

7



SHĪ

AN ARMY

An army.
For a big man,
keeping on will bring good fortune
and no harm.

Being in an army is dangerous, but the army gives its “big men” (strong warriors) opportunities for advancement and gain. The key military virtues, according to the text, are discipline and caution. Followers should follow and leaders should lead and the army as a whole should not advance too quickly or too far.

Lines

first line/6 — — An army sets out in strict order.
If not, even the strongest is doomed.

Order and discipline are essential to an army’s success. This lowest line represents a soldier of the lowest rank. As the first line, it has to do with setting out. “Strongest” may refer either to an army or to a man.

line two/9 ——— In an army.
Good fortune. No harm.
The king thrice awards him rank.

The king picks a strong warrior out from among the other soldiers and gives him a position of leadership. Line two is the place of the subject. The strong line represents a strong warrior.¹

line three/6 — — An army carts corpses.
Misfortune.

Defeat. The army should avoid battle. Line three is almost always inauspicious.

line four/6 — — An army encamps away from the enemy.
And avoids harm.

The army saves itself by avoiding battle. Line four is often the solution to a problem encountered in line three. The passive line (— —) suggests that the solution in this case involves inaction or retreat.²

line five/6 — — The hunt has reaped its harvest.
Interrogating prisoners will avert harm.
Let the elder son lead the army.
If the younger son did,
there would be cartloads of dead.
Persevering brings misfortune.

Be satisfied with the gains you have made; go no further. By interrogating prisoners, you can learn about the enemy and will be able to decide how best to act. The “elder son” is the stronger and more experienced of two people. It is the “younger son” to whom this line is addressed. The line is passive and in the place of the ruler. This suggests both that the ruler should be passive and that the subject should be passive toward his ruler.

top line/6 — — The great lords receive mandates
To found states and establish their houses.

The king rewards his commanders with land and noble titles that they can pass on to their descendants.

STRUCTURE ☴ ☵ Kūn Acquiescent (passive, obedient,
accepting, a crowd)

☶ 坎 Kǎn Pit (danger, difficulties)

The members of an army face danger (lower trigram ☶) with passive obedience (upper trigram ☴). The army's commander responds to danger (☶) by remaining passive (☴). The broken lines are a crowd of soldiers. The solid line is a strong warrior among them. He is accepted forward into high position by the commander (upper trigram ☴).

SEQUENCE The subject's request for advancement was rejected in the previous hexagram SONG (6) GRIEVANCE. Now he serves loyally as a common soldier, facing danger on his ruler's behalf. He will be rewarded with the advancement he sought.

Notes

1. “thrice” (line two) — This may simply serve to emphasize the value of the award. See also RÚ (5) GETTING WET, top line, SÒNG (6) GRIEVANCE, top line, and BǏ (8) ALLIANCE, line five. The numbers three, seven, and ten occur frequently in the *Changes*. Their significance is not always clear.

2. “encamps away from the enemy” (line four) — This is literally “encamps on the left.” Commentators say that the left is the direction of retreat.