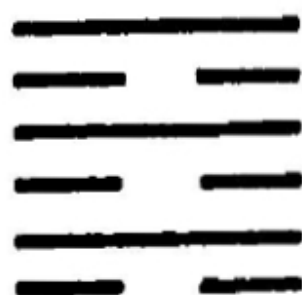


## HEXAGRAM 64

WEI CHI BEFORE COMPLETION<sup>1</sup>

*Component trigrams:*

*Below: K'AN, water, a pit.*

*Above: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.*

**TEXT** Before Completion—success! Before the little fox has quite completed its crossing (of the ice), its tail gets wet.<sup>2</sup> No goal (or destination) is favourable now.

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** This hexagram presages success because the yielding line (line five) occupies a central position (in the upper trigram). That the little fox does not quite complete its crossing (before getting its tail wet) indicates that we have not yet succeeded in getting beyond the middle (of the matter forming the subject of our enquiry). The wetting of its tail and the absence of any favourable goal (or destination) imply that our affairs cannot be pushed through to completion.<sup>3</sup> The firm and the yielding lines, although not appropriately placed, accord with one another.

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes fire above water.<sup>4</sup> The Superior Man takes care to distinguish between things before arranging them in order.

### *The Lines*

**6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** Its tail gets wet—disgrace!<sup>5</sup> **COMMENTARY** This also implies that we do not know how to take advantage of opportunities.

**9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** He brakes the wheel of the chariot—righteous persistence brings good fortune!<sup>6</sup> **COMMENTARY** Namely, the good fortune of being able to steer a middle course and go straight forward.<sup>7</sup>

**6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** The crossing is incomplete, so to advance now would bring misfortune; (yet) it will be advantageous to cross the great river (or sea).<sup>8</sup> **COMMENTARY** The first part of this passage is suggested by the line's unsuitable position.

**9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE** Persistence in a righteous course brings reward and regret vanishes. The subjugation of the land of Kuei involved tremendous activity; but, at the end of three years, great territories were bestowed (upon the successful generals).<sup>9</sup> **COMMENTARY** The reward to be gained by persistence and the disappearance of regret both imply that what we will will come about.

**6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE** Persistence in a righteous course brings good fortune and absence of regret. The lustre of the Superior Man wins people's confidence—hence the good fortune! **COMMENTARY** The Superior Man has the glorious custom of distributing his good fortune (among the needy).<sup>10</sup>

**9 FOR THE TOP PLACE** Those in whom the people repose their trust may feast themselves without doing wrong; but if they allow their heads to get wet they will forfeit that trust.<sup>11</sup> **COMMENTARY** Because that would indicate lack of restraint.

**NOTES** (1) That the LAST of the sixty-four hexagrams should be Before Completion rather than After Completion (H.63) may seem surprising until it is recalled that there is nothing final about it; the cycle of change continues, passing from H.64 onto the first hexagram, and so on eternally. (2) This implies that we are to expect a setback in our plans. (3) Hence this is a time for waiting and for drawing in our horns. (4) A reference to the component trigrams. (5) If we receive this moving line, the setback is likely to be discreditable to us. (6) But note that he uses his brake; i.e. our persistence must be in the form of determination to halt now and proceed later. (7) See note six, just above this one. If events permit us to interpret the braking of the wheel as a recent success in preventing ourselves being dragged into a wrong course, then all is well and there is no need to halt now. (8) The second and third clauses of this passage appear contradictory; but not if we interpret them to mean that, though we must halt for a while, we should preserve our determination to go forward to the end when conditions warrant an advance. (9) This implies that we must work and, perhaps, suffer much in order to gain the fulfilment of our will promised in the commentary on this line. (10) From the point of view of divination, this implies that we should be very generous in sharing the promised good fortune. (11) This is a warning against excess. We have every right to enjoy our good fortune within reasonable bounds; but, if we are guilty of an excess comparable to that of drunken men who pour wine over one another's heads, we shall forfeit the high esteem in which we are (or soon will be) held.