

4



蒙

MÉNG

# THE YOUNG SHOOT

The young shoot.  
The young shoot is blessed.  
“It is not I who seek something of the young shoot,  
It is the young shoot who seeks something of me.  
But when I have given him the first answer,  
He ignores the second and the third.  
Since he ignores them, I will not give them.”  
It is favorable to remain as one is.

If an inexperienced youth (a “young shoot”) does not accept instruction and restraint, his ignorance of the world will lead him into trouble. Rather than charging ahead recklessly, he should stay as he is. The passage in quotes is probably provided for the diviner to repeat as his own words, but may also be seen as spoken by the power behind the *Changes*. As translated, it suggests that ancient diviners made each divination three times, using the second and third answers to verify the first.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## *Lines*

first line/6 — —     The young shoot bursts forth.  
Punishment should be imposed.  
Letting him advance unshackled  
will lead to trouble.

The exuberant youth is blind to the dangers that lie ahead of him.<sup>3</sup>

line two/9 ——— He wraps an offering of young shoots.  
 Auspicious.  
 It is auspicious for him to get a wife.  
 A son can have his own household.

People who were not wealthy enough to have special bronze sacrificial vessels wrapped their offerings to the spirits in the leaves of certain plants. His offering of young shoots is a paltry one, but it indicates at least that he is ready to take a place in the world. Since line two is the place of the subject, the “wife” may symbolize his ruler.<sup>4</sup>

line three/6 — — He must not take a wife.  
 The gold that he sees is not for him.  
 Unfavorable.

It is not favorable for him to marry. The person whom he wants to join is either too good for him or not as good as she/he seems. Line three is almost always dangerous.<sup>5</sup>

line four/6 — — The young shoot is overburdened.  
 Trouble.

He takes on responsibilities that are too heavy for him. Line four is the place of the officer.

line five/6 — — The young shoot.  
 Has good fortune.

He has good fortune because he accepts restraint. The upper trigram Gēn ䷎ Keep Still indicates restraint. Line five is the place of the ruler. The passive line (— —) shows the subject's acceptance of his ruler's restraint. Line five is also usually the place of greatest good fortune in a hexagram.

top line/9 ——— The young shoot is caught and bound.  
 It is not favorable to make raids,  
 It is favorable to ward them off.

He recklessly goes too far and is restrained by force. The top line of a hexagram often has to do with going too far and with conflict between inferior and superior. The solid line suggests both the inferior's reckless activity and the superior's solid restraint.

STRUCTURE ䷳ 艮 Gēn Keep Still (stopped, restraint)  
                   ䷜ 坎 Kǎn Pit (danger, difficulties, trouble)

Trouble is stopped. Someone smaller or lower is in difficulties (lower trigram ䷜). Someone bigger or higher restrains him (upper trigram ䷳).

SEQUENCE If TÚN (3) GATHERING SUPPORT was pregnancy, this hexagram is childhood, when the young creature is subject to his parents' restraint and instruction. The restraint in GATHERING SUPPORT was self-restraint. The restraint in THE YOUNG SHOOT is imposed from outside.

### Notes

1. MÉNG — the word 蒙 méng can have several meanings: “young shoot,” “darkness,” “blindness,” “ignorance,” “to cover,” “to receive.” Which of these were in the minds of the early diviners, I am not sure. The young shoot is in darkness, covered by soil and ignorant of the world outside.

2. “But when I have given him the first answer, he ignores the second and the third. Since he ignores them, I will not give them.” (opening text) — This passage is usually interpreted: “But when I have answered his question once, he insults me by asking it a second and a third time. Since he insults me, I will not answer.” Both interpretations are reasonable. For more evidence that ancient diviners may have asked each question more than once, see KŪN (2) ACQUIESCENCE, note 4, and Bǐ (8) ALLIANCE, note 2. See also Gao (1947), pages 8–9.

3. “unshackled” (first line) — The words 桎梏 zhì gù refer to wooden fetters for the feet and the hands, respectively.

4. “wraps an offering” (line two) — See also TÀI (11) FLOWING, line two, and Pǐ (12) BLOCKED, lines two and three.

5. “gold” (line three) — At the time of the *Changes*, the word 金 jīn “metal” probably referred to bronze rather than to gold. Only later, when gold became the metal par excellence, did it come to mean gold. I have nonetheless chosen to translate it “gold” because during the Bronze Age bronze had the symbolic value that gold has for us today. In fact, not only was it the most brilliant metal but the hardest as well. Wealthy lords held much of their portable wealth in objects made of bronze.