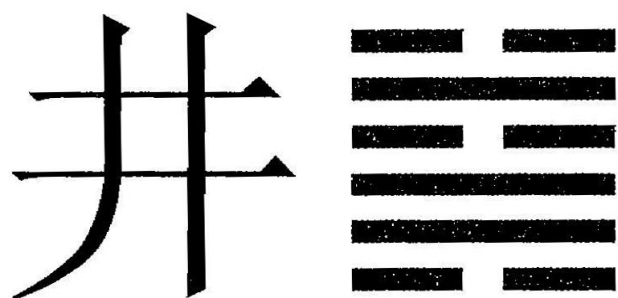


48



(jǐng) The Well

The well. Move the city but do not move the well. No loss, no gain: going to and coming from the well. But if it dries up, the rope is not yet there, or the bucket is damaged, misfortune.

- Six in the first place: The well is muddy, no drinking from it. An old well, without birds.
- Nine in the second place: In the well's depths, shooting at little fish. The bucket leaks.
- Nine in the third place: The well is repaired but its water is not drunk. My heart is sad. It can be used and drunk if the ruler is enlightened and bestows his good fortune on others.
- Six in the fourth place: The well is repaired; no troubles.
- Nine in the fifth place: The well has cold spring water. Drink it.

- **Six at the top:** You take from the well without covering it. If you are sincere, great good fortune.

Image

Above wood, there is water: the image of the well. You should reward others and all should encourage each other.

This character is a picture of the wood used to make the cross-pieces at the top of a well. It is these pieces of wood which enable us to raise the water beneath us to our own level. This represents the human apparatus that enables people to reach and share the resources they need. First, one must locate reliable springs, even those well below the level of the earth. Then the well must be excavated, the hole preserved with bricked walls, the wooden frame provided at the top, with the rope and bucket or pot to draw the water up.

Such wellsprings are so important that we cannot live far from them. We may move our houses, even our cities, but we cannot eliminate our need for water. Therefore, we must safeguard wells and maintain them. If they are muddy, this must be fixed by digging deeper or replacing bricks that have fallen and allowed earth to sift down into the water. If the rope or bucket is broken, it must be mended or replaced. An enlightened leader avoids calamities by making sure all these components are kept in good working order, and sees that access to the well is shared, not locked down with a lid, which excludes some.

The spring that furnishes water for a well is inexhaustible, but the human apparatus to reach the water is not. Bricks, ropes, and water pots break; buckets develop leaks; the wooden surrounding

frames decay. All must be maintained in order to avoid disasters as dire as depriving an entire city of its water. Instead of neglecting the reliable sources of our sustenance, whether they are water, shelter, or relationships, we need to remember to maintain them before they are muddied or broken. Enlightened leaders minimize the probability of disasters by remaining conscious of the wellsprings of life for the group they serve even when they seem so reliable as to be easily forgotten. Individuals also need to notice what sustains them, both bodily and emotionally, to maintain these lifelines even if they seem quite humble and unimportant. What are the things that enable you to live? Who are the people who can be entrusted with caring for the basics that really matter? If your bodily needs are met, if you have clean water to drink, you are among the fortunate few in this world. So often we do not notice what is most valuable to us until we lose it. Much of wisdom consists of being mindful of these basics—physical, economic, social, and psychic.

Shaughnessy, 84–85, 299–300.

Lynn, 438–443.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 185–188.