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## REDUCTION

Reduction.

Faithful allegiance

brings supreme good fortune and no harm.

One may continue in this way.

It is favorable to advance.

What offering to make?

Two bowls of grain are sufficient.

Reduction makes advance possible. It is best to reduce oneself to the position of a subordinate. Only from such a position will one be able to advance. And the lower one's position, the smaller the sacrifice the spirits will demand in return for success.<sup>1</sup>

### *Lines*

first line/9 ——— Though he skimps on the sacrifice,  
He may go forward without harm.  
He reduces the wine offering.

The spirits will protect him, even if he neglects part of the appropriate sacrifice. This lowest line represents low social position. Someone who has reduced himself to such a low position may advance safely.

line two/9 ——— It is favorable to continue.  
But marching to war will bring misfortune.  
Not reduce but increase.

Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate. From such a

reduced position it is possible now to increase. One may advance as long as one does not advance aggressively (“marching to war”).

line three/6 — — If three men go on a journey,  
they will lose one man.  
If one man goes on a journey,  
he will gain a companion.

Increase leads to reduction, reduction leads to increase. “A companion” could also be read “companions.” Line three often deals with the unfortunate results of an attempt at self-aggrandizement. This is like the three men who lose one man. But this hexagram says that reduction will lead to good fortune. That is why someone who goes alone will gain a friend.

line four/6 — — Reducing fever  
Speeds recovery’s joy.  
And averts harm.

Line four often presents the solution to a problem. The word 疾 *jí*, translated “fever,” can mean either “illness” or “haste.”

line five/6 — — If he is increased  
By a tortoise shell worth ten strings of cowries,  
He cannot refuse.  
Supreme good fortune.

If increase is forced upon him, he must not refuse it. He either receives a valuable tortoise shell from his ruler or else divination with one tells him to increase. Line five is the place of the ruler and of success. The passive line (— —) indicates receptiveness toward the ruler.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

top line/9 ——— Not reduce but increase:  
No harm.  
Continuing will bring good fortune.  
It is favorable to advance.  
He gains a slave without family.

The time for reduction is past and now it is time for INCREASE (the next hexagram). The top line of a hexagram sometime takes on the nature of the hexagram that follows it in the sequence. The only hint of reduction that remains here is the fact that the slave brings no wife or children with him.<sup>5</sup>

STRUCTURE    ䷳ 艮 Gēn      Keep Still (stopped)  
                   ䷵ 兌 Duì      Stand Straight (break free)

One who stands up from a low position (lower trigram ䷵) will be stopped (upper trigram ䷳). The two solid lines at the bottom of the hexagram (䷵) are reduced to one at the top (䷳).

SEQUENCE      The independent protagonist of the last hexagram XIÈ (40) GETTING FREE gained release from his difficulties by withdrawal. Now, in order to get an opportunity to advance successfully, he reduces himself to a subordinate position.

### Notes

1. “bowls” (opening text) — The type of bowl specifically referred to is a large flattened spheroid called a 簋 *guǐ*. Typical early Zhou bronze *guǐ* were 15–20 centimeters (6–8 inches) high and 25–30 centimeters (10–12 inches) wide at the belly. They were used to offer cooked grain to the spirits.

2. “tortoise shell” (line five) — Tortoise shell divination was the main method used by the Shang kings and even under Zhou was considered more powerful than *Changes* divination. The tortoise shells used were valuable objects and were sometimes given as gifts both by and to great men. See Appendix B.

3. “ten strings of cowries” (line five) — Cowries are small warm water sea mollusks whose beautiful shiny shells were strung together in strings of five to ten and used as a form of currency. The figure of ten strings suggests a date of late Shang or early Zhou, about 1300 to 900 B.C. Ten strings is the highest number mentioned in oracle bone or bronze inscriptions of this period. By the time of the *Classic of Poetry* (詩經 *Shījīng*) around 700–500 B.C., the figure of 100 strings becomes more common. (Qu, 1950)

4. line five — Compare with line two of the next hexagram YÌ (42) INCREASE.

5. “slave without family” (top line) — See TÚN (33) THE PIGLET, note 3.