

Hsü Kua / Treatise on the Sequence

Note of the compiler:

This commentary aims at giving an explanation why the hexagrams are given in their present order. Although an occasional rational or intriguing explanation cannot be denied, the effort falls short of its intentions. At best it seems a rather stretched mnemonic on the general theme of things being unable to last forever, and hence being followed by something else.

Section I

1-3.

When there were heaven and earth, then afterwards all things were produced. What fills up the space between heaven and earth are all things. Hence Ch'ien (the Creative Principle) and K'un (the Passive Principle) are followed by Chun (Initial Difficulties). Chun denotes filling up.

4-6.

Chun is descriptive of things on their first production, when they are sure to be in an undeveloped condition. Hence Chun is followed by Meng (Youthful Inexperience). Meng is descriptive of what is undeveloped; the young of creatures and things.

These in that state require to be nourished. Hence meng is followed by Hsü (Delay). Hsü is descriptive of the ways of supply of food and drink. Over food and drink there are sure to be contentions. Hence Hsü is followed by Sung (Conflict).

7-8.

Sung is sure to cause the rising of the multitudes, hence it is followed by Shih (the Army). Shih signifies multitudes, and between multitudes there must be some bond of union. Hence it is followed by Pi (Seeking Unity), which denotes solidarity and being attached to.

9-11.

Multitudes in union must be subjected to some restraint. Hence Pi is followed by Hsiao Ch'u (Minor Restraint).

When things are subjected to restraint, there come to be rites of ceremony, hence Hsiao Ch'u is followed by Lü (Treading carefully). Treading on what is proper leads to a state of freedom and repose, hence Lü is followed by T'ai (Peace).

12-16.

T'ai denotes things having free course. They cannot have that for ever, hence it is followed by P'i (Stagnation), denoting being shut up and restricted. Things cannot for ever be shut up, hence P'i is followed by T'ung Jen (Companionship). To him who cultivates companionship, things must come to belong, hence T'ung Jen is followed by Ta Yu (Great Possessions). Those who have great possessions, should not allow themselves the feeling of being full, hence Ta Yu is followed by Ch'ien (Modesty). When great possessions are associated with modesty, there is sure to be pleasure and satisfaction; and hence Ch'ien is followed by Yü (Enthusiasm).

17-19.

He who causes such complacency, is sure to have followers, hence Yü is followed by Sui (Allegiance). They who follow are sure to have services to perform, hence Sui is followed by Ku (Arresting Decay). Ku means performing services. He who performs such services may afterwards become great, hence Ku is followed by Lin (Approaching). Lin means increasing in size.

20-23.

What is great draws forth contemplation, and hence Lin is followed by Kuan (Contemplation). He who attracts contemplation will then bring about the union of others with himself, and hence Kuan is followed by Shih Ho (Biting through). Shih Ho means union. But things should not be united in a reckless or irregular way, hence Shih Ho is followed by Pi (Grace). Pi denotes adorning. When ornamentation has been carried to the utmost, its progress comes to an end, hence Pi is followed by Po (Disintegration). Po denotes decay and overthrow.

24-26.

Things cannot be done away for ever. When decadence and overthrow have completed their work at one end, re-integration begins at the other, hence Po is followed by Fu (the Turning Point). When the return has taken place, we have not any rash disorder, and Fu is followed by Wu Wang (Innocence). Given the freedom from disorder and insincerity this denotes, there may be accumulation of virtue, hence Wu Wang is followed by Ta Ch'u (the Restraining Force).

27-30.

Such accumulation having taken place, there will follow the nourishment of it; and hence Ta Ch'u is followed by I (Nourishment), which denotes nourishing. Without nourishment there could be no movement, hence I is followed by Ta Kuo (Excess). Things cannot for ever be in a state of large excess, hence Ta Kuo is followed by K'an (the Abyss). K'an denotes falling into peril. When one falls into peril, he is sure to cling to some person or thing, hence K'an is followed by Li (Clinging Brightness). Li denotes being

attached, or adhering , to.

Section II

31-32 .

Heaven and earth existing , all things then got their existence. All things having their existence, afterwards there came male and female. From the existence of male and female there came afterwards husband and wife. From husband and wife there came father and son. From father and son there came ruler and minister. From ruler and minister there came high and low. When the distinction of high and low had existence, afterwards came the arrangements of propriety and righteousness. The rule for the relation of husband and wife is that it should be long-enduring. Hence Hsien (Influence) is followed by Heng (Endurance). Heng denotes long-enduring.

33-37.

Things cannot abide in the same place for long ; and hence Heng is followed by Tun (Withdrawal). Tun denotes withdrawing. Things cannot be for ever withdrawn, hence Tun is followed by Ta Chuang (Strength of Greatness). Things cannot remain for ever in the state of vigour, hence Ta Chuang is followed by Chin (Progress). Chin denotes advancing. But advancing is sure to lead to being wounded; and hence Chin is followed by Ming I (Sinking Light). Ming I denotes being wounded. He who is wounded by advancing abroad, will return to his home; hence Ming I is followed by Chia Jen (the Family).

38-40.

When the right administration of the family is at an end, misunderstanding and division will ensue; and hence Chia Jen is followed by K'uei (Opposition). K'uei denotes misunderstanding and division; and such a state is sure to give rise to difficulties and complications. K'uei therefore is followed by Chien (Obstacles). Chien denotes difficulties; but things cannot remain for ever in such a state. Chien therefore is followed by Hsieh (Deliverance), which denotes relaxation and ease.

41-44.

In a state of relaxation and ease, there are sure to be losses; and hence Hsieh is followed by Sun (Decrease). Sun denotes diminution; but when diminution is going on without end, increase is sure to come. Sun therefore is followed by I (Increase). When increase goes on without end, there is sure to come a dispersion of it, and hence I is followed by Kuai (Resolution). Kuai

denotes break-through and dispersion. But dispersion must be succeeded by a reunion. Hence Kuai is followed by Kou (Coming on), which denotes such meeting.

45-48.

When things meet together, a collection then is formed. Hence Kou is followed by Ts'ui (Congregation), which name denotes being collected. When collections mount to the highest places, there results an upward advance, hence Ts'ui is followed by Sheng (Moving Upward). When such advance continues without stopping, there is sure to come distress; and hence Sheng is followed by K'un (Exhaustion). When distress is felt in the height that has been gained, there is sure to be a return to the ground beneath; and hence K'un is followed by Ching (the Well).

49-55.

What happens under Ching will in time require change, hence Ching is followed by Ko (Revolution), denoting change. For changing the substance of things, there is nothing equal to the cauldron, hence Ko is followed by Ting (the Cauldron). For presiding over that and all other vessels, no one equals the eldest son, and hence Ting is followed by Chen (Thunderclap). Chen conveys the idea of putting in motion. But things cannot be kept in motion forever. The motion is stopped; and hence Chen is followed by Ken (Inaction), which gives the idea of arresting or stopping. Things cannot be kept for ever in a state of repression, and hence Ken is followed by Chien (Gradual Progress), denoting the idea of gradual advance. With advance, there must be a point that is arrived at, hence Chien is followed by Kuei Mei (the Marriageable Maiden). When things thus find the proper point to which to come, they are sure to become great. Hence Kuei Mei is succeeded by Feng (Abundance), which conveys the idea of being great.

56-57.

He whose greatness reaches the utmost possibility, is sure to loose his dwelling; and hence Feng is succeeded by Lü (the Wanderer), denoting travellers or strangers. We have the idea of strangers having no place to receive them, hence Lü is followed by Sun (Gentle Penetration), which gives the idea of penetrating and entering.

58-59.

One enters and afterwards has pleasure in it; hence Sun is followed by Tui (Joy). Tui denotes pleasure and satisfaction. This pleasure and satisfaction dissipate afterwards, hence Tui is followed by Huan (Dispersal), which denotes separation and dissolution.

60-62 .

A state of division cannot continue for ever, hence Huan is followed by Chieh (Restraint). Chieh having been established, men believe in it, hence

Chieh is followed by Chung Fu (Inner Truth). When men have the belief that Chung Fu implies, they are sure to carry it into practice; and hence it is succeeded by Hsiao Kuo (Small Excess).

63-64.

He that surpasses others is sure to remedy existing evils, therefore Hsiao Kuo is succeeded by Chi Chi (Completion and After).

The succession of events cannot come to an end, therefore Chi Chi is succeeded by Wei Chi (Before Completion), with which the hexagrams are completed.
