



# ALLIANCE

Alliance brings good fortune.  
 Even though the original divination said:  
 "Keep right on as you are. No harm."  
 After unrest begins, this is inauspicious.

Allying oneself with someone stronger protects one from harm. Even though under normal circumstances one may be able to remain independent, when danger threatens one must have a protector.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## *Lines*

first line/6 — — Faithful alliance:  
 Averts harm.  
 His faithfulness overflows:  
 Unexpected trouble will end well.

Having a strong ally right from the start is a protection against harm. One keeps an ally by being faithful to him.<sup>3</sup>

line two/6 — — Alliance from within.  
 Auspicious.

One gets closer to a ruler with whom one is already associated. Line two is inside the inner trigram, therefore "within." It is the place of the subject and is particularly auspicious here because the hexagram as a whole recommends acting like a subject.

line three/6 — — Alliance with the wrong man.

Line three is the place of danger. The only danger in entering into an alliance is that one might choose the wrong ally.<sup>4</sup>

line four/6 — — External alliance.  
Auspicious.

One joins someone outside. Line four is the entry into the outer trigram. It is also the place of the officer.

line five/9 ——— Shining ally.  
The king makes a three-side hunt:  
Though his people lose the game before them,  
They are not blamed.  
Auspicious.

Despite their shortcomings, the king remains a shining ally to his people. Line five is the place of the ruler. On a “three-side hunt,” beaters drove game inward from three sides of a large square. The king waited on the open fourth side to shoot the game as it rushed out. In this case, his beaters let the animals in the square break out through their lines. But because these people are his faithful followers, the king does not punish them.<sup>5</sup>

top line/6 — — An alliance with no head.  
Inauspicious.

An alliance must have a head. A subject must not try to equal his ruler. This top line is above the line of the ruler, line five, and implies conflict with one's ruler.<sup>6</sup>

STRUCTURE ䷇ 坎 Kǎn Pit (danger)  
䷋ 坤 Kūn Acquiescent (obedient, a crowd)

With danger ahead (upper trigram ䷇), one acquiesces (lower trigram ䷋) in another's leadership. The broken lines are a crowd of passive followers who ally themselves with a strong leader, the solid line (——) in the place of the ruler, line five.

SEQUENCE The subject of SHĪ (7) AN ARMY faced danger in his ruler's army in order to get closer to him. The protagonist of this inverse hexagram ALLIANCE gets closer to his ruler in order to be protected from harm.

## Notes

1. Bǐ — The word 比 *bǐ* means “side-by-side,” “get close to,” and “assist,” as well as “enter into an alliance with.”

2. “original divination” (opening text) — This is one more indication that at least some ancient diviners may have made each divination more than once. See MÉNG (4) THE YOUNG SHOOT, opening text and commentary and note 2.

3. “overflows” (first line) — This is literally “overflows the jar,” referring to one of the large pottery jars in which both wine and grain were stored.

4. “wrong man” (line three) — This is literally “not-man” (非人 *fěirén*) and may also mean “bad man,” which is to say “not a man,” “inhuman.”

5. line five — The Chinese text is ambiguous. It may also mean that the king misses game that runs out right in front of him, but his loyal people do not blame him or become apprehensive over his ability to protect them.

6. “with no head” (top line) — See also QIÁN (1) STRONG ACTION, all lines 9.