

HEXAGRAM 6

SUNG CONFLICT¹



Component trigrams:

Below: K'AN, water, a pit.

Above: CH' IEN, heaven, male, active, etc.

TEXT Conflict. Confidence accompanied by obstacles! With care, affairs can be made to prosper in their middle course, but the final outcome will be disaster. It is advantageous to visit a great man, but not to cross the great river (or sea).²

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT In this hexagram, the upper trigram indicates firmness; the lower, danger. When danger is met by firmness, conflict follows. What is said above about affairs prospering in their middle course if care is exercised is derived from the firm line in the middle (of the lower trigram). The final disaster occurs because the conflict is one which cannot be resolved. The advantage of going to see a great man is indicated by the firm line just mentioned. It would be unwise to cross the great river (go on any journey) as we should inevitably tumble into the watery abyss.³

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes sky and water in opposition.⁴ The Superior Man does not embark upon any affair until he has carefully planned the start.

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Provided that affairs are not pressed through to the end and that as little as possible is said about them, they will end propitiously. **COMMENTARY** Not pressing affairs through to the end implies not dragging on a dispute. Though little should be said, its purport should be clear.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE As the conflict cannot be resolved, he

beats a hasty retreat. His clan, numbering three hundred households, also escapes harm.⁵ **COMMENTARY** This passage means that, if we pit ourselves against superior strength, we shall find ourselves bowed beneath the dint of conflict to the bitter end.

6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE He nourishes himself upon the ancient virtues. Right determination leads to initial trouble followed by good fortune. Were he to seek public office now, he would not be able to attain it. **COMMENTARY** The good fortune will result from obedience to superiors which stems from cherishing the ancient virtues.

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Since the conflict cannot be resolved, it is best to retreat and submit to heaven's will. Peaceful determination brings good fortune. **COMMENTARY** Provided we submit to heaven's will, peaceful determination will enable us to win through.

9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Conflict followed by supreme good fortune. **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the fitting position of the central line (of the upper trigram).

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE If a girdle of honour were bestowed upon him, he would be forced to strip it off thrice within one day. **COMMENTARY** Garments of honour obtained through strife do little credit to the wearer.⁶

NOTES (1) In general, this hexagram indicates that we have little chance of success in any conflict, dispute or lawsuit in which we are now engaged and that retreat is the best policy—unless line one or five is a moving line, in which case the position is more hopeful. (2) We can profit from the advice of someone truly wise, but a journey of any kind at this time would be disastrous. (3) Suggested by the lower trigram. (4) The component trigrams suggest two domes, that of the sky and that of the watery pit. (5) This sentence may have been taken from some ancient writing known to readers of the *Book of Changes* at that time. In divination, unless it obviously has some bearing on the case, it may be disregarded, or else interpreted symbolically without paying much regard to the number three hundred. (6) In divination, garments of honour may be taken to symbolize any of the prizes obtained through a successful dispute.