



12. *P'i / Standstill [Stagnation]*

	<i>above</i>	CH'IEN	THE CREATIVE, HEAVEN
	<i>below</i>	K'UN	THE RECEPTIVE, EARTH

This hexagram is the opposite of the preceding one. Heaven is above, drawing farther and farther away, while the earth below sinks farther into the depths. The creative powers are not in relation. It is a time of standstill and decline. This hexagram is linked with the seventh month (August–September), when the year has passed its zenith and autumnal decay is setting in.

THE JUDGMENT

STANDSTILL. Evil people do not further  
The perseverance of the superior man.  
The great departs; the small approaches.

Heaven and earth are out of communion and all things are benumbed. What is above has no relation to what is below,

and on earth confusion and disorder prevail. The dark power is within, the light power is without. Weakness is within, harshness without. Within are the inferior, and without are the superior. The way of inferior people is in ascent; the way of superior people is on the decline. But the superior people do not allow themselves to be turned from their principles. If the possibility of exerting influence is closed to them, they nevertheless remain faithful to their principles and withdraw into seclusion.

#### THE IMAGE

Heaven and earth do not unite:

The image of STANDSTILL.

Thus the superior man falls back upon his inner  
worth

In order to escape the difficulties.

He does not permit himself to be honored with  
revenue.

When, owing to the influence of inferior men, mutual mistrust prevails in public life, fruitful activity is rendered impossible, because the fundamentals are wrong. Therefore the superior man knows what he must do under such circumstances; he does not allow himself to be tempted by dazzling offers to take part in public activities. This would only expose him to danger, since he cannot assent to the meanness of the others. He therefore hides his worth and withdraws into seclusion.

#### THE LINES

Six at the beginning means:

When ribbon grass is pulled up, the sod comes with it.

Each according to his kind.

Perseverance brings good fortune and success.

The text is almost the same as that of the first line of the preceding hexagram, but with a contrary meaning. In the latter a man is drawing another along with him on the road to an official career; here a man is drawing another with him into retirement from public life. This is why the text says here,

“Perseverance brings good fortune and success,” and not “Undertakings bring good fortune.” If it becomes impossible to make our influence count, it is only by retirement that we spare ourselves humiliation. Success in a higher sense can be ours, because we know how to safeguard the value of our personalities.

□ Six in the second place means:

They bear and endure;

This means good fortune for inferior people.

The standstill serves to help the great man to attain success.

Inferior people are ready to flatter their superiors in a servile way. They would also endure the superior man if he would put an end to their confusion. This is fortunate for them. But the great man calmly bears the consequences of the standstill. He does not mingle with the crowd of the inferior; that is not his place. By his willingness to suffer personally he insures the success of his fundamental principles.

Six in the third place means:

They bear shame.

Inferior people who have risen to power illegitimately do not feel equal to the responsibility they have taken upon themselves. In their hearts they begin to be ashamed, although at first they do not show it outwardly. This marks a turn for the better.

Nine in the fourth place means:

He who acts at the command of the highest

Remains without blame.

Those of like mind partake of the blessing.

The time of standstill is nearing the point of change into its opposite. Whoever wishes to restore order must feel himself called to the task and have the necessary authority. A man who sets himself up as capable of creating order according to his own judgment could make mistakes and end in failure. But the man who is truly called to the task is favored by the

conditions of the time, and all those of like mind will share in his blessing.

○ Nine in the fifth place means:

Standstill is giving way.

Good fortune for the great man.

“What if it should fail, what if it should fail?”

In this way he ties it to a cluster of mulberry shoots.

The time undergoes a change. The right man, able to restore order, has arrived. Hence “Good fortune.” But such periods of transition are the very times in which we must fear and tremble. Success is assured only through greatest caution, which asks always, “What if it should fail?” When a mulberry bush is cut down, a number of unusually strong shoots sprout from the roots. Hence the image of tying something to a cluster of mulberry shoots is used to symbolize the way of making success certain. Confucius says about this line:

Danger arises when a man feels secure in his position. Destruction threatens when a man seeks to preserve his worldly estate. Confusion develops when a man has put everything in order. Therefore the superior man does not forget danger in his security, nor ruin when he is well established, nor confusion when his affairs are in order. In this way he gains personal safety and is able to protect the empire.

Nine at the top means:

The standstill comes to an end.

First standstill, then good fortune.

The standstill does not last forever. However, it does not cease of its own accord; the right man is needed to end it. This is the difference between a state of peace and a state of stagnation. Continuous effort is necessary to maintain peace: left to itself it would change into stagnation and disintegration. The time of disintegration, however, does not change back automatically to a condition of peace and prosperity; effort must be put forth in order to end it. This shows the creative attitude that man must take if the world is to be put in order.