

## HEXAGRAM 50

### TING A SACRIFICIAL VESSEL



*Component trigrams:*

*Below: SUN, wind, wood, bland, mild.*

*Above: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.*

**TEXT** A Sacrificial Vessel—supreme success!

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** The TING is symbolical (of the peace and beauty presaged by the combination of the two component trigrams). Wood and fire combine to cook (the sacrifice).<sup>1</sup> The holy sage cooks in performing sacrificial ceremonies to the Supreme Lord (of Heaven); he cooks more lavishly to nourish the holy and the virtuous.<sup>2</sup> By their peaceful employment, eyesight and hearing are sharpened. The yielding enters and ascends (to the fifth place) where it responds to the firm—hence supreme success.

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes fire upon wood.<sup>1</sup> The Superior Man, taking his stance as righteousness requires, adheres firmly to heaven's decrees.

#### *The Lines*

**6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** To rid it of decaying remnants of meat, the vessel is turned upside down.<sup>3</sup> It is not shameful to take a concubine for the sake of bearing sons.<sup>4</sup> **COMMENTARY** There is nothing improper about up-ending a sacrificial vessel to rid it of decaying matter. Such actions are necessary in the pursuit of what is noble.

**9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** The TING possesses solidity. My enemies are in difficulty and there is nothing they can do to me—good fortune! **COMMENTARY** The first sentence indicates a need for caution. 'My enemies are in trouble' indicates that I shall remain blameless to the end.

**9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** The handles of the TING have been detached, so it is difficult to move it.<sup>5</sup> The fat of the pheasant is not eaten.<sup>6</sup> Suddenly rain<sup>7</sup> comes, regret wanes and, ultimately, there is good fortune. **COMMENTARY** What is said about the handles of the TING implies our failure in carrying out our duty.

**9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE** The legs of the TING snap. The prince's food is overturned and his person soiled—misfortune.<sup>8</sup> **COMMENTARY** The prince's food is overturned—how is it possible to continue enjoying his confidence?

**6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE** The TING has yellow handles with golden rings attached<sup>9</sup>—righteous persistence brings reward! **COMMENTARY** What is said here about the TING is indicated by the central position of this line (in the upper trigram) which implies solid worth.

**9 FOR THE TOP PLACE** The TING has jade handles<sup>10</sup>—great good fortune! Everything is now favourable. **COMMENTARY** The first part of the passage is indicated by this top line—a firm line which meets the yielding (fifth) harmoniously.

**NOTES** (1) A reference to the component trigrams, indicating that our duties are (or should be) carried out gently and gracefully. (2) It is proper to fulfil our religious (and or formal) obligations, but we should expend far more money and energy on our duties towards our fellow man than upon ceremonies. (3) Some actions, though highly improper in themselves, may be properly performed if circumstances so require; a merely ritualistic conception of right and wrong is not desirable. (4) This is added as an example, immediately acceptable to a traditionally minded Chinese of something improper in itself which becomes proper when the motive is acceptable. (5) A delay due to some remissness on our part. (6) Because of our remissness an opportunity goes to waste. (7) An omen of good fortune, of heaven's nourishing powers. (8) Through gross carelessness an opportunity to advance our interests is not only lost but transformed into an occasion of trouble. (9) The faults described in the last two notes have now been put right; the position is even better than before they were committed. (10) A further improvement on the progress indicated in the preceding note.