

6



訟

SÒNG

GRIEVANCE

Grievance.

Allegiance is blocked and becomes cautious.

To stop halfway is auspicious,

To carry on to the end is not.

One should go to see a big man.

One should not cross a big river.

Because he has not been granted advancement, a subject's faith in his ruler is impaired and he feels a grievance. Rather than let this continue, he should go and have the matter out ("go to see a big man"). He should not attempt any great undertaking ("cross a big river").¹

Lines

first line/6 — — He quits his ruler's service.
Words are spoken against him,
But he is fortunate in the end.

It is better for him to quit now than to wait until a bad situation becomes worse. This line is early enough in the hexagram that he can still back out safely, suffering nothing worse than a little criticism. The passive line (— —) suggests withdrawal.

line two/9 — His grievance is rejected.
He flees to his 300-household estate
And escapes disaster.

When his grievance is rejected, he withdraws from his ruler's service

and retires to his own estate. Commentators say that a 300-household estate was a small one. This solid second line of the trigram Kǎn ䷮ Pit (danger) stands for safety in the midst of danger.²

line three/6 — — He lives off his patrimony.
This is dangerous,
but will be fortunate in the end.
In the service of the king,
he would achieve nothing.

His inherited estate is just barely enough to live on. It is better for him to stay on it, however, than to enter the service of the king.

line four/9 — His grievance is rejected.
He returns to obedience.
Though he suffers loss,
it is auspicious for him to stay as he is.



When his ruler rejects his grievance, he abandons it and once again becomes a docile subject. Line four is the place of the officer, whose obedience will be rewarded with advancement. Compare with line two.



line five/9 — He makes a grievance.
Supremely auspicious.

His grievance is accepted and he is granted advancement. Line five is the place of success and of the ruler, to whom the grievance is made.

top line/9 — He is awarded a leather belt,
But in a morning,
it is taken from him three times.

The leather belt is a mark of honor given to him by the king. The grievance by which he gained it, however, created an atmosphere of mistrust that leads to its being taken away again. The top line of a hexagram often involves conflict with a superior. The number three is related to the three strong lines of the upper trigram Qián ䷀ Strong Action. For something similar, see the top line of the previous hexagram RÚ (5) GETTING WET.

STRUCTURE  乾 Qián Strong Action
 坎 Kǎn Pit (difficulties)

The subject is in difficulties (lower trigram ), his path ahead blocked by the strong ruler (upper trigram ). He therefore lays his difficulties (lower trigram) before his ruler (upper trigram) in a grievance.

SEQUENCE His ruler, whose service he braved difficulties to join in RÚ (5) GETTING WET, does not grant him the advancement he seeks, so he makes a grievance.

Notes

1. SÒNG — The word 訟 *sòng* “grievance” refers to legal proceedings. It is made up of elements that mean “speak” 言 and “duke” 公. “Speaking to the duke” is taking a case to court. The English word “court” itself refers to a nobleman’s courtyard, the place where his subjects brought their disputes and grievances for him to hear.

2. line two — The usual interpretation of this line — and also a reasonable one — is that the fugitive flees even his own estate, thereby saving its 300 households from the disaster of attack by the offended ruler.