

HEXAGRAM 34

TA CHUANG THE POWER OF THE GREAT¹



Component trigrams:

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

Above: CHÊN, thunder, movement, to sprout or quicken.

TEXT The Power of the Great. Persistence in a righteous course brings reward.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT TA CHUANG (literally Great

Power) here means the Power of the Great. The firm wields power by reason of its active nature. Right persistence is rewarded because (as indicated by the arrangement of the hexagram) great and right are (in this context) synonymous. Righteousness and greatness combined lead to understanding of the inner nature of everything in heaven and earth.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes thunder in the sky.² The Superior Man never takes a step involving impropriety.

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE Power in the toes.³ To advance now would bring misfortune, but confidence remains. **COMMENTARY** The confidence symbolized by power in the toes is soon exhausted.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Persistence in a righteous course brings good fortune. **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the line's central position (in the lower trigram).

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE Inferior men use their power where (under the circumstances prevailing) the Superior Man refrains from using his. Persistence now would bring serious consequences, as when a goat butts against a hedge and gets its horns entangled. **COMMENTARY** This means that inferior men use their power and the Superior Man (is likely to be) tricked.

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Righteous persistence brings good fortune and regret vanishes. The hedge falls apart and he is no longer entangled. There is great power in the cart axle.⁴ **COMMENTARY** Once the hedge has fallen apart, he can get up and go forward.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE He sacrifices a goat too lightly—no regret!⁵ **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the line's unsuitable position.

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE A goat butts against a hedge and can move neither backward nor forward; it can get nowhere.⁶ Yet at this time, difficulty presages good fortune.⁷ **COMMENTARY** Inability to retire or advance is hardly conducive to good fortune; but our very

difficulties will generate it; the ignoble circumstances (in which we find ourselves) will not endure for long.

NOTES (1) This hexagram with a solid group of firm lines topped by a small number of yielding ones obviously signifies strength—in this case the power to succeed in spite of difficulties. Much of what follows concerns goats—a symbol presumably suggested by the form of the hexagram, namely a solid body distinguished by a pair of horns—the yielding lines at the top. (2) The combination of trigrams meaning thunder and sky suggests something of the awe-inspiring quality of the truly great. (3) I.e. power of a rather low or limited kind. (4) A powerful axle indicates that the time is favourable for an advance towards our goal. (5) I.e. he resorts too easily to force, which is not advisable. (6) 'It can get nowhere' is a rendering of a phrase which, taken symbolically, means that this is not a time to advance towards our goal (or destination). (7) The implication is that the shame we feel at finding ourselves prisoners of circumstances will drive us to make an effort powerful enough to release us.