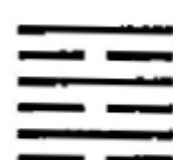


未濟

64. *Wei Chi / Before Completion*

	<i>above</i>	LI	THE CLINGING, FLAME
	<i>below</i>	K'AN	THE ABYSMAL, WATER

This hexagram indicates a time when the transition from disorder to order is not yet completed. The change is indeed prepared for, since all the lines in the upper trigram are in relation to those in the lower.¹ However, they are not yet in

1. [See p. 362.]

their places. While the preceding hexagram offers an analogy to autumn, which forms the transition from summer to winter, this hexagram presents a parallel to spring, which leads out of winter's stagnation into the fruitful time of summer. With this hopeful outlook the Book of Changes comes to its close.

THE JUDGMENT

BEFORE COMPLETION. Success.

But if the little fox, after nearly completing the
crossing,
Gets his tail in the water,
There is nothing that would further.

The conditions are difficult. The task is great and full of responsibility. It is nothing less than that of leading the world out of confusion back to order. But it is a task that promises success, because there is a goal that can unite the forces now tending in different directions. At first, however, one must move warily, like an old fox walking over ice. The caution of a fox walking over ice is proverbial in China. His ears are constantly alert to the cracking of the ice, as he carefully and circumspectly searches out the safest spots. A young fox who as yet has not acquired this caution goes ahead boldly, and it may happen that he falls in and gets his tail wet when he is almost across the water. Then of course his effort has been all in vain. Accordingly, in times "before completion," deliberation and caution are the prerequisites of success.

THE IMAGE

Fire over water:

The image of the condition before transition.
Thus the superior man is careful
In the differentiation of things,
So that each finds its place.

When fire, which by nature flames upward, is above, and water, which flows downward, is below, their effects take opposite directions and remain unrelated. If we wish to achieve an effect, we must first investigate the nature of the forces in

question and ascertain their proper place. If we can bring these forces to bear in the right place, they will have the desired effect, and completion will be achieved. But in order to handle external forces properly, we must above all arrive at the correct standpoint ourselves, for only from this vantage can we work correctly.

THE LINES

Six at the beginning means:
He gets his tail in the water.
Humiliating.

In times of disorder there is a temptation to advance oneself as rapidly as possible in order to accomplish something tangible. But this enthusiasm leads only to failure and humiliation if the time for achievement has not yet arrived. In such a time it is wise to spare ourselves the opprobrium of failure by holding back.²

Nine in the second place means:
He brakes his wheels.
Perseverance brings good fortune.

Here again the time to act has not yet come. But the patience needed is not that of idle waiting without thought of the morrow. Kept up indefinitely, this would not lead to any success. Instead, an individual must develop in himself the strength that will enable him to go forward. He must have a vehicle, as it were, to effect the crossing. But he must for the time being use the brakes. Patience in the highest sense means putting brakes on strength. Therefore he must not fall asleep and lose sight of the goal. If he remains strong and steadfast in his resolve, all goes well in the end.

Six in the third place means:
Before completion, attack brings misfortune.
It furthers one to cross the great water.

2. Note how this situation differs from that in the first line of the preceding hexagram.

The time of transition has arrived, but one lacks the strength to complete the transition. If one should attempt to force it, disaster would result, because collapse would then be unavoidable. What is to be done? A new situation must be created; one must engage the energies of able helpers and in this fellowship take the decisive step—cross the great water. Then completion will become possible.

Nine in the fourth place means:
 Perseverance brings good fortune.
 Remorse disappears.
 Shock, thus to discipline the Devil's Country.
 For three years, great realms are awarded.

Now it is the time of struggle. The transition must be completed. We must make ourselves strong in resolution; this brings good fortune. All misgivings that might arise in such grave times of struggle must be silenced. It is a question of a fierce battle to break and to discipline the Devil's Country, the forces of decadence. But the struggle also has its reward. Now is the time to lay the foundations of power and mastery for the future.

○ Six in the fifth place means:
 Perseverance brings good fortune.
 No remorse.
 The light of the superior man is true.
 Good fortune.

The victory has been won. The power of steadfastness has not been routed. Everything has gone well. All misgivings have been overcome. Success has justified the deed. The light of a superior personality shines forth anew and makes its influence felt among men who have faith in it and rally around it. The new time has arrived, and with it good fortune. And just as the sun shines forth in redoubled beauty after rain, or as a forest grows more freshly green from charred ruins after a fire, so the new era appears all the more glorious by contrast with the misery of the old.

Nine at the top means:
There is drinking of wine
In genuine confidence. No blame.
But if one wets his head,
He loses it, in truth.

Before completion, at the dawning of the new time, friends foregather in an atmosphere of mutual trust, and the time of waiting is passed in conviviality. Since the new era is hard on the threshold, there is no blame in this. But one must be careful in all this to keep within proper bounds. If in his exuberance a man gets drunk, he forfeits the favorableness of the situation through his intemperance.

NOTE. The hexagram AFTER COMPLETION represents a gradual transition from a time of ascent past a peak of culture to a time of standstill. The hexagram BEFORE COMPLETION represents a transition from chaos to order. This hexagram comes at the end of the Book of Changes. It points to the fact that every end contains a new beginning. Thus it gives hope to men. The Book of Changes is a book of the future.