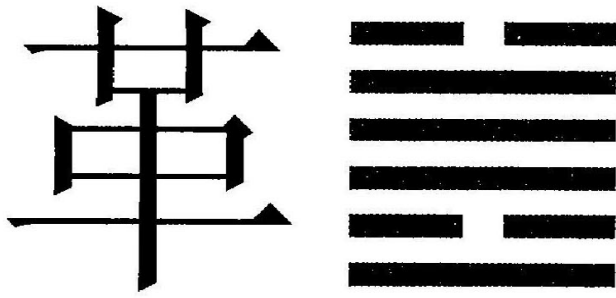


49



(gé) Molting (Shedding)

Molting. The day after the zenith, return. Supreme success. Persistence is effective. Remorse disappears.

- Nine in the first place: Tie it with leather from a yellow cow.
- Six in the second place: The day after the zenith, shed it. Beginning a campaign brings good fortune, without blame.
- Nine in the third place: Attacking brings misfortune. Persistence brings danger. Shedding words, calculating three times. Return.
- Nine in the fourth place: Remorse disappears. If there is sincerity, a change in the mandate brings good fortune.
- Nine in the fifth place: A great person, a tiger changing. Not yet a prediction, but a return.

- **Six at the top:** One worthy of power, a leopard changing. A petty person, a facial change. If you start a campaign, misfortune. If you stay and persist, good fortune.

This may mean that a great and good person changes as rarely as a leopard changes its spots, whereas a shallow person vacillates as easily as facial expressions change. Thus persistence is valued far higher than frequent changes.

Image

Within the marsh there are flames: the image of molting. Thus you should illuminate the seasons by bringing order to the calendar.

Shedding feathers or skin is a normal and essential part of growth in many animals. This timely discard of bodily debris is likened to a wildfire sweeping through a marsh and to calendrical reforms and reforms of government. (The character for molting can also be translated as *revolution*.)

In all these cases, we may first notice the discarding of the outgrown skin or the terrible destructiveness of a fire as it consumes years of old growth and any animals unable to escape. Such times are so shocking that they should come rarely and only when the times are ripe; that is, after the organism or institution has passed its zenith and can grow no more in its current form. During these times we need to keep our focus on the very long view, thinking in terms of many years of past experience and future goals, just as astronomers do on those rare occasions when they readjust the calendar so that it fits the actual seasonal events more closely. The Chinese used intercalary months occasionally for this purpose.

The discarding of dead matter during a period of shedding may be as gentle as a cat's grooming or as violent as a civil war. Such pe-

riods should inspire us to a greater recognition of the many kinds of timeliness and a commitment to finding ways for more orderly and less destructive movement through change, such as those provided by a sound constitution or well planned new growth. In any case, even in the midst of the fiery destruction we should remember that this shedding is a normal and necessary preparation for new life. If the snake does not shed its skin, it cannot grow. If the old feathers do not fall, the new ones cannot grow in to replace them. This less visible part of the molting process is the reason for the discards: new growth is coming, and needs room. We cannot cling to every bit of debris we create and still move ahead.

Since the growing season in north China is very short, one of the oldest responsibilities of government there was the construction of an accurate calendar and instruction to farmers on when to plant their crops. This required accurate records of astronomical and weather phenomena over hundreds of years as well as timely adjustments to ensure that the humanly designated seasons and months remained synchronized with the actual progression of the seasons. In the midst of the rapid destruction accompanying radical governmental change, it is not always easy either to have access to all this data or to use it with the care necessary for such essential pattern recognition and creation of a usable pattern within which to act. In the midst of the flames, our first thought is of flight and self-preservation. Yet a time of shedding is precisely when we most need to do this. Anyone who has emptied their home before moving or after the death of a loved one will understand this.

Shaughnessy, 128–129, 311.

Lynn, 444–451.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 189–192.