

57



XÙN

KNEELING IN SUBMISSION

Kneeling in submission.

Small is blessed.

It is favorable to go forward.

It is favorable to go to see someone big.

Someone small kneels in submission to someone big. Far from being a misfortune, this is blessed. By joining someone bigger, he is enabled to get ahead.¹

Lines

first line/6 — — He advances
and then retreats.
It is favorable to remain a common soldier.

By retreating, he avoids defeat. He should remain a common soldier because if he does not he will be destroyed. This lowest line symbolizes low rank. The broken or passive (— —) line suggests retreat.²

line two/9 — He kneels before the royal couch
And is consecrated by the scribes and shamans.
Auspicious.
He comes to no harm.

He submits to the king and is consecrated to this service. Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate. Because this suits the overall meaning of the hexagram so well, the line is auspicious.^{3, 4}

line three/9 — Disconsolate,
he kneels in submission.
Trouble.

He is forced to submit against his will. Such misfortune is normal in line three.

line four/6 — — Regrets will pass.
He makes a great catch on the hunt.

At first he regrets having to submit, but in the end he profits by it. He goes hunting with his new ruler and makes a great catch: of animals, of men, or of increased status. Line four is the place of the officer.⁵

line five/9 — Keeping on brings good fortune.
Regrets will pass.
Not at all unfavorable.
No beginning but a good end.
He submits three days before the seventh day
And three days after it he has good fortune.

Though at first submission appears to be a disaster, it will prove beneficial in the end. "Seventh day" refers to the day called 庚 *gēng*, the seventh day of the ancient ten-day week. He submits at midweek, before he is forced to, and has success by week's end.⁶

top line/9 — He kneels before the royal couch
And loses his possessions and his axe.
Keeping on brings misfortune.

He is brought low when he tries to put himself above his ruler, who is represented by line five. The wealth and the weapon that the ruler once gave him are taken away.^{3, 7}

STRUCTURE ≡ 巽 Xùn Kneel in Submission
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Each trigram shows a weak subject (weak line — —) kneeling beneath a strong ruler (strong lines ≡).

SEQUENCE The protagonist of the last hexagram Lǚ (56) THE WANDERER wandered about in search of a suitable ruler. In this hexagram, he is forced to end his search, whether he chooses to or not. In the sequence, this hexagram represents both the depth of powerlessness for the vassal of defeated Shang and the beginning of a rise toward power in the new Zhou regime.

Notes

1. KNEELING IN SUBMISSION — The principal meaning traditionally given to the character 巽 *xùn* is “submissive” or “submit.” Ancient forms of the character, especially the Shang form 𠩺, are thought to resemble two kneeling figures.

2. “common soldier” (first line) — See also Lǚ (10) TREADING, line three.

3. “royal couch” (line two, top line) — The accepted meaning of the word 牀 *chuáng* is “bed.” I call it “royal couch” because of its context both here and in Pǒ (23) DESTRUCTION, lines one, two, and four.

4. “consecrated” (line two) — Where the transmitted text has 紛 *fēn* “many,” I follow Gao (1947) in reading 霽 *xìn* “consecrated.” Many things, including captured weapons, sacrificial vessels, and even men could be daubed with the blood of a sacrificed animal to remove evil influences from them.

5. “makes a great catch” (line four) — This is literally “catches three kinds.” Various commentators suggest this means three kinds of animals, three grades of men, or three steps in rank. Compare SHĪ (7) ARMY, line two, and Gǎn (31) MOVEMENT, line four.

6. “three days before the seventh day” (line five) — For a similar phrase involving the first day, see Gǔ (18) ILLNESS, note 2.

7. “axe” (top line) — See also Lǚ (56) THE WANDERER, line four.