

HEXAGRAM 62

HSIAO KUO THE SMALL GET BY



Component trigrams:

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

Above: CHÊN, thunder, movement, to sprout or quicken.

TEXT The Small Get By—success! Persistence in a righteous course brings reward. Small things can be accomplished now, but not great ones. When birds fly high, their singing is out of tune.¹ The humble, but not the mighty, are favoured now with great good fortune.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT This hexagram augurs success for the small; their persistence is rewarded and their actions accord with the times. The yielding (fifth line) obtains the central place (in the upper trigram); it is this which indicates good fortune in small matters. The firm (fourth line) fails to get a commanding position and is not central; hence, important matters should not be undertaken now. The image of a bird has been chosen; for, when birds fly high, they cannot sing harmoniously. That the humble, but not the mighty, are greatly favoured by fortune indicates that those ascending now will meet with difficulty, whereas those descending will find their way smooth.²

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes thunder over the mountains.³ The Superior Man now acts with too much reverence, experiences too much sorrow from bereavement and is over thrifty in satisfying his needs.⁴

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE A bird in flight brings misfortune.
COMMENTARY There is nothing we can do about it.⁵

6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Passing by (the spirit tablets of) his ancestors, he encountered (the ghost of or else the tablet of) his late

mother.⁶ He did not get as far as the Prince but encountered one of the ministers—no error! **COMMENTARY** He did not reach the Prince because he was unable to get by the minister.⁷

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE Unless he takes appropriate precautions, one of his subordinates may slay him⁸—misfortune! **COMMENTARY** Were that to happen, it would indeed be misfortune!

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE No error! Instead of passing him by, he accosts him. Advancing now entails dangers which have to be guarded against. This is not a time for action, but for unwavering determination. **COMMENTARY** Accosting someone instead of passing him by is now inappropriate (or, is indicated by the unsuitable position of this line). The danger of going forward and the need for precaution imply that we should not continue long in our present course.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Dense clouds come from the western outskirts,⁹ but no rain falls. The prince shoots an arrow and hits someone in a cave.¹⁰ **COMMENTARY** Dense clouds and no rain points to their having risen too high.¹¹

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE Instead of accosting him, he passed him by. The bird flew away from him—misfortune in the form of natural calamity and deliberate injury. **COMMENTARY** The first sentence suggests that we behave too arrogantly.

NOTES (1) A picturesque way of saying that to aim high now would be to put ourselves out of accord with the times. (2) Far from aiming higher, we should deliberately draw in our horns for the time being. (3) A reference to the component trigrams. (4) This is almost the only place in the book where fault is found with the Superior Man. Even he is human enough to go too far at times. (5) The bird is merely a symbol; we are due to encounter misfortune which we are powerless to avert. (6) The additional commentaries do not make the meaning clear. Presumably, we can take it to mean very much the same as the sentence which follows. (7) We fail, but through no fault of ours, to reach as high as we had hoped. This is a time to be content with modest success. (8) We are liable to be injured by a subordinate. (9) See note three to Hexagram 9. (10) The prince symbolizes the fifth line; the two yielding lines at the top suggest a cave. The meaning is that something is gained, but nothing of much importance. (11) Something which could have been of great help to us passes us by.