

HEXAGRAM 48 CHING A WELL



Component trigrams:

Below: SUN, wind, wood, bland, mild.

Above: K'AN, water, a pit.

TEXT A Well. A city may be moved, but not a well.¹ A well suffers from no decrease and no increase; but often, when the people come to draw water there, the rope is too short or the pitcher gets broken before reaching the water²—misfortune!

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT Where (the pitchers are put) into the water to draw it up—such is a well. That a well gives nourishment without suffering depletion and that a city may be moved, but not a well, are both implied by the firm line in the centre (of the upper trigram). The rope's being too short indicates failure to achieve results; the breaking of the pitcher presages a positive misfortune.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes water over wood.³ The Superior Man encourages the people with advice and assistance.

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE The muddy water at the well bottom is undrinkable; an old well attracts no animals. **COMMENTARY** The first clause signifies that our affairs take a downward trend; the second, that it is time to give up.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE Perch dart from the water in the well hole; the pitcher is worn out and leaks.⁴ **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the failure of this line to win response (from the other lines).

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE The well has been cleaned out; to my heart's sorrow, no one drinks from it, though it could well be used to supply drinking water.⁵ The King is wise and it is possible for the people to share his good fortune.⁵ **COMMENTARY** The first sentence implies activities which call forth pity; the second, that we should accept our good fortune.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE The well is being tiled—no error! **COMMENTARY** For it is under repair.⁶

9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE The well is cool; its water tastes like water from an icy spring.⁷ **COMMENTARY** This is indicated by the suitable position of this line, which is central (to the upper trigram).

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE The well-rope lies unconcealed—confidence and supreme good fortune! **COMMENTARY** The supreme good fortune presaged here is in the nature of a great achievement.

NOTES (1) The building of a city depends upon ourselves; but wells cannot be moved to places where nature supplies no water. The implication is that our activities are limited by natural conditions. (2) What we desire is there for the taking, but we may not succeed in getting it. (3) A reference to the component trigrams. Wood may signify the bottom of a bucket or the wooden lining of an ancient well. (4) We are doubly unfortunate in that natural conditions (signified by fish in the water) and our own ineptitude or misfortune combine to ensure our failure. (5) If we fail now, it is not for lack of opportunity but because we do not make use of opportunity. (6) We are likely to suffer a necessary delay, but the situation is hopeful. (7) All goes well with us.