

12



Pǐ

BLOCKED

Blocked.
Do not keep on like a lord.
Big goes forward,
small draws back.

When one's advance is blocked by someone powerful, one must accept it and draw back. To act "like a lord" means to take strong action.^{1, 2}

Lines

first line/6 — — Madder is picked
by the roots.
Staying as one is brings good fortune.
Blessed.

It is best to remain in this low position. Madder is a low creeper, the roots of which are used to make alizarin-red dye. Though the root is low, it is the most important part of the plant.³

line two/6 — — He wraps an offering of meat.
All right for a little man,
But a big man is blocked.
Blessed.

It is all right for someone of low status to wrap his offering in leaves, but someone greater must use bronze ritual vessels. Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate: It is he who will be blessed with an eventual successful advance.⁴

line three/6 — — He wraps an offering of sauces.

This is probably inauspicious. It is all right to offer plain meat wrapped in leaves (see line two), but meat with sauces is a fine offering that should be made in the proper bronze ritual vessels. Line three is at the top of the lower trigram. It often represents someone who strives higher than he can or should go. If he cannot afford bronze vessels, he should not offer sauced meats.⁴

line four/9 ——— Awarded rank.
No harm.
An associate shines blessings.

Line four is the place of the officer. The ruler who had been blocking his advance now grants him a commission.

line five/9 ——— A fortunate blockage.
Run away? Run away?
He is tied to a flourishing mulberry tree.

His advance may be blocked, but he is forced to stay in a place that is a good one. Line five is the place of the ruler. Why should he want to run away from a flourishing ruler?

top line/9 ——— The blockage is overthrown.
Blocked before,
happy afterward.

The top line of a hexagram often has to do with conflict between a subject and his ruler. Usually the subject is defeated. In this case, his attack is successful.

STRUCTURE	☰ 乾 Qián	Strong Action (solid, strong, active)
	☷ 坤 Kūn	Acquiescent (weak, passive, withdraw)

The weak and passive lower trigram (☷) is blocked by the strong upper trigram (☰) ahead of it. Someone small or in a low position passively accepts the fact that his progress is blocked by someone strong and in a high position. The upper trigram advances (☰), the lower trigram withdraws (☷). See opening text: "Big goes forward, small draws back."

SEQUENCE In the previous hexagram TÀI (11) FLOWING, the ruler helped his subject to advance. Here he blocks him, not wanting him to rise too high.

Notes

1. "Blocked." (opening text) — The transmitted text has: "Blocked by someone bad." I follow Li (1969).

2. "Big goes forward, small draws back." (opening text) — Compare with the opening text of the previous hexagram TÀI (11) FLOWING: "Small goes forward, big draws back."

3. "Madder is picked by the roots." (first line) — Compare with the first line of FLOWING, which is identical, except that the omen recommends marching forth rather than staying as one is.

4. "He wraps an offering" (lines two and three) — These lines are traditionally interpreted: "He bears and endures" and "He bears shame." I follow Gao (1947) and Li (1969). See MÉNG (4) THE YOUNG SHOOT, note 4.