



### 3. *Chun / Difficulty at the Beginning*

	<i>above</i>	K'AN	THE ABYSMAL, WATER
	<i>below</i>	CHÊN	THE AROUSING, THUNDER

The name of the hexagram, Chun, really connotes a blade of grass pushing against an obstacle as it sprouts out of the earth—hence the meaning, “difficulty at the beginning.” The hexagram indicates the way in which heaven and earth bring forth individual beings. It is their first meeting, which is beset with difficulties. The lower trigram Chên is the Arousing; its motion is upward and its image is thunder. The upper trigram K'an stands for the Abysmal, the dangerous. Its motion is downward and its image is rain. The situation points to teeming, chaotic profusion; thunder and rain fill the air. But the chaos clears up. While the Abysmal sinks, the upward movement eventually passes beyond the danger. A thunderstorm brings release from tension, and all things breathe freely again.

#### THE JUDGMENT

DIFFICULTY AT THE BEGINNING works supreme  
success,  
Furthering through perseverance.  
Nothing should be undertaken.  
It furthers one to appoint helpers.

Times of growth are beset with difficulties. They resemble a first birth. But these difficulties arise from the very profusion of all that is struggling to attain form. Everything is in motion: therefore if one perseveres there is a prospect of great success, in spite of the existing danger. When it is a man's fate to undertake such new beginnings, everything is still unformed, dark.

### 3. *Chun / Difficulty at the Beginning*

Hence he must hold back, because any premature move might bring disaster. Likewise, it is very important not to remain alone; in order to overcome the chaos he needs helpers. This is not to say, however, that he himself should look on passively at what is happening. He must lend his hand and participate with inspiration and guidance.

#### THE IMAGE

Clouds and thunder:

The image of DIFFICULTY AT THE BEGINNING.

Thus the superior man

Brings order out of confusion.

Clouds and thunder are represented by definite decorative lines; this means that in the chaos of difficulty at the beginning, order is already implicit. So too the superior man has to arrange and organize the inchoate profusion of such times of beginning, just as one sorts out silk threads from a knotted tangle and binds them into skeins. In order to find one's place in the infinity of being, one must be able both to separate and to unite.

#### THE LINES

○ Nine at the beginning means:

Hesitation and hindrance.

It furthers one to remain persevering.

It furthers one to appoint helpers.

If a person encounters a hindrance at the beginning of an enterprise, he must not try to force advance but must pause and take thought. However, nothing should put him off his course; he must persevere and constantly keep the goal in sight. It is important to seek out the right assistants, but he can find them only if he avoids arrogance and associates with his fellows in a spirit of humility. Only then will he attract those with whose help he can combat the difficulties.

Six in the second place means:

Difficulties pile up.

Horse and wagon part.

He is not a robber;  
He wants to woo when the time comes.  
The maiden is chaste,  
She does not pledge herself.  
Ten years—then she pledges herself.

We find ourselves beset by difficulties and hindrances. Suddenly there is a turn of affairs, as if someone were coming up with a horse and wagon and unhitching them. This event comes so unexpectedly that we assume the newcomer to be a robber. Gradually it becomes clear that he has no evil intentions but seeks to be friendly and to offer help. But this offer is not to be accepted, because it does not come from the right quarter. We must wait until the time is fulfilled; ten years is a fulfilled cycle of time. Then normal conditions return of themselves, and we can join forces with the friend intended for us.

Using the image of a betrothed girl who remains true to her lover in face of grave conflicts, the hexagram gives counsel for a special situation. When in times of difficulty a hindrance is encountered and unexpected relief is offered from a source unrelated to us, we must be careful and not take upon ourselves any obligations entailed by such help; otherwise our freedom of decision is impaired. If we bide our time, things will quiet down again, and we shall attain what we have hoped for.<sup>1</sup>

Six in the third place means:  
Whoever hunts deer without the forester  
Only loses his way in the forest.  
The superior man understands the signs of the time  
And prefers to desist.  
To go on brings humiliation.

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1. A different translation is possible here, which would result in a different interpretation:

Difficulties pile up.  
Horse and wagon turn about.  
If the robber were not there,  
The wooer would come.  
The maiden is faithful, she does not pledge herself.  
Ten years—then she pledges herself.



If a man tries to hunt in a strange forest and has no guide, he loses his way. When he finds himself in difficulties he must not try to steal out of them unthinkingly and without guidance. Fate cannot be duped; premature effort, without the necessary guidance, ends in failure and disgrace. Therefore the superior man, discerning the seeds of coming events, prefers to renounce a wish rather than to provoke failure and humiliation by trying to force its fulfillment.

Six in the fourth place means:

Horse and wagon part.

Strive for union.

To go brings good fortune.

Everything acts to further.

We are in a situation in which it is our duty to act, but we lack sufficient power. However, an opportunity to make connections offers itself. It must be seized. Neither false pride nor false reserve should deter us. Bringing oneself to take the first step, even when it involves a certain degree of self-abnegation, is a sign of inner clarity. To accept help in a difficult situation is not a disgrace. If the right helper is found, all goes well.

○ Nine in the fifth place means:

Difficulties in blessing.

A little perseverance brings good fortune.

Great perseverance brings misfortune.

An individual is in a position in which he cannot so express his good intentions that they will actually take shape and be understood. Other people interpose and distort everything he does. He should then be cautious and proceed step by step. He must not try to force the consummation of a great undertaking, because success is possible only when general confidence already prevails. It is only through faithful and conscientious work, unobtrusively carried on, that the situation gradually clears up and the hindrance disappears.

Six at the top means:

Horse and wagon part.

Bloody tears flow.

The difficulties at the beginning are too great for some persons. They get stuck and never find their way out; they fold their hands and give up the struggle. Such resignation is the saddest of all things. Therefore Confucius says of this line: "Bloody tears flow: one should not persist in this."