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(zhūn) Sprouting

Sprouting ensures continuing growth. Persistence is effective; don't start a journey now. It is good to delegate responsibilities to those you trust.

- **Nine in the first place:** Pacing back and forth. Persisting where you are is effective, as is appointing helpers.
- **Six in the second place:** Sprouting like going in circles. Riding a horse but going in circles. When a bandit seeks to marry a woman, she must persist in saying no. But after ten years, then the word marriage.
- **Six in the third place:** If you hunt deer without a guide, you find yourself lost in the midst of a forest. It is better to give up rather than try to win in this situation. If you move forward, trouble.
- **Six in the fourth place:** Riding a horse, going in circles. Seek marriage. Moving forward brings good fortune. Nothing is ineffective.

- **Nine in the fifth place:** Sprouting eases your way. If you persist with small things, good fortune. If you persist with the great, misfortune.
- **Six at the top:** Riding the horse in circles. You shed ceaseless, bloody tears.

Image

Clouds and thunder: the image of sprouting. You should set strong warp strings to the loom.

Clouds and thunder were welcome signs on the north China plains, where rainfall was scarce and too much sun could spell death for crops and people. Although the clouds darken the light for a time, and the thunder may be frightening, they usually signal the arrival of the rain necessary for growing things. Similarly, stringing a loom with the long warp threads which will provide strength to a fabric is a difficult process, requiring more than one person to accomplish it. This is a time of new growth and of setting the stage for further growth. This stage usually includes difficulties, but surmounting them will result in a framework, an environment, which will support sustained growth and productivity.

The character that names this hexagram depicts a sprout, a seedling at the stage when, after developing its roots, it has just managed to pierce the crust of the earth and push its first tendril above ground. Many of us can remember a childhood experience of watching a bean go through this process in a clear container, so that we could see the roots developing within the earth. What is visible above ground looks fairly pathetic. The sprout is pallid and weak, bent over and exhausted from the effort of pushing through the earth. We have all had times when we have felt just as

exhausted by persistent efforts which have seemed to accomplish little. But the gardener knows that this plant will live, since it has finally attained access to all the sources of energy it needs, from sun and sky as well as from the earth.

A secondary aspect of this stage is delegation. The Zhou kings, who consulted the forerunner of the *Book of Changes*, reigned for nearly eight hundred years but they never tried to rule their entire kingdom directly. They kept a small amount of land under their direct control, enough for their immediate needs, and delegated the supervision of the vast majority of their domains to their relatives, making them subordinate lords, which they enfeoffed as dukes. A modern parallel would be the delegation of responsibilities for a project to those worthy of your long-term trust and a fair amount of autonomy.

The lines of the hexagram make it clear that we are not expected to go it alone. Even the greatest person, with the most developed wisdom and self-control, cannot succeed without guides, just as a ruler going hunting requires expert assistance for a successful hunt. If trustworthy help is not available, it is usually better to postpone attempts to move ahead. However, if someone is so committed to us that they have stood by us for ten years, without a commitment on our side, then they are not thieves but truly sincere about spending their lives with us. We need this kind of ally, but we also need to avoid people who might rob us.

Shaughnessy, 82–83, 298–299.

Lynn, 152–158.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 16–20.