

22



BÌ

ADORNED

Adorned.

Adornment is blessed.

It is favorable for small to advance.

By making himself attractive, someone small is enabled to advance. The line texts seem to tell the story of a betrothal: A prospective bridegroom and his attendants travel to a lady's home with betrothal gifts. Though his gifts are meager, they are beautiful and he is accepted. The bridegroom and the lady probably represent the subject and his ruler. See XIǎO XÙ (9) SMALL IS TAMED, note 4.¹

Lines

first line/9 ——— His feet are adorned.
He leaves his carriage and walks.

His attractiveness can only be seen if he abases himself by getting down from his carriage. In order to be accepted by the person whom he approaches, he must avoid any semblance of aggressiveness or ambition. This lowest line represents low social position and is also associated with the feet.²

line two/6 — — He adorns his beard.

A superficial beautification makes him more attractive. He trims or plaits his beard.

line three/9 ——— His adornments get wet.
Keeping on will bring good fortune.

Although he gets wet fording a river, perseverance will bring him to the far shore. Line three is the place of adversity. The gap between the lower and upper trigrams is the dangerous river to be crossed. He is both active and safe because this is the active central line of a Kǎn ䷮ Pit trigram formed by lines two through four; this line normally represents safety in the midst of danger.³

line four/6 — — Adorned but stopped
Are his long-maned white horses.
He comes not for plunder
but marriage.

He halts his brilliant entourage in order to show that his intentions are friendly. Line four is the place of the officer, who waits passively (— —) for acceptance by his ruler.

line five/6 — — Though adorned like a hill garden,
The bolts of cloth he offers are few.
His difficulties will end in good fortune.

Though his betrothal gifts are paltry, they are beautiful and he is accepted. Line five is the place of the ruler, who like a bride accepts (passive line — —) his subordinate's advance. Here as elsewhere in the hexagram, physical beauty may symbolize some other sort of beauty.

top line/9 ——— Adornment made plain.
Averts harm.

He removes his adornments. By hiding his light in this way, he avoids the appearance of trying to outshine his ruler. Because it is above the line of the ruler, line five, this top line holds the possibility of conflict between subject and ruler.

STRUCTURE ䷮ 艮 Gēn Keep Still (stop, stopped, restraint)
䷲ 離 Luó Shining Light (shining, shone upon)

In a situation where his ruler above him stops him from advancing freely (upper trigram ䷮), the subject makes himself shinningly beautiful (lower trigram ䷲) and his ruler accepts him into high position (passive, accepting line five — —).

SEQUENCE The shining prize he won in SHÍ HÈ (21) BITING THROUGH makes him attractive to his ruler, enabling him to rise.

Or else: Rather than actively BITING THROUGH, he makes himself passively beautiful and is helped to rise.

Notes

1. ADORNED — The word 賁 *bì* “adorned,” “variegated,” contains the element 貝 *bèi* “cowrie.” Cowries are beautiful small seashells that were strung together and used as jewelry and money. For their use as money, see SŪN (41) REDUCTION, line five, and YÌ (42) INCREASE, line two.

2. “His feet are adorned.” (first line) — This adornment is probably fine shoes, but it may be paint, tattooing, or jewelry, perhaps cowrie anklets.

3. “get wet” (line three) — This concept is fully developed in RÚ (5) GETTING WET.