



10. Treading

Even when they tread on a tiger's tail, it doesn't bite people. This is developmental.

EXPLANATION

Treading means forward progress. As for the qualities of the hexagram, above is *heaven* ☰, strong, and below is *lake* ☱, joyous. Yin is rejoicing in yang; with the advance of one yin, the hexagram will change into pure yang. Representing this, it is therefore called *treading*.

This hexagram symbolizes progression of yang and prevention of danger; it follows on the preceding hexagram *accord*. In *accord*, yin follows yang. But if you want yin to follow, it is necessary first to advance yang. When the progression of yang reaches proper balance, yin naturally follows it. This is the appropriate priority of the path of advancing yang.

The true yang in people is inherent and need not be sought from another. When it mixes with acquired conditioning, true feeling is obscured and arbitrary feelings arise; then true yang runs away outside. This is likened to a tiger running off and staying elsewhere as a member of another house; though it is in another house, originally the tiger is one's own. It is just that people are not willing to call it back.

The way of calling it back is not sought in *heaven*, or *earth*, or *fire*, or *water*, but only in *lake*. *Lake*, as the youngest daughter,* travels the path of receptive submission in place of mother *earth*, and is able to revert to yang by the culmination of yin. Its nature is harmonious and joyous. Being harmonious, it can relax; being joyous it can trust. Being relaxed, it can go gradually; trusting, it can endure long. Able to relax and trust, powerful practice unrelenting, it is thereby possible to advance to the stage of indestructible firmness and strength, to again see the original face of heaven, and not be injured by false yin and false yang. This is likened to treading on a tiger's tail without its biting people, and having a way of development and growth.

A tiger is something that bites people; it is most dangerous to tread on it. If one can tread with harmony and joyfulness, without excessive ferocity, it is like treading on a tiger's tail. If one is careful, as if treading on a tiger's tail, looking ahead and behind, striking a balance without obsession or indifference, proceeding gradually in an orderly manner, forestalling danger, aware of perils, carrying out the firing process without error, then the yin can be transmuted into yang, and the yang can be restored to purity. Not only is one not bitten by the tiger—one can even take over the living energy in its killing, and preserve life and being whole. This path of

*In the so-called temporal arrangement of the trigrams, the trigrams are associated with members of a family: *heaven* is father, *earth* is mother, *thunder* is eldest son, *wind* is eldest daughter, *water* is middle son, *fire* is middle daughter, *mountain* is youngest son, and *lake* is youngest daughter.

development and achievement without obstruction or hindrance through advancement of yang, treading strongly with harmony and joy, is of great benefit.

- **First yang:** Treading plainly, going without fault.

EXPLANATION

Those with strength of mind and robust energy, who are plain and sincere in treading the Path, are able to tread it with confidence in their steps. If they proceed in this way, they will surely progress to where there is no fault. This is treading with firmness of purpose.

- **2 yang:** Treading the path evenly, the aloof person is upright and fortunate.

EXPLANATION

With happiness in balance, there is naturally true joy, and one is not attracted to artificial enjoyment. No external things can move one, so one therefore treads the path evenly. Treading that is even is without greed, without craving; the mind is at peace, the spirit tranquil. Only the aloof person who consistently remains upright can tread the path happily, forgetful of the years.

- **3 yin:** Able to see with a squint, able to walk with a limp. When they tread on the tiger's tail, it bites people. Inauspicious. A soldier becomes a ruler.

EXPLANATION

If one goes on the Path impetuously, acting on one's own in ignorance, not knowing the medicinal substances, not understanding the firing process, thinking ignorance to be knowledge, thinking incapacity to be ability, that is like seeing with a squint, walking with a limp—treading on the tiger's tail, it will bite; one calls misfortune on oneself. This is also like a soldier becoming a ruler, bringing on disaster. This is treading the Path ignorantly on one's own.

- **4 yang:** Treading on the tail of a tiger, with caution it will turn out well.

EXPLANATION

Being firm but not impetuous, truthfully clear-minded, flexible in action, forestalling danger, aware of perils, is like treading on a tiger's tail with caution, wary and careful. Not only can the tiger not bite; one will eventually tread on the ground of pure yang and attain felicity. This is treading the Path with both firmness and flexibility.

- **5 yang:** Treading decisively. Even if one is upright, there is danger.

EXPLANATION

With strength in proper balance, following one's heart's desire without exceeding what is appropriate, treading the Path decisively, without getting into difficulty—still when the treading of the Path reaches central balance and the gold elixir has formed, it is necessary to be upright and undivided, to master oneself in danger, so that one can avoid the problem of losing what has been gained. This is treading the Path in which there is no one but oneself.

- **Top yang:** Observing the treading, considering what is felicitous, the return is auspicious.

EXPLANATION

Here yang is in the position of flexibility: Observing the firing process trodden, considering the balance of gravity and energy in the medicinal substances, proceeding in an orderly manner, completing the cycle from start to finish, completing the beginning by the end, one aims to reach the merging of yin and yang in complete original wholeness. This is treading the Path consummating the beginning and completing the end.

So the path of advancing yang requires flexibility within firmness and firmness within flexibility. It is important that firmness and flexibility balance each other, and one neither rushes nor lags, but is harmonious, joyous, equanimous, and serene.



10. Treading

heaven above,
lake below

Above is the sky, below is a lake: Treading. Thus do superior people distinguish above and below, and settle the will of the people.

Treading means progressive ascent. Above is *heaven* ☰, below is *lake* ☱; the sky covers the lake, the lake looks up to the sky—so above and below have fixed positions, which cannot be mixed up. This is the image of *treading*.

What superior people see in this is that the metaphysical is called the Tao and the physical is called the vessel; there is a distinction between the greater and lesser, a difference between the noble and the base. The higher is not to be considered lower, and the lower is not to be considered higher; the greater is not to be considered lesser, the lesser is not to be considered greater; the noble is not to be considered base, the base is not to be considered noble. This is whereby to distinguish above and below and settle the will of the people, not allowing transgression through false ideas.

The celestial is the ruler; this is higher, above. The earthly is the citizenry; this is lower, below. When one can distinguish the higher and lower, then right and wrong, sanity and aberration, are clear; not doing anything inappropriate, sustaining the celestial and controlling the earthly, cultivating the real and dissolving the false, thoughts not arising inwardly, external things not entering the mind, myriad things are all empty of absoluteness, and all mundane feelings involved with objects are settled.

In the body of the hexagram, *lake* is the mundane, representing arbitrary feelings; *heaven* is the celestial, representing true sense. When the mundane treads under the celestial and the celestial treads on top of the mundane, then arbitrary feelings do not arise and true sense is always present. True sense is unemotional sense; using unemotional sense to control feelings is like a cat catching a mouse, like boiling water being poured on snow—in a short time calamity turns to fortune, the “will of the people” is settled, and there is nothing to thwart the Tao. Then one gradually puts into practice the pure, unadulterated vitality of firm strength in proper balance.

But settling the will of the people is all a matter of being able to distinguish the higher and the lower; the stability attained will be in proportion to the degree to which this distinction is successfully made. If there is any lack of clarity in this distinction, there will be that much instability. Therefore the sages’ science of fulfillment of nature in comprehension of life requires thorough investigation of principle as the first step.