

HEXAGRAM 15 CH'IENT MODESTY



Component trigrams:

Below: K'ÊN, a mountain, hard, perverse, obstinate.

Above: K'UN, earth, female, passive, etc.

TEXT Modesty brings success. The Superior Man is able to carry affairs through to completion.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT This hexagram presages success. It is heaven's way to pour down succour from above and to shed radiance; earth's way is to be lowly and work upwards. Heaven's way is to diminish what is already over-full and to augment what is modest; whereas earth's way is to transform the full and help the modest to flow smoothly. Demons and gods destroy the full but heap prosperity upon the modest. Man's way is to dislike the full and love the modest. Thus modesty receives reverence and glory; it is a lovely quality; nothing can climb above it. The Superior Man makes it his goal.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes a mountain in the centre of the earth.¹ The Superior Man takes from where there is too much in order to augment what is too little. He weighs things and apportions them fairly.

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE The Superior Man, ever modest and retiring, fords the great river—good fortune!² **COMMENTARY** This passage means that he shows humility in disciplining himself.

6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Modestly crows the cock. Righteous persistence brings good fortune. **COMMENTARY** Good fortune in that the cry reaches the depths of our hearts.

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE The Superior Man, exceedingly hard-working yet modest, brings his affairs to fruition—good fortune! **COMMENTARY** The people (most willingly) submit to him.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Everything will be propitious for those who cultivate modesty. **COMMENTARY** Because this involves no departure from what is right.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE In treating his neighbours, he is modest about his wealth. If he now attacks (the rebels), everything will contribute to his success. **COMMENTARY** Such an attack is warranted if the purpose is to chastise those who do not submit (to virtuous laws).³

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE Modestly crows the cock. Now is the time to set armies marching to subdue the cities and the countries of the empire. **COMMENTARY** Because (the ruler's) will has yet to be carried out, it is proper to do so.⁴

NOTES (1) The component trigrams symbolize a mountain surrounded by flat earth, thus suggesting too much in one place and too little in others. (2) Any journey undertaken at this time will bring good fortune. (3) This is not an invitation to use force in any circumstances, but only if its use is directed at what is truly perverse or evil. (4) This omen can be taken to indicate that we can afford to go forward boldly with our plans, but only if their fruition will tally with the general good. 'The ruler's will' in this case is roughly synonymous with the public good.