

## HEXAGRAM 9

HSIAO CH'U THE LESSER NOURISHER<sup>1</sup>

*Component trigrams:*

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

*Above: SUN, wind, wood, bland, mild.*

**TEXT** The Lesser Nourisher. Success! Dense clouds giving forth no rain approach from the western outskirts.

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** In this hexagram, a yielding line takes the ruling position and all the lines above and below correspond to it. This is called the Lesser Nourisher. Strong and yet gentle,<sup>2</sup> the firm line in the centre (of the lower trigram) indicates that our will be accomplished and that success will follow. The dense clouds giving forth no rain signify that our affairs are still going forward; what is said about their coming from the west<sup>3</sup> indicates that matters have not yet reached the point at which we may take action.

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes wind blowing across the sky.<sup>2</sup> The Superior Man displays his scholarly accomplishments.

### *The Lines*

**9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** How could returning to this path be blameworthy? **COMMENTARY** This passage assures us of good fortune.

**9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** Compelling ourselves to go back brings good fortune. **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the central position of this line (in the lower trigram). The idea of not getting lost is also implied.

**9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** The chariot is separated from the spoked

wheel. Husband and wife stand glaring at each other. COMMENTARY Disorder reigns within the house.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE Owing to confidence, bloody and terrible deeds are avoided—no error. COMMENTARY This means that the will of our superiors is identical with our own.

9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Confidence is like a cord (to bind the hearts of others). With it we enrich our neighbours. COMMENTARY This implies not getting rich on our own.

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE The rains are falling and a time of rest has come. Virtue continues to increase. At this moment, persistence would bring serious trouble to women. Were the Superior Man to venture forth at the time of the full moon, he would be courting calamity.<sup>4</sup> COMMENTARY The first sentence indicates that our stock of virtues is mounting; that about the Superior Man indicates that we may expect trouble.

NOTES (1) On the whole, this hexagram presages good for us. The wind blowing across the heavens does not have the nourishing virtues of rain, but it refreshes us and makes us feel better. Thus, if things are going reasonably well with us, we may expect an improvement, especially in the future when, presumably, the nourishing rain will fall. However, as lines three and six indicate, if we are in serious trouble, we must not expect much help from the rather mild good fortune that is blowing our way. The conception of something weak or yielding bringing great benefit has been greatly developed by the Taoists who, as though they were familiar with judo, recognize the strength to be found in softness and the dangerous weakness sometimes occasioned by too much strength. The name of this hexagram understood somewhat differently may also be taken to mean that the time is propitious for undertaking some additional activity or the care of the young. (2) A reference to the component trigrams. (3) The text implies western outskirts; however, those familiar with the way in which the *Book of Change* answers our enquiries will know better than to take every word literally. Moreover, the actual Chinese words which, on good advice from a Chinese expert, I have translated 'western outskirts' actually read 'to the west of us'; so it may be understood that some good fortune, which has yet to materialize fully, is to be found somewhere to the west of where we happen to be or is coming from that direction to where we are. (4) The commentary which follows this passage would seem to indicate that, in most cases, we need not take what is said about the time of the full moon too literally, but that we may expect trouble within a few days or weeks—i.e. at the time of the full moon or within the period between now and the night of the next full moon. Yet there are occasions when the *Book of Change* gives very literal answers, so it will be wise to avoid doing much out of doors on the night of the full moon.