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(gǔ) Branching Out

Good fortune and success. Fording the great river is effective. Before the start of a ten-day period,* three days. After the first of ten days, three days.

- Six in the first place: Stemming from father's branch: having a child who is crafty. No blame, but trouble. In the end, good fortune.
- Nine in the second place: Stem of mother's branch: you cannot persist.
- Nine in the third place: Stem of father's branch: few have regrets. No great blame.
- Six in the fourth place: Water over father's branch: going to see. Trouble.
- Six in the fifth place: Stem of father's branch: using a cart.

- **Nine at the top:** Glorifying your own deeds instead of bringing admiration to ruler and lords. Misfortune.

Image

Below the mountain, a wind: the image of branching out. You should stir up the people and nourish moral strengths.

When a bamboo grows, its stems send off branches. This is likened to the winds that blow around the foot of a mountain. This is a healthy part of natural growth and change. The focus of the lines seems to be on the stems, paternal or maternal, and on the types of growth the branches (or children) may provide for the whole plant (family).

For many centuries, another character with the same sound was accepted as the title of this hexagram. Its emphasis was also on changes from one's parents' pasts, but this positive aspect was overshadowed by the vividness of the alternative image: a bowl holding a writhing mass of insects consuming rotten food. However, the older Mawangdui text found in the tomb of a Han duchess makes more sense; that is, it is more consistent within itself in referring to both stems and branches rather than to saving insect-infested food, clearly an impossible (and disgusting) task.

Think instead of a clump of bamboo and the branches from its stems. (The word for *branch* here has the bamboo radical, not the tree radical). What is common to this growing plant and to the winds at the feet of mountains? Both winds and branches seem weaker, yet both are more flexible, than their larger partner. Some branches may need trimming, just as some winds may necessitate windbreaks. Yet life could not continue without some branching,

if only to put forth more leaves, just as a climate cannot be salubrious without some wind. We are urged here to encourage others in the development of their capabilities, to feed their desire for what is sound, what has virtue in themselves and in what they can do. Likewise, we are warned that self-promotion at the expense of the whole picture seen by good leaders would be a mistake.

* Ten days was the usual duration of the traditional Chinese “week.”

Shaughnessy, 68–69, 295.

Lynn, 248–253.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 75–78.