

52



艮

GĒN

KEEP STILL

He keeps still
And is not taken captive.
They pass his house
And he is not seen.
He escapes harm.

By keeping still, he escapes harm. Conquerors overrun his town, but he keeps out of harm's way and they ignore him.

Lines

first line/6 — — He keeps his feet still.
Averts harm.
It is favorable to stay just as one is.

This lowest line is associated with feet. The higher lines are associated with higher parts of the body. Compare with the lines of GĀN (31) MOVEMENT.

line two/6 — — He keeps his calves still
And does not lift his heels.
But his heart is not content.

He keeps still as he knows he must, though he yearns to take action. Line two is the place of the subject. Perhaps this subject's heart remains loyal to a defeated ruler. He wants to fight although he knows the cause is lost.

line three/9 ——— He keeps his waist still
 And his back is laid open.
 Danger sears his heart.

He is punished for refusing to bend before the conqueror. This uppermost line of the lower trigram often concerns someone of low rank who offends against his ruler.¹

line four/6 — — He keeps still.
 And averts harm.

The Chinese text literally reads: "He keeps his body still."

line five/6 — — He keeps his cheeks still.
 His words express allegiance.
 Regrets will pass.

He declares his allegiance to the new ruler. His yearning for the old ruler will pass. Line five is the place of the ruler.

top line/9 ——— He is forced to keep still.
 Auspicious.

Even in this last line, it is not too late to stop and keep still. The solid line (——) is a barrier to advance. The top line of a hexagram is associated with conflict between subject and ruler.

STRUCTURE ䷳ 艮 Gēn Keep Still (stop, stopped)
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The trigram symbolizes keeping still because not only are its first two lines passive (==), but their way ahead is blocked by the solid line (——) above them.

SEQUENCE Both this hexagram and its inverse, the previous hexagram ZHÈN (51) THUNDERBOLTS portray reactions of Shang vassals to their masters' conquest by Zhou. In THUNDERBOLTS, the reaction was terror at the conquerors' onslaught. Here in KEEP STILL, a vassal who wants to fight wisely saves himself by keeping still.

Note

1. "sears" (line three) — The word 熏 *xūn* literally means "smokes" and refers to smoking meat or fish.