

HEXAGRAM 7

SHIH THE ARMY¹



Component trigrams:

Below: K'AN, water, a pit.

Above: K'UN, earth, female, passive, etc.

TEXT The Army. Persistence in a righteous course brings to those in authority good fortune and freedom from error.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT This hexagram suggests a great host. Persistence is required for their governance. He who can govern people rightly is worthy to be a ruler. The firm line (in the lower trigram) is central and the others respond to it. Making progress with a highly dangerous task is a way of obtaining control of the realm and of winning the people's allegiance. When such good fortune is obtained, how can there be room for error?

SYMBOL The hexagram symbolizes water surrounded by land.² The Superior Man nourishes the people and treats them with leniency.

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE An army is built up through discipline; without it, corruption leading to disaster occurs. **COMMENTARY** The disaster indicated in this passage results from a breakdown of discipline.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE The general in the midst of his army enjoys good fortune and is free from error. Thrice he is honoured by the King. **COMMENTARY** It is because he is esteemed by the King that he enjoys good fortune and the protection of his army. Solicitous about the welfare of the empire, the King thrice awards him the command.

6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE The army carries waggon-loads of corpses—disaster! **COMMENTARY** This indicates a serious defeat.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE The army retreats and halts—no error! **COMMENTARY** No error is involved because retreating and halting are a normal part of military activity.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Wild beasts roam the field. To avoid error, speech should be guarded. The eldest son is in command; the younger son carts away the corpses. Persistence would lead to calamity.³ **COMMENTARY** The moving line in the centre (of the upper trigram) indicates that the elder son is in command. The younger son is put in charge of carrying away the corpses because he is unsuited to worthier employment.⁴

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE The mandate is given to a great prince so that the work may go forward satisfactorily. A man of mean ability would be useless,⁵ for he would merely spread disorder through the realm.

NOTES (1) If the enquiry is not concerned with military affairs, we must interpret this hexagram symbolically in the sense that life is a battle. (2) This is deduced from the component trigrams. (3) What is said here about the elder and younger sons is not deduced in the ordinary way from either the component or the nuclear trigrams; for, while the lower nuclear trigram (lines 2, 3 and 4 from the bottom) is that of the elder son, the younger son is not represented by any of the four trigrams. (4) In line with the symbolical interpretation usually accorded to this hexagram, this line may refer to the suitability or otherwise of a person required to fill an important post in any sort of organization or in carrying out some scheme. (5) We cannot now rely on anyone of less than exceptional ability.