

# HEXAGRAM 28 TA KUO EXCESS



*Component trigrams:*

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

*Above: TUI, a body of water, pool, marsh, joy.*

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**TEXT** Excess! The ridgepole sags.<sup>1</sup> It is favourable to have some goal (or destination) in view. Success!

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** This hexagram indicates something

altogether too large (or else excessive in some other way). The sagging of the ridgepole results from its weakness at both ends. The firm line in the centre (of the lower trigram) is unsuitably situated, for there are too many (firm lines). Nevertheless, the gentle and the joyful act as one,<sup>2</sup> so it is good to have in view a goal (or destination); success will follow! The timely application of this hexagram is of vast importance.

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes a forest submerged in a great body of water.<sup>3</sup> The Superior Man, though standing alone, is free from fear; he feels no discontent in withdrawing from the world.

### *The Lines*

**6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** For mats, use white rushes<sup>4</sup>—no error!

**COMMENTARY** The reference to rush mats is derived from the position of this yielding line below (so many firm ones). (A further commentary explains that they symbolize treating things with gentleness).

**9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** The withered willow tree puts forth new shoots—an old man takes to wife a young girl. Everything is favourable. **COMMENTARY** He weds her because they have been overmuch together.<sup>5</sup>

**9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** The ridgepole sags—misfortune! **COMMENTARY** That is to say the misfortune of being without adequate support.

**9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE** The ridgepole is upheld—good fortune! Were it otherwise, there would be cause for blame. **COMMENTARY** Good fortune in the sense that it does not fall.<sup>6</sup>

**9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE** The withered willow tree puts forth blossom—an old woman takes a vigorous (young) husband; no blame, no praise!<sup>7</sup> **COMMENTARY** How can such blossom endure for long? From another point of view, both of them should feel ashamed.<sup>8</sup>

**6 FOR THE TOP PLACE** While he was fording the river, the water rose above his head—misfortune, but he was not at fault. **COM-**

**MENTARY** This presages a misfortune for which we cannot possibly be blamed.

**NOTES** (1) A glance at the hexagram will show that it is too heavy in the middle and too weak at the ends. A number of firm lines is generally auspicious, but there can be too much of a good thing! (2) A reference to the component trigrams. (3) This is suggested by the component trigrams. Water is necessary for the nourishment of the trees, but too much of it can cause serious damage. (4) White rushes are less common than ordinary ones and probably make more beautiful mats. The implication may be that, if we decide to do things rather nicely, we might just as well go a little further and do them as charmingly as possible. (5) For an old man to wed a young girl may not be ideal in all circumstances; but if his association with her has already given rise to gossip, it is probably the best thing he can do. From his point of view, it is in any case a matter for satisfaction, so it is taken here to symbolize favourable circumstances. Some commentaries suggest another implication, namely that the old man is able to take on tasks normally difficult for the elderly. (6) This would seem to be good fortune of a negative kind; not so much good fortune as the failure of expected bad fortune to materialize. (7) No blame, in that there is no prohibition against such marriages; no praise, in that they are generally considered far more unsuitable than when the husband is much older than his wife. This implication for us is set forth in note eight. (8) The question of blaming or praising such a marriage is in any case of little importance, since it can scarcely be destined to endure for long. The second sentence of the commentary perhaps reveals that, for once, Confucius was inclined to disagree with his beloved mentor, the *Book of Changes*, and to be taken aback by the words 'no blame'. From the point of view of divination, lines of this sort do not always indicate marriage; this line could mean that we shall do or have done something rather unusual of which the results will be more or less negative.