

師

7. *Shih / The Army*

☷	☵	<i>above</i>	K'UN	THE RECEPTIVE, EARTH
☵	☷	<i>below</i>	K'AN	THE ABYSMAL, WATER

This hexagram is made up of the trigrams K'an, water, and K'un, earth, and thus it symbolizes the ground water stored

up in the earth. In the same way military strength is stored up in the mass of the people—invisible in times of peace but always ready for use as a source of power. The attributes of the two trigrams are danger inside and obedience outside. This points to the nature of an army, which at the core is dangerous, while discipline and obedience must prevail outside.

Of the individual lines, the one that controls the hexagram is the strong nine in the second place, to which the other lines, all yielding, are subordinate. This line indicates a commander, because it stands in the middle of one of the two trigrams. But since it is in the lower rather than the upper trigram, it represents not the ruler but the efficient general, who maintains obedience in the army by his authority.

THE JUDGMENT

THE ARMY. The army needs perseverance
And a strong man.

Good fortune without blame.

An army is a mass that needs organization in order to become a fighting force. Without strict discipline nothing can be accomplished, but this discipline must not be achieved by force. It requires a strong man who captures the hearts of the people and awakens their enthusiasm. In order that he may develop his abilities he needs the complete confidence of his ruler, who must entrust him with full responsibility as long as the war lasts. But war is always a dangerous thing and brings with it destruction and devastation. Therefore it should not be resorted to rashly but, like a poisonous drug, should be used as a last recourse.

The justifying cause of a war, and clear and intelligible war aims, ought to be explained to the people by an experienced leader. Unless there is a quite definite war aim to which the people can consciously pledge themselves, the unity and strength of conviction that lead to victory will not be forthcoming. But the leader must also look to it that the passion of war and the delirium of victory do not give rise to unjust acts that will not meet with general approval. If justice and perseverance are the basis of action, all goes well.

THE IMAGE

In the middle of the earth is water:
The image of THE ARMY.
Thus the superior man increases his masses
By generosity toward the people.

Ground water is invisibly present within the earth. In the same way the military power of a people is invisibly present in the masses. When danger threatens, every peasant becomes a soldier; when the war ends, he goes back to his plow. He who is generous toward the people wins their love, and a people living under a mild rule becomes strong and powerful. Only a people economically strong can be important in military power. Such power must therefore be cultivated by improving the economic condition of the people and by humane government. Only when there is this invisible bond between government and people, so that the people are sheltered by their government as ground water is sheltered by the earth, is it possible to wage a victorious war.

THE LINES

Six at the beginning means:
An army must set forth in proper order.
If the order is not good, misfortune threatens.

At the beginning of a military enterprise, order is imperative. A just and valid cause must exist, and the obedience and co-ordination of the troops must be well organized, otherwise the result is inevitably failure.

○ Nine in the second place means:
In the midst of the army.
Good fortune. No blame.
The king bestows a triple decoration.

The leader should be in the midst of his army, in touch with it, sharing good and bad with the masses he leads. This alone makes him equal to the heavy demands made upon him. He needs also the recognition of the ruler. The decorations he

receives are justified, because there is no question of personal preferment here: the whole army, whose center he is, is honored in his person.

Six in the third place means:

Perchance the army carries corpses in the wagon.

Misfortune.

Here we have a choice of two explanations. One points to defeat because someone other than the chosen leader interferes with the command; the other is similar in its general meaning, but the expression, "carries corpses in the wagon," is interpreted differently. At burials and at sacrifices to the dead it was customary in China for the deceased to whom the sacrifice was made to be represented by a boy of the family, who sat in the dead man's place and was honored as his representative. On the basis of this custom the text is interpreted as meaning that a "corpse boy" is sitting in the wagon, or, in other words, that authority is not being exercised by the proper leaders but has been usurped by others. Perhaps the whole difficulty clears up if it is inferred that there has been an error in copying. The character *fan*, meaning "all," may have been misread as *shih*, which means "corpse." Allowing for this error, the meaning would be that if the multitude assumes leadership of the army (rides in the wagon), misfortune will ensue.

Six in the fourth place means:

The army retreats. No blame.

In face of a superior enemy, with whom it would be hopeless to engage in battle, an orderly retreat is the only correct procedure, because it will save the army from defeat and disintegration. It is by no means a sign of courage or strength to insist upon engaging in a hopeless struggle regardless of circumstances.

○ Six in the fifth place means:

There is game in the field.

It furthers one to catch it.

Without blame.

Let the eldest lead the army.
The younger transports corpses;
Then perseverance brings misfortune.

Game is in the field—it has left its usual haunts in the forest and is devastating the fields. This points to an enemy invasion. Energetic combat and punishment are here thoroughly justified, but they must not degenerate into a wild melee in which everyone fends for himself. Despite the greatest degree of perseverance and bravery, this would lead to misfortune. The army must be directed by an experienced leader. It is a matter of waging war, not of permitting the mob to slaughter all who fall into their hands; if they do, defeat will be the result, and despite all perseverance there is danger of misfortune.

Six at the top means:
The great prince issues commands,
Founds states, vests families with fiefs.
Inferior people should not be employed.

The war has ended successfully, victory is won, and the king divides estates and fiefs among his faithful vassals. But it is important that inferior people should not come into power. If they have helped, let them be paid off with money, but they should not be awarded lands or the privileges of rulers, lest power be abused.