

HEXAGRAM 2¹K'UN² THE PASSIVE PRINCIPLE

Component trigrams:

Below: K'UN, earth, female, passive, etc.

Above: K'UN, earth, female, passive, etc.

TEXT The Passive Principle. Sublime success! Its omen is a mare, symbolizing advantage. The Superior Man has an objective and sets forth to gain it. At first he goes astray, but later finds his bearings. It is advantageous to gain friends in the west and the south, but friends in the east and the north will be lost to us. Peaceful and righteous persistence brings good fortune.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT Exalted indeed is the sublime Passive Principle! Gladly it receives the celestial force (of the Creative Principle) into itself, wherefrom all things receive their birth. This Passive Principle contains a vast plenitude of objects and into it the celestial power (literally 'virtue') enters unhindered. It is an all-embracing, shining vessel brimming with multitudinous contents. The mare symbolizes

those (passive, female) creatures which wander unfettered throughout its confines. Gentle and accommodating, how auspicious is this omen! The passage about the Superior Man setting forth to gain his object suggests that, though at first he will lose his way due to some confusion, ultimately his situation will improve and return to normal.³ Finding friends in the south and west really means that we should make friends with people of our own kind. Our losing friends in the east and north points to a situation in which, ultimately, there will be cause for rejoicing. The good fortune resulting from peaceful persistence will be due to our accord with the terrestrial forces.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes the passivity of the terrestrial forces. The Superior Man displays the highest virtue by embracing all things.

THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT The Passive Principle, thanks to its exceeding softness, can act with tremendous power.⁴ Silent, tranquil, its virtue is amorphous until, receiving into itself the subjective force, it becomes clearly defined. Embracing all that exists, it becomes bright and shines forth. Its essential characteristic is glad acceptance. After receiving the celestial power, it acts in harmony with the sequence of time.

(The rest of this commentary is attached to the individual lines concerned.)

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Hoarfrost underfoot betokens the coming of solid ice. **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** A household which accumulates good deeds will enjoy blessings in abundance, while one which piles up evils will inevitably face a host of sufferings. The assassination of a ruler by his minister or the crime of patricide does not result from the events of a single day and night. The causes have gradually accumulated and, though they should have been observed long before, were not noticed and put right in time. The passage about hoarfrost underfoot being followed by the forming of solid ice indicates a need for caution.⁵ **THE MAIN COMMENTARY** This line indicates the approach of (winter's) dark power; following nature's sequence, the season of solid ice is at hand.

6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Straight and of broad capacity, though we do nothing, all our affairs prosper. **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** Straightness denotes rectitude. Broadness denotes a capacity for righteousness. The Superior Man is reverent and thereby strengthens his inner self; his righteousness enables him to deal justly with the external world. With reference and righteousness established in our hearts, we shall never depart from moral excellence. Straight, of broad capacity and great—whatever we undertake is sure to prosper; no longer need we doubt the successful outcome of our affairs.³ **THE MAIN COMMENTARY** The six in this place indicates a straight-forward movement to occupy a spacious area. Though nothing is done, everything prospers—this is a glorious characteristic of the terrestrial forces.

6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE Concealment of talent (or beauty) constitutes the right course. As to the undertaking of public affairs, though immediate success may not be achieved, their ultimate fruition is assured. **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** The passive dark force has many beauties but keeps them hidden. In public service, we must not presume to settle affairs by ourselves; instead we should emulate the terrestrial forces and behave like a wife (to her husband) or like one who serves his king. They complete nothing; yet, in course of time, fruition comes of itself.³ **THE MAIN COMMENTARY** Talent (beauty) now concealed will be unfolded when the time is ripe; once it is engaged in public affairs, this talent will become great and glorious.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Taciturnity—no blame, no praise. **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** The transformations caused by the celestial and terrestrial forces bring forth a rich profusion of plants and trees; but when those forces are inactive, the Superior Man avoids the limelight. This passage has the underlying meaning of 'Be extremely watchful'. **THE MAIN COMMENTARY** The passage means that, with proper caution, we shall escape trouble.³

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE A yellow⁵ jacket—sublime good fortune. **THE WÊN YEN COMMENTARY** The Superior Man, yellow (virtuous) within, seeks to grasp life's fundamental principles and is contented with his prosperous condition. The beauty lying within him permeates his whole being with joy and influences all his undertakings.³ Such is