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TÀI

FLOWING

Flowing.
Small goes forward,
big draws back.
Auspicious.
Blessed.

A smooth and easy advance. Someone small moves forward, aided by someone big, who draws back to help him. This auspicious hexagram portrays an ideal relationship between a subject and his ruler.^{1, 2}

Lines

first line/9 — Madder is picked
by the roots.
Marching forth will bring good fortune.

One's rise starts from a low position. Madder is a low creeper, the roots of which are used to make alizarin-red dye.

line two/9 — He wraps the offering
of a poor harvest.
Crossing the River,
He will not be swept away.
Though his friends are lost,
He will gain the far shore road.

He has little, but humbly offers what he can and is helped to surmount the obstacles in his path. Line two is the place of the subject, who is aided by his ruler. The river referred to is probably the Yellow River (黄河 *Huánghé*).^{3, 4}

line three/9 ——— No level ground does not become hilly,
No advance does not end in retreat.
Persevere against adversity,
you will come to no harm.
Do not fear. For the faithful
There will be food left
when the time comes to eat.

Even though their relationship may sometimes turn sour, a subject who remains faithful to his ruler will not be abandoned. The misfortune normal to third lines is in this case somewhat mitigated, as is the auspiciousness of line four. Such a balance is usually maintained by these two lines.⁵

line four/6 — — Misfortunes
fly to him from his neighbor,
Whom he has faith in
and does not blame.

Line four is the place of the officer, who bears faithful allegiance to his ruler.

line five/6 — — King Diyi gave his sister in marriage
And riches besides. Supreme good fortune.

The subject receives gifts from his ruler. The second-last Shang king of China gave many gifts to his great vassal the lord of Zhou, including a bride from one of the royal clans. Line five is the place of the ruler and the passive line (— —) indicates receptivity.⁶

top line/6 — — Battlements are toppled into the ditch.
Do not field an army.
From the capital
comes a command to halt.
Keeping on will lead to trouble.

Going too far leads to destruction. The top line of a hexagram often depicts the conflict that ensues when a subject places himself above his ruler.

STRUCTURE ☷ ☰ Kūn Acquiescent (weak, accepting, withdraw)

☳ 乾 Qián Strong Action (strong, active)

The strong and active lower trigram (☳) moves easily forward through the weak and accepting upper trigram (☷). A strong and active subject moves smoothly forward, aided by a ruler who accepts the advance and draws back to help him (see opening text).

SEQUENCE The association entered into in Bǐ (8) ALLIANCE went through some initial difficulties in Xiǎo Xù (9) SMALL IS TAMED and Lǚ (10) TREADING, but in FLOWING it reaches an easy perfection, as subject and ruler work together for the subject's advance.

Notes

1. TÀI — The meaning of the word 泰 *tài* is debatable. Its basic meaning is “huge” or “extreme,” but commentators do not use this. Most English translators call the hexagram Peace. Chinese commentators define it with words that mean something like “getting through,” “successful,” or “smooth and auspicious.” I have selected FLOWING to convey this meaning because the character 泰 contains the element 水, which is a form of 水 “water.”

2. “Small goes forward, big draws back.” (opening text) — See next hexagram Pǐ (12) BLOCKED, where these actions are reversed.

3. “He wraps the offering of a poor harvest.” (line two) — This is one of the most disputable phrases in the *Changes*. Various commentators and translators give it as: “Bearing with the uncultivated,” “Encompassing the ends of the earth,” “Encompassing emptiness,” “[Floating on] a big gourd,” and “Encompassing the waters.”

4. “Wraps the offering” (line two) — Those too poor to own bronze ritual vessels wrapped their offerings to the spirits in the leaves of certain plants. See MÉNG (4) THE YOUNG SHOOT, line two, and Pǐ (12) BLOCKED, lines two and three.

5. “There will be food left” (line three) — Ancient lords held sacrificial feasts in which they and their relatives and vassals ate the intentional leftovers of a cooked offering to the spirits.

6. “King Diyi gave his sister in marriage” (line five) — Dìyǐ 帝乙 was the second-last Shang king of China. The “younger sister” he gave as a bride to the lord of Zhou was probably actually a distant cousin. All members of a generation in the Shang clans were thought of as brothers and sisters. In any case, this bride may have been a

very important gift. A Shang wife is said to have borne one lord of Zhou (季歷 *Jìlì*), a son who became King Wen (文王 *Wénwáng*), the originator of Zhou power. Another Shang wife is said to have borne King Wen a son who became King Wu (武王 *Wǔwáng*), the conqueror of Shang and the first Zhou king of China. See also GUĪ MÈI (54) A MAIDEN MARRIES, line five.