

## 5 xu/waiting



*Sacrificing captives.  
Supreme offering.  
Auspicious augury.  
Favourable for fording a big river.*

Base (9): Waiting at the suburban altar.

*Favourable for a heng ceremony.  
NO MISFORTUNE.*

(9) 2: Waiting on the sands.

*There will be some complaints.  
Ultimately AUSPICIOUS.*

(9) 3: Waiting in mud.

*Makes raiders come.*

(6) 4: Waiting in blood.

*From their holes they scud.*

(9) 5: Waiting for wine and food.

*Augury: AUSPICIOUS.*

Top (6): Entering a pithouse.

*Some uninvited guests arriving;  
treat them courteously.  
Ultimately AUSPICIOUS.*

(5) **waiting**

(Tag) Some scholars prefer an alternative reading of the tag: *ru* ‘getting wet’ (see Diagram 11). Waley (A127) believes that it means ‘ant’ or ‘weevil’ or some similar insect. Both readings can be maintained throughout the chapter instead of ‘waiting’, and both make sense.

Reading it to mean weevils suggests a set of omens. Reading it to mean 'waiting' must be understood as referring to the prisoners, who may be destined for use as sacrificial victims.

(Hexagram statement) The word here translated as 'supreme' appears in the text as *guang* 'glory', which makes for fractured grammar unless *guang* is a sentence in itself. There is no sentence of that kind elsewhere in *Zhouyi*. Wen Yiduo suggests that it is a miscopying of the visually similar character *yuan* (see Diagram 13), part of the standard expression *yuanheng* 'supreme offering' (W588). Gao (G176), however, accepts *guang* as meaning 'glory' and the whole sentence as 'There will be the glory of taking captives.'

(Base) *Jiao* 'the suburban altar' was a mound outside the city, where very large crowds could attend rituals. Compare 13:top. See also Hexagram Statement 9 and 62:5.

Waley (A136) suggested that a *heng* ceremony was a rite for fixing an omen as a mordant fixes dye. It may have been as simple as burying an oracle bone or drawing a circle round a place. See also 32:3. Gao (G176) takes *heng* to mean 'patience'.

(2) The same phrase about complaints occurs in 6:base.

(4 and Top) *Xue*, translated 'hole' or 'pit', occurs in both these line statements. In Line 4 it may mean a prison-pit (suggesting that 'scud' means 'escape'), and in the top line a pit-dwelling.

(4) The blood is presumably the blood of sacrifice. The meaning may be '(victims) waiting for bloodshed'.

Gao Heng (G177) suggests that escaping from a hole or pit refers to a story recorded in the Zuo Commentary (Duke Ai year 1: Legge 792/794) about a queen of the Xia dynasty who was pregnant when her husband was killed during an insurrection. She escaped from imprisonment in a pit, or 'through a hole', and her son restored the family's power.

(5) Perhaps 'waiting *with* wine and food'. There may be a hint of reprieve from execution.

(Top) Pit-houses, houses with floors lower than the ground outside, were the dwellings of the common people.