

HEXAGRAM 30

LI FLAMING BEAUTY



Component trigrams:

Below: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.

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TEXT Flaming Beauty. Righteous persistence brings reward. Success! Rearing cows—good fortune!¹

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT This hexagram implies dependence. The sun and moon depend from the heavens; the myriad kinds of plant life depend from the earth. Immense clarity (of mind) depending upon what is right can transform and perfect the world.² The yielding lines, being dependent, are suitably centred between firm lines (in both trigrams); that is why the hexagram presages success and why (the symbol) rearing cows is used to denote good fortune.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes fire rising in two tongues of

brilliant flame.³ The Superior Man, by perpetuating the brilliance (of the ancients), illumines every quarter of the earth.

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Approaching with reverent steps, he pays them his respects—no error. **COMMENTARY** He walks reverently expressly to avoid blame.⁴

6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Yellow sunlight—sublime good fortune! **COMMENTARY** The good fortune of being able to keep to a middle path.⁵

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE In the light of the setting sun, young men do not beat upon their cooking pots or sing; the old sigh piteously—misfortune! **COMMENTARY** Sunset beauty—how can it endure for long?⁶

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE How sudden its coming! Then (with) flamelike (swiftness) it is dead and cast away.⁷ **COMMENTARY** Its coming was sudden and there was no place for it.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE His tears streamed forth as though to extinguish his piteous sighs—good fortune!⁸ **COMMENTARY** This good fortune stems from the rulers.⁹

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE The King went forth to set things to rights and, blessed (by heaven with victory), he destroyed the leader (of the rebels); but he did not chastise the (rebel) followers—no error! **COMMENTARY** The King acted thus in order to rectify the affairs of the various states (comprising his realm).¹⁰

NOTES (1) Cows are gentle creatures which require looking after; hence this sentence means that good fortune can be gained from looking after those in need of help. (2) In other words, we should make ourselves as completely dependent on the principle of righteousness as natural objects are dependent upon nature; in this way, we are sure to be successful. (3) Here, both the component trigrams are the same. As Li is in itself an auspicious trigram, its duplication makes the hexagram unusually auspicious. (4) This suggests a rather delicate situation in which we should avoid any appearance of lacking respect for others. (5) This is suggested by the position of the line, which is central to the lower trigram. The middle path, the golden mean, is praised by Taoists, Confucians and Buddhists alike. It has always been regarded by traditionally minded Chinese as the

principle upon which conduct should be based. Extremes of any kind have no place in Chinese philosophy, which is thus more humanistic than many of the philosophies of India and the Middle East. (6) This passage suggests that our present happiness or success is not destined to endure; we must prepare for a setback. (7) Apparently we may expect some unlooked for good fortune, but of a kind that will have passed away before we have had time to enjoy it. (8) Bitter regret serves us in good stead. (9) For purposes of divination, we may take it that 'rulers' means anyone with authority over us. (10) This passage implies that we may be compelled to resort to forceful measures but that we should avoid chastising those who have been led to do harm by others.