

HEXAGRAM 38

K'UEI THE ESTRANGED, OPPOSITES¹



Component trigrams:

Below: TUI, a body of water, pool, marsh, joy.

Above: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.

TEXT The Estranged—good fortune in small matters.²

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT In this hexagram, fire moves upwards, the water moves downwards.³ (It is as though they were) two women living under one roof whose wishes do not accord. But, when joy and beauty are conjoined³—what radiance! The yielding (Yin principle) advances and ascends to the middle (of the upper trigram); it responds to the firm (Yang principle)—hence good fortune in things small. Though heaven and earth lie apart, they are at one in their activity. Men and women are opposites, but their desire is for union. Everything has its own separateness and accomplishes its purpose according to its kind. The timely application of this hexagram is of the greatest value.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes fire above and a marshy lake below.³ The Superior Man achieves difference through unity.⁴

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Regret vanishes! Do not follow the straying horse, for it will return of its own accord.⁵ Though he allows evil men to visit him, he remains without error. **COMMENTARY** That is to say, his very purpose in receiving them is to avoid error.⁶

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE He encountered his lord in a narrow lane—no error!⁷ **COMMENTARY** He was not in error for he had not strayed from his path.

6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE He watched them dragging at his axle and striking his oxen. As for himself, his topknot and nose were sliced off—not much of a beginning, but there was an end (to his troubles).⁸ **COMMENTARY** The first part of this passage is indicated by the unsuitable position of the line. That, despite this poor beginning, there is an end (to his troubles—or ours—) can be deduced from this line's meeting with a firm one (immediately above it).

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE After suffering estrangement and loneliness, she met an admirable husband and mutual confidence grew between them⁹—unpleasantness, but no error! **COMMENTARY** What is said about mutual confidence and freedom from error indicates the fulfilment of what is willed.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Regret vanishes! The head of the clan bites through the flesh (or meat). What is there to prevent him proceeding (with his plans)?¹⁰ **COMMENTARY** What is said about his biting through the flesh indicates that to proceed (with current plans) will result in blessings.¹¹

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE (Wandering) estranged and lonely, he saw a boar covered with mud and a waggon loaded with demons. First he stretched his bow, but then put it aside. It is not an obstacle but a matter of betrothal (which causes delay or hesitation). If rain is encountered during the conduct of affairs, good fortune will ensue.¹² **COMMENTARY** The last sentence implies the dispersal of all doubt.¹³

NOTES (1) It is the different nature of the component trigrams which indicates the meaning given to this hexagram. (2) The implication is that we should not try to proceed with great matters, unless encouraged to do so by a favourable moving line. (3) A reference to the component trigrams, which imply a union between the sexes. In

the context of opposites, two people of the same sex cannot get along, whereas a mating of the sexes brings joy. (4) That is to say, he applies the same moral principles in all his dealings, though his methods must differ according to the nature of each task. (5) This must be interpreted in the light of its bearing on our problems. (6) We must expect to encounter unlikeable people whom it would be impolitic or dangerous to ignore. (7) Chinese lanes can be **VERY** narrow. It is probable that he inconvenienced his lord, who was doubtless approaching with a group of retainers. The implications are that we are not to blame, any inconvenience we cause will not be deliberate. (8) This is a frighteningly inauspicious line. We must expect severe trouble; the only comfort we can take is the knowledge that it will not be permanent. (9) For those to whom the literal interpretation does not apply, the last six words of the commentary are all that matter. (10) This just means that all will go well with our plans. The head of the clan is our mind; the flesh is the difficulty we shall succeed in overcoming. (11) I.e. unexpected good fortune. (12) The first two sentences imply that we shall meet with unpleasant and frightening things; that, at first, we shall think to fend them off, but then decide to let them be. The sentence about betrothal means only that there will be some delay or hesitation for very good reasons. The last sentence may or may not mean exactly what it says. If we decide that it is not to be taken literally, then we must take it to mean that a slight setback on the way is a good omen. (13) Coupling this commentary with what is said about rain, we may suppose that, if rain (or an unexpected setback) occurs, then we shall no longer have any reason to doubt the successful outcome of our plans.