

HEXAGRAM 5

HSÜ CALCULATED INACTION¹



Component trigrams:

Below: CH' IEN, heaven, male, active, etc.

Above: K' AN, water, a pit.

TEXT Calculated inaction (or exhibiting the power to wait) and the confidence of others win brilliant success. Righteous persistence brings good fortune. It will be advantageous to cross the great river (or sea).

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT To accord with the circumstances now prevailing, action must be avoided. Danger² lies ahead; but, with firmness and strength, we shall avoid failure. This implies not allowing ourselves to be bewildered. The first two sentences of the text are indicated by the fact that the ruling line of this hexagram (in this case, the fifth line) is the line of heaven, which acts with rectitude and attains its end. The passage about crossing water simply means that a journey at this time will be rewarding.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes clouds rising to the zenith³—inactivity! The Superior Man will pass this time in feasting and enjoyment.

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Stay on the outskirts avoiding action. Constancy preserves from harm. **COMMENTARY** Remaining on the outskirts means not rushing forward to undertake what is difficult

to perform. Constancy preserves from harm, suggests doing nothing out of the ordinary.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Inactivity upon the river beach—some slight gossip may arise, but the final result will be good fortune. **COMMENTARY** The first sentence indicates a place with water flowing through the middle.⁴ Though there be gossip, all will be well in the end.

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE Inactivity amidst the mud⁵—this permits the approach of evil. **COMMENTARY** Remaining inactive in the midst of mud subjects us to external dangers, but the approaching evil will not harm us if we exercise proper care.⁶

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Inactivity amidst blood—we shall emerge from the abyss. **COMMENTARY** To abstain from action amidst deeds of blood is to accord with the principle of allowing things to take their course.

9 FOR THE FIFTH LINE Inactivity amidst food and wine—righteous persistence will bring good fortune.⁷ **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the fact that the line is a firm one between two yielding lines.

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE Entering a pit. Three uninvited guests arrive; to honour them will ultimately bring good fortune. **COMMENTARY** When uninvited guests arrive, our treating them with honour brings good fortune. Although this is not customary, nothing is lost by it.⁸

NOTES (1) The significance of this hexagram is that inaction while awaiting the outcome of events will enable us to avoid a danger now threatening. Firmness, clarity of mind and success in winning the confidence of others are now demanded of us; with them, our undertakings will prosper. Moreover, this period of inaction is a good time in which to go on a journey or else for relaxation and enjoyment. (2) This danger is suggested by the upper trigram. (3) Clouds are symbolized by the upper trigram, the zenith by the lower. (4) Sitting on a river beach watching the water flow past symbolizes watching what is going forward without taking part. (5) This suggests a danger of our being so bogged down that we can neither fight nor flee. (6) We must not allow the mud to bog us down. (7) We may safely relax and enjoy ourselves, but we must preserve our determination to act when the time is ripe. (8) There is a Chinese proverb which runs: 'Being over-courteous excites no blame from others.'