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<i>Module Code:</i> SICH6016 <i>Module title:</i> Sinological English III: Translation of Confucian and Buddhist Literature	<i>Student number:</i> 2304995
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The Lessons of the *Qian* Hexagram in The Governing Principles of Ancient China for Leaders

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Module codes: SICH6016

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Date : 13 Aug. 2025



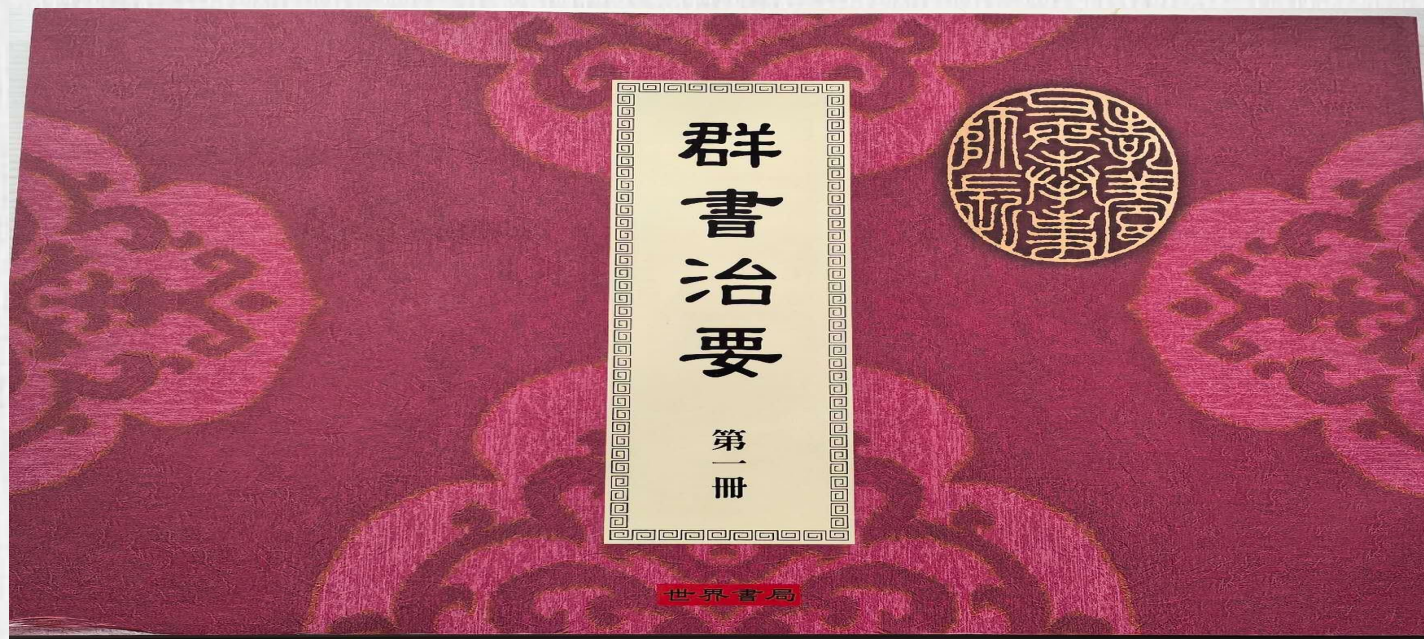


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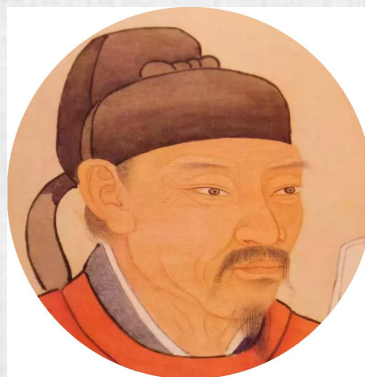
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- II. The Concept of *Qian*
- III. Conclusion

I . Introduction





Tang Emperor Taizong (598–649)

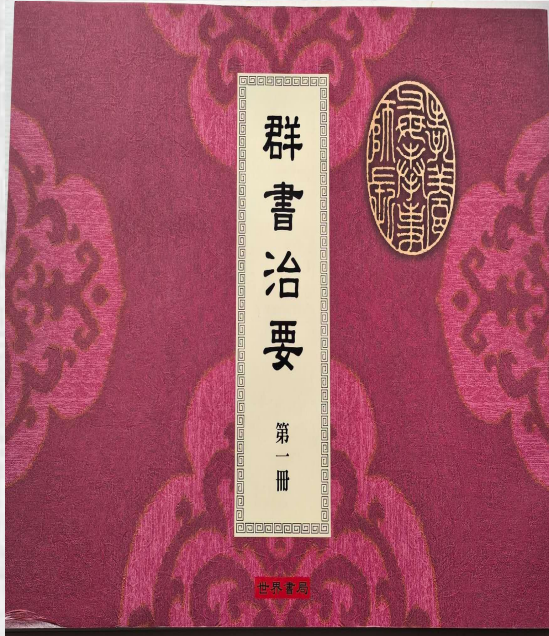


Wei Zheng(580–643)



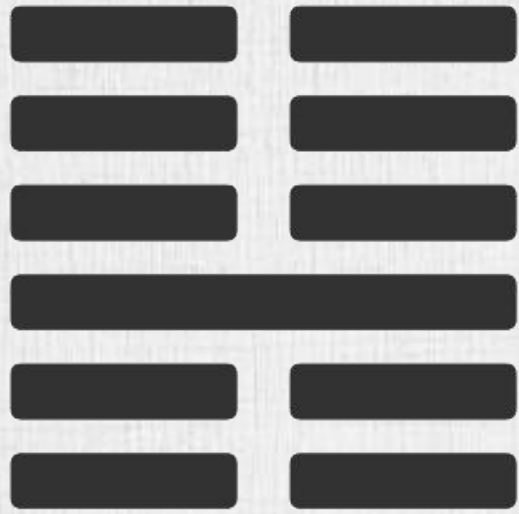
Yu Shinan(558–638)



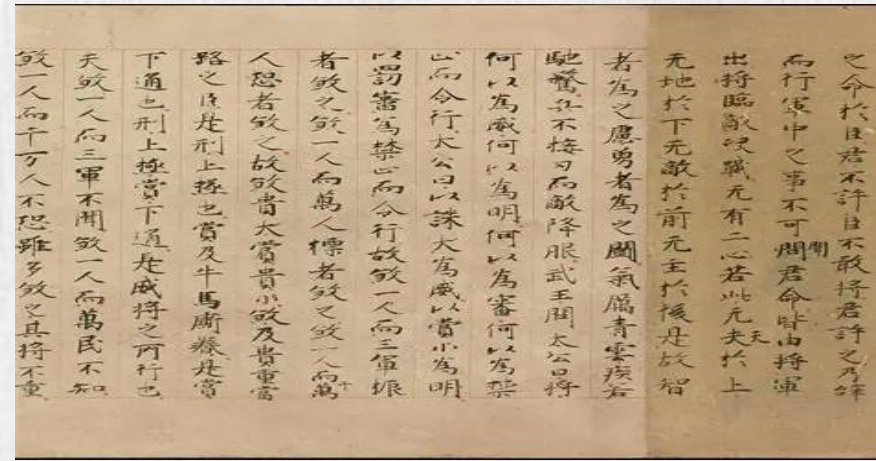
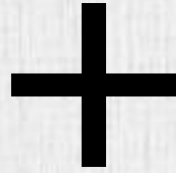
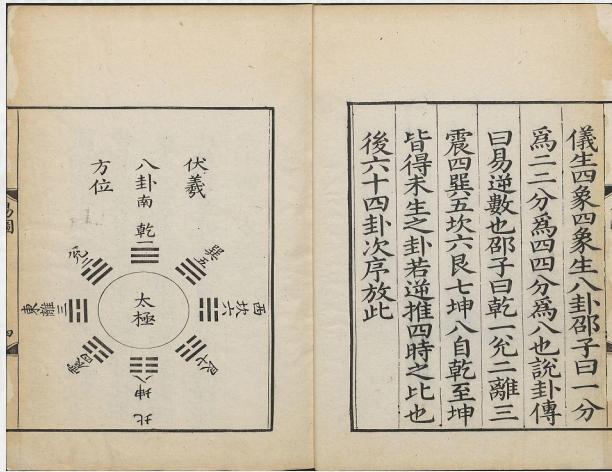


- Self – cultivation
- Family management
- Ruling the country





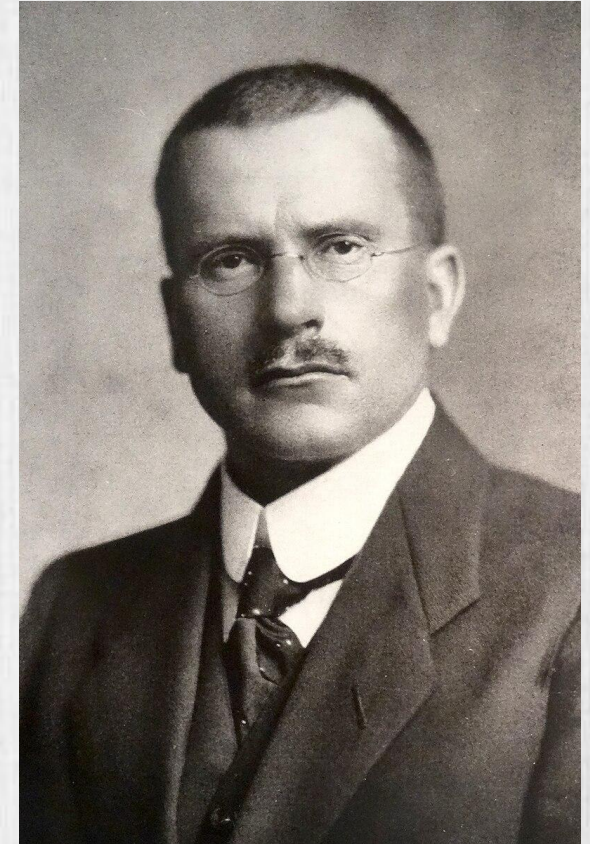
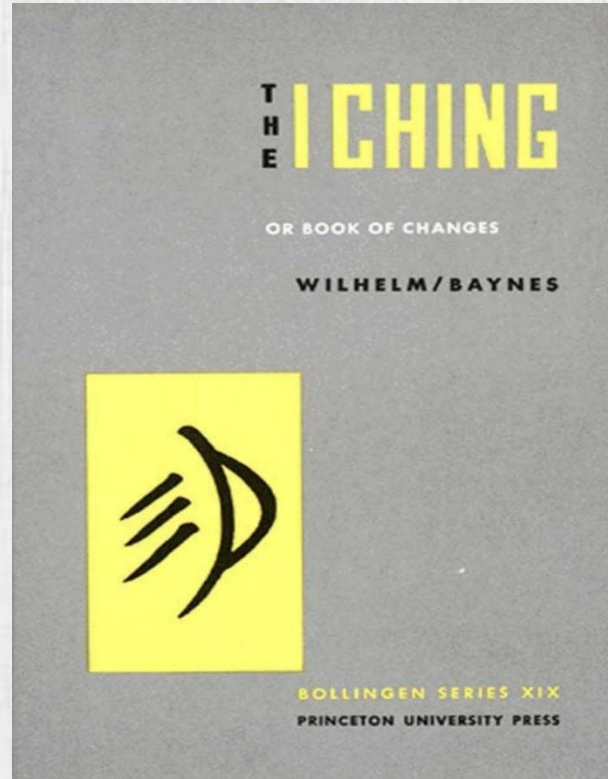
Mr. Lu Shaogang said in his book, ‘Among the sixty–four hexagrams, many have meanings like regret, stinginess, bad luck, or punishment, but only the Qian hexagram has all three lower lines as lucky and all three upper lines as favourable.’¹



- How this important hexagram is presented in The Governing Principles of Ancient China.
- Which key verses about Qian hexagram did Wei Zheng and others select for Emperor Taizong to learn?
- How did the ideas about humility in theses verses influence Emperor Taizong's actual ruling?



Richard Wilhelm (1873 – 1930)

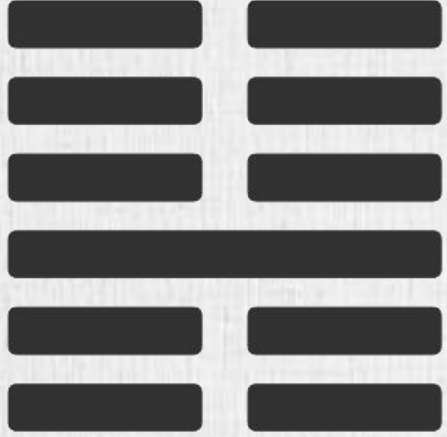


Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961)

The background is a traditional Chinese ink wash landscape painting. It features misty, layered mountains in shades of grey and blue. In the lower left, a small boat with a single figure wearing a conical hat is on the water. On the right, a rocky outcrop with several dark, stylized pine trees is visible. The overall atmosphere is serene and ethereal.

II. The Concept of *Qian* as Presented in *The Governing Principles of Ancient China*

Books Text	<i>The Governing Principles of Ancient China</i>	<i>I Ching</i>
The Judgment (卦辭)		謙，亨，君子有終。
The Images (大象辭)	地中有山，謙。君子以裒多益寡，稱物平施。	地中有山，謙。君子以裒多益寡，稱物平施。
The Judgment 彖辭	謙，亨。天道下濟而光明，地道卑而上行。天道虧盈而益謙，地道變盈而流謙，鬼神害盈而福謙，人道惡盈而好謙。謙，尊而光，卑而不可逾，君子之終也。	謙，亨。天道下濟而光明，地道卑而上行。天道虧盈而益謙，地道變盈而流謙，鬼神害盈而福謙，人道惡盈而好謙。謙，尊而光，卑而不可逾，君子之終也。
<i>First Yin</i> (爻辭) 初六	謙謙君子，用涉大川，吉。	謙謙君子，用涉大川，吉。
Commentary on the images 小象辭	謙謙君子，卑以自牧也。	謙謙君子，卑以自牧也。
<i>Third Yang</i> 九三	勞謙，君子有終，吉。	勞謙，君子有終，吉。
Commentary on the images 小象辭	勞謙君子，萬民服也。	勞謙君子，萬民服也。



**‘Superior man maintains a lowly
stance to nurture his own virtue.’²**

謙謙君子，卑以自牧也

- - - - - In *Qian* Hexagram - First Yin, the Commentary on the

Images

I Ching 易經 translated by Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 65.

‘謙謙’ (*qian qian*) means ‘utmost humility

Cheng Yi (1033 – 1107)



‘To conduct oneself with utmost humility is to be accepted by all.’

A humble leader

- Wins trust from subordinates and the public

- Remains safe even in dangerous situations

Receives aid from others when needed

Cheng Yi's interpretation

‘Dwelling in a lowly and gentle position
is the norm...’

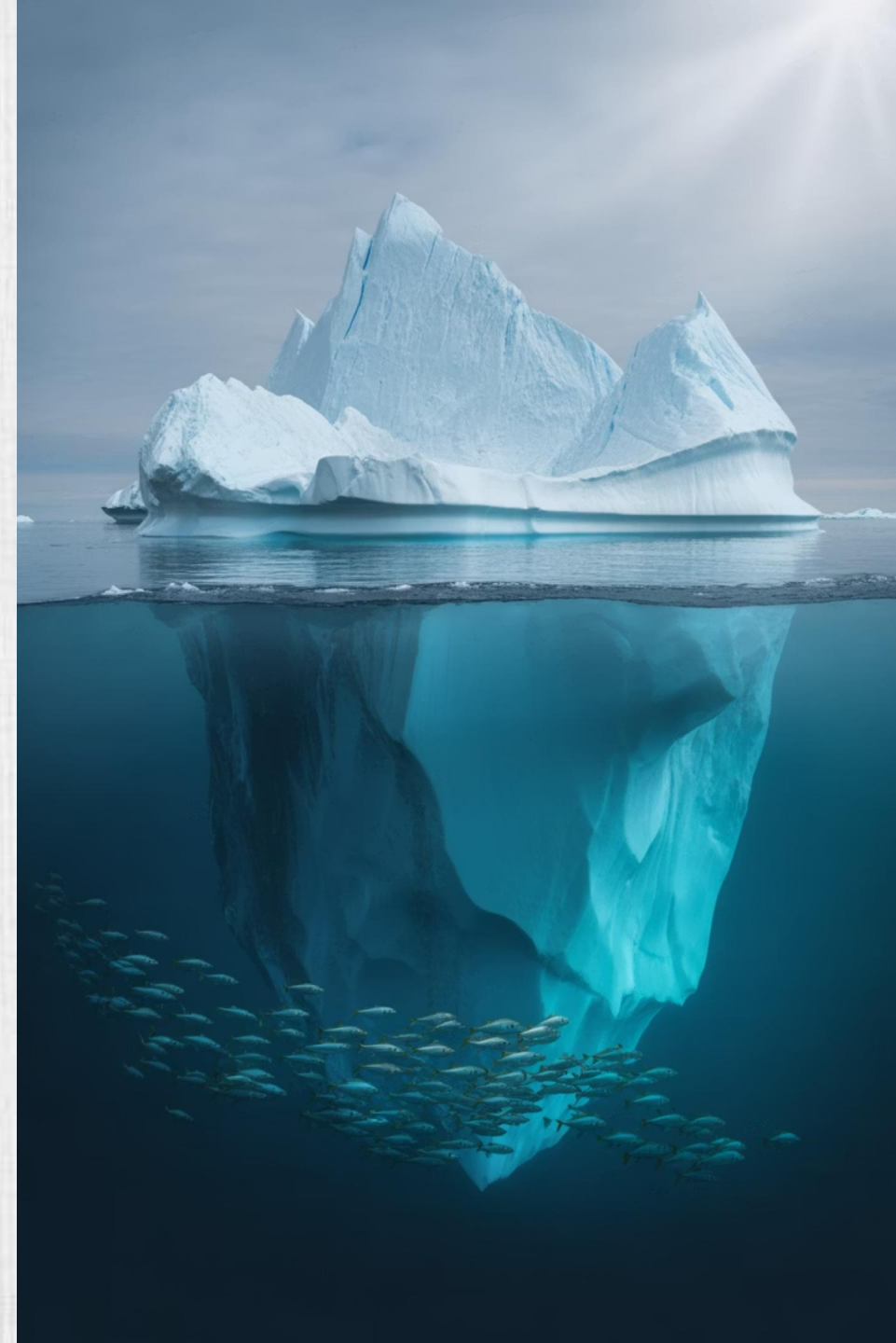
humility

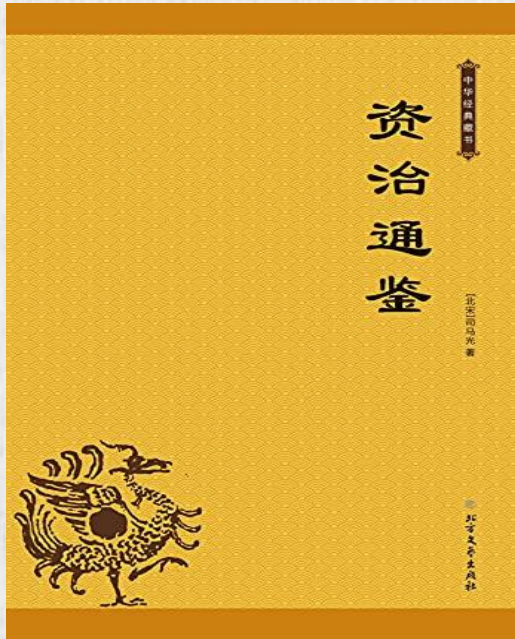


less
noticeable



minimising
errors





‘Being adept at heeding counsel’ stands as an expression of Emperor Taizong's humbleness.

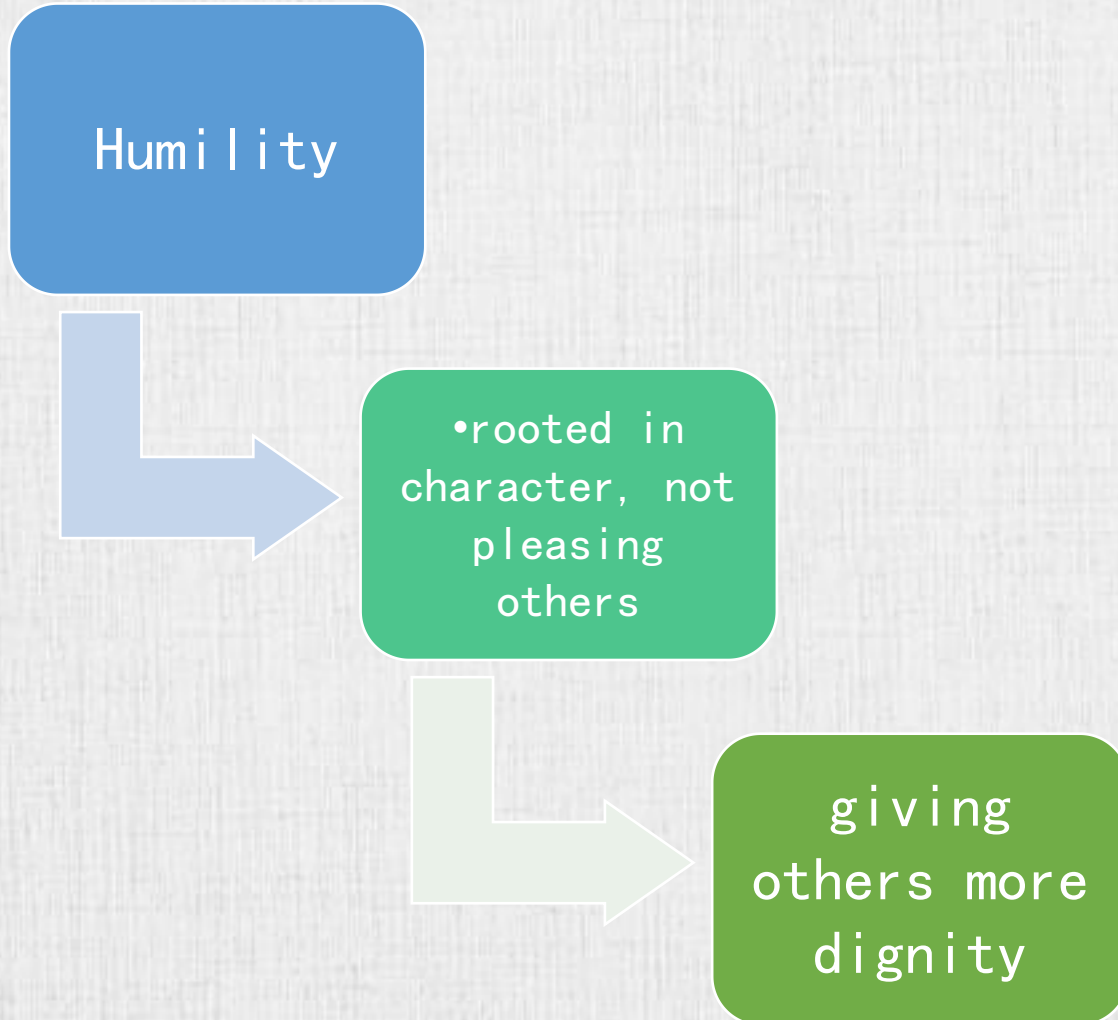
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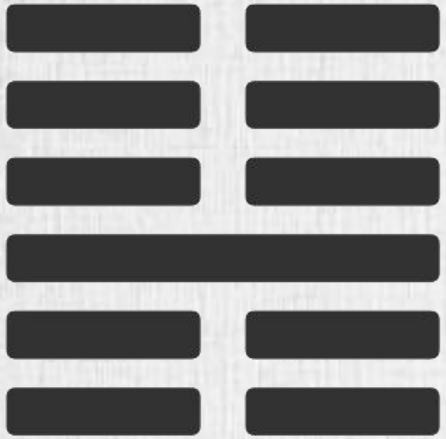
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Accepted his suggestions and corrected his own shortcomings.

Humility is an inner path of
self-cultivation





‘The humility superior man, though accomplished, wins the respect of all the people.’³

勞謙君子，萬民服也。

———In *Qian* Hexagram – Third Yang, the Commentary on the

Images

I Ching 易經 translated by Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 65.

Fu Lipu' s interpretation

The humility superior man, when the court is distributing rewards, attributes all the credit to those who died in service, declines rewards for himself, and takes no personal gain. In doing so, he earns not only the respect of the living but also the gratitude of the dead.'

humility
superior

attributes
all the
credit

declines
rewards

takes no
personal
gain



True Submission

- Not just about physical submission
- Heartfelt admiration and respect





Fang Xuanling (579–648)



Du Ruhui (585–630)



Wei Zheng(580–643)

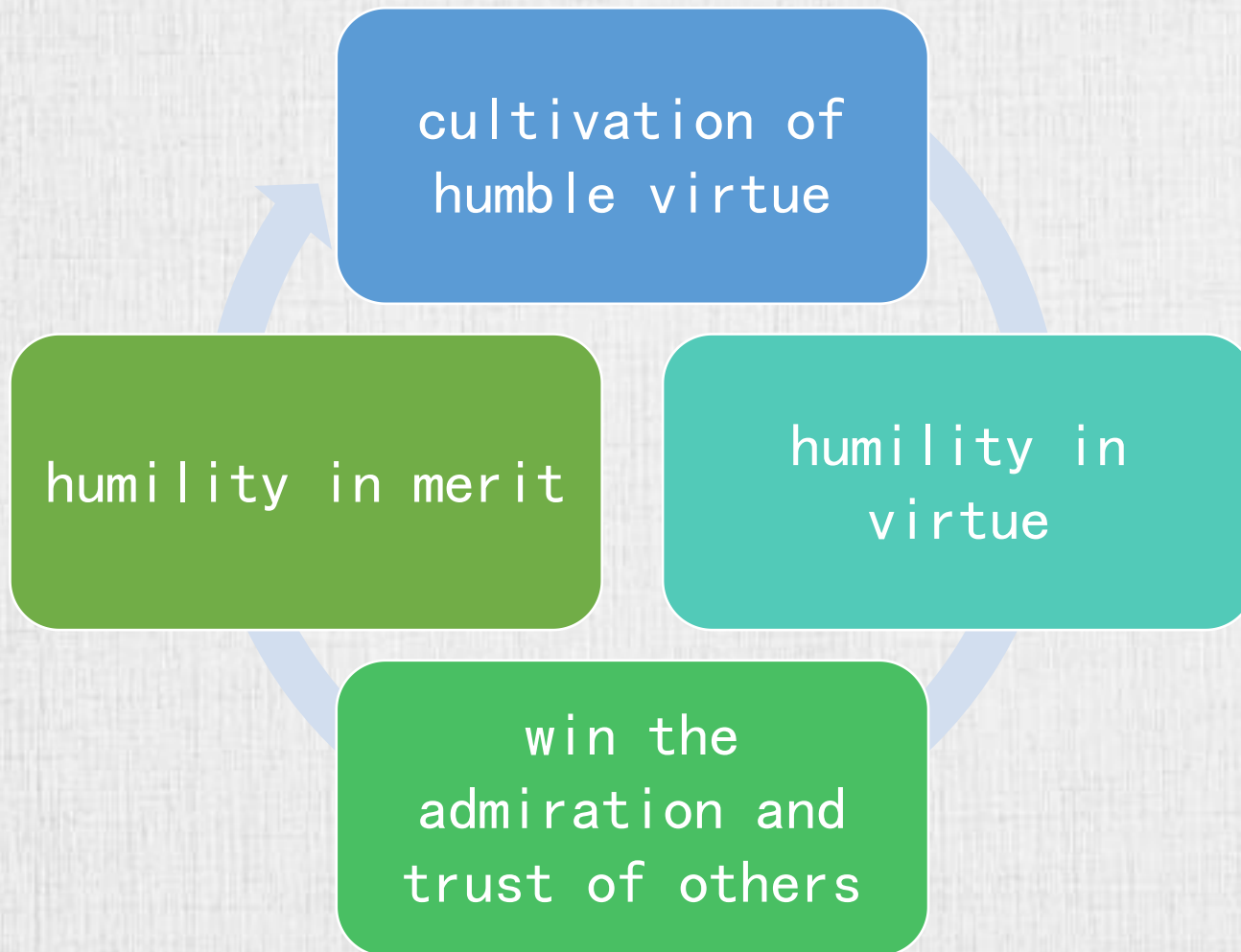


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The Humility Cycle in Leadership



Superior man maintains a lowly stance to nurture his own virtue.

謙謙君子，卑以自牧也

The humble superior man, though accomplished, earns the willing submission of all the people.

勞謙君子，萬民服也。

Alexus McLeod's view

‘Humility has a relational or secondary function linked with other virtues.’

Humility

ren (benevolence)

yi
(righteousness)

zhong (loyalty)

shu
(reciprocity).

If a leader can consistently treat others with humility, the impact will be both profound and far-reaching.

III. Conclusion



Conclusion

Emperor Taizong of Tang to take humility as a moral quality as the foundation of self-cultivation, and to implement the spirit of humility in governance practices. Ultimately, there aim was to achieve a harmonious society where leaders and subordinates are united.

Recommendations



Cultivate humility as a core virtue



Listen attentively and care for your people



Avoid claiming credit for yourself

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4. Mark Alfano, Michael P. Lynch and Alessandra Tanesini, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Humility* (New York: Routledge)
5. Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung (New Jersey: Princeton University Press)
6. Sima Guang 司馬光, *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* 資治通鑒 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1956)