.5	42.2* xiàng 亨	42.0, 42.0 42.1, 42.4	42.2	2+ 0+ 2x
43			43.0, 43.0		0+ 2+ 2x
44				44.1	0+ 2+ 2x
45	45.5 46.0	45.0, 45.0 46.0	45.0, 45.0, 45.0 45.2, 45.3	45.0 45.5	6+ 4+ 10x
46		46.0 46.4	46.2, 46.6	46.5, 46.6	2+ 5+ 7x
47		47.0 47.2* xiàng 亨	47.2, 47.5	47.0	2+ 2+ 4x + 1
48	48.6 49.0	49.0	49.0	49.0 49.3, 49.6	0+ 1+ 1x 4+ 2+ 6x
49	50.0	50.0	50.1, 50.5, 50.6	50.5	2+ 4+ 6x
50		51.0			1+ 0+ 1x 0+
51				52.1	2+ 2x
52			52.1 53.0 53.3	52.1 53.0	2+ 1+ 3x
53			54.0 54.2, 54.6	54.2	1+ 3+ 4x
54		55.0			1+ 0+ 1x 2+
55		56.0		56.0 56.2, 56.3	2+ 2+ 4x
56		57.0	57.0, 57.0 57.1, 57.5	57.1, 57.5, 57.6	3+ 5+ 8x
57		58.0	58.0	58.0	3+ 0+ 3x
58		59.0	59.0, 59.0	59.0	4+ 1+ 5x
59	60.0 60.4	60.0 60.4	60.0 60.6	60.0 60.6	2+ 2+ 4x
60			61.0, 61.0	61.0 61.6	3+ 1+ 4x
61		62.0	62.0	62.0 62.4	3+ 1+ 4x
62		63.0	63.0	63.0	3+ 0+ 3x
63		64.0 64.3	64.0 64.3	64.2, 64.4, 64.5	2+ 4+ 6x
64					2+ 4+ 6x
Total	27x	47x + 3	119x	111x	304x + 3
Judgments:	13x	40x + 1	58x	35x	146x + 1
Lines:	14x	7x + 2	61x	76x	158x + 2