

## HEXAGRAM 31

## HSIEN ATTRACTION, SENSATION



*Component trigrams:*

*Below: KÊN, a mountain, hard, obstinate, perverse.*

*Above: TUI, a body of water, pool, marsh, joy.*

**TEXT** Attraction. Success! Righteous persistence brings reward. Taking a wife will result in good fortune.

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** Attraction involves stimulation. The yielding is above, the firm below.<sup>1</sup> Though they are opposite in character, a mutually responsive feeling enables them to be together. The stubborn and the joyous are conjoined,<sup>2</sup> with the man below the girl<sup>3</sup>—hence all the good things promised in the Text. The myriad objects owe their existence to the mutual stimulation subsisting between heaven and earth. Similarly, the holy sage stimulates men's hearts and the whole world is thenceforth at peace. The inner nature of everything in heaven and earth can be gauged by observing what it is that stimulates each of them.<sup>4</sup>

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes a lake<sup>5</sup> situated upon a mountain. In dealing with men, the Superior Man shows himself to be entirely void (of selfishness).

### *The Lines*

**6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** Sensation in the toe. **COMMENTARY** This implies that the will is fastened upon external matters.

**6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** Sensation in the legs—misfortune!<sup>6</sup> Good fortune comes to those who do not venture forth. **COMMENTARY** Despite these predictions, if we gladly accord with others, we shall come to no harm.<sup>7</sup>

**9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** Sensation in the thighs. He cleaves so closely to his wife (handmaiden, etc.) that for him to continue in this manner would be shameful. **COMMENTARY** Sensation in the thighs also denotes restlessness; while being guided by the will of a wife (or subordinate) involves clinging to what is inferior.

**9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE** Righteous persistence brings good fortune and regret vanishes; but only friends and immediate followers will waste their thoughts on one who dithers irresolutely to and fro. **COMMENTARY** Persistence rewarded and the vanishing of regret both result from our not having incited anyone to evildoing, but this irresolute conduct scarcely indicates clarity of mind (on our part).<sup>8</sup>

**9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE** Sensation in the fleshy covering of the spinal column—no regret. **COMMENTARY** This betokens inability to impose our will as yet.

**6 FOR THE TOP PLACE** Sensation in the jaws and the tongue. **COMMENTARY** This is a way of saying that we open wide our mouths and talk (too much).

**NOTES** (1) This is a reference to the component trigrams, whose position is auspicious, for the firm can easily support the weak. (2) Another reference to the component trigrams. (3) I doubt if this should be regarded as shedding light upon the ancient Chinese concept of the most acceptable position for intercourse; it is more likely to mean that the girl is able to depend upon the man as a plant depends upon the earth for its nourishment. (4) Men reveal their characters to those who observe what things cause them pleasure or pain. (5) The upper hexagram, Tui, denotes a marsh rather than a lake full of clear water, but I have avoided translating it as marsh because it has none of the derogatory significance possessed by the English word. The mountain lake or marsh suggests a wild, open place which provides a suitable symbol for the voidness referred to just below. (6) I.e. misfortune if we yield to the urge to exercise our legs by going somewhere else. (7) This means that, even if we do not stay at home—obviously the best course for us at this time—no harm will result provided that we accord with the wishes of others. (8) This suggests the rather negative good fortune of having a clear conscience; apparently we have little reason for self-congratulation, since our rather spineless conduct alienates everyone who is not bound to us by ties of blood or friendship.