5

☵ 濡　　　　　　　　　RÚ

GETTING WET

Getting wet.
Shining allegiance will be blessed.
Keeping on will bring good fortune.
It is favorable to ford a great river.

He boldly sets out to ford a broad and dangerous river. Although he gets wet, he succeeds in reaching the far shore. Bold action and clear allegiance to a superior are what ensure success. In the *Changes*, fording a river symbolizes any difficult task or ordeal.[1, 2]

Lines

first line/9 ——　　　He gets wet in the fields.
　　　　　　　　　　He should stay there. No harm.

Difficulties at the beginning of a journey are a warning of worse to come. The way to escape harm is to stay where one is.

line two/9 ——　　　He gets wet on the sand.
　　　　　　　　　　Words are spoken against him,
　　　　　　　　　　But he is fortunate in the end.

Getting a bit wet on the shore of the river is no disaster. It will not prevent his getting across. Line two is the place of the subject, who goes to enter his ruler's service. Loose sand is like slander. Though members of the ruler's entourage speak against him, he is accepted in the end.

line three/9 ——　　Getting wet in the mud
　　　　　　　　　　Causes raiders to come.

He advances too far and becomes stuck in the mud of the river bottom. Being dirty makes him look like a dirty rebel. Being stuck makes him vulnerable to attack. This uppermost line of the lower trigram often portrays the misfortunes of someone who tries to advance beyond his proper station.[3]

line four/6 —— ——   Soaked with blood,
                       He emerges from his hole.

He does not leave home until he is forced to. He should have gone sooner. Line four, coming just after the midpoint of the hexagram, sometimes refers to being late. See GUĪ MÈI (54) A MAIDEN MARRIES. This line and the top line refer to holes because, as the two broken lines of the trigram Kǎn ☵ Pit, they symbolize two pits.[4]

line five/9 ————   Soaked with food and wine.
                     Perseverance brings good fortune.

He celebrates a successful crossing, being welcomed by the ruler whom he crossed the river to join. Line five is the place of the ruler and of success. The active line (————) suggests that success is achieved by taking action.

top line/6 —— ——   Into his hole
                      Come three uninvited guests.
                      If he honors them, all will be well.

He delays leaving home for so long that someone comes to get him, someone who can either help or destroy him. The "three guests" are symbolized by the three solid lines of the lower trigram Qián ☰ Strong Action.[4]

STRUCTURE ☵ 坎 Kǎn   Pit (difficulties)
               ☰ 乾 Qián   Strong Action
Strong action (lower trigram ☰) will overcome the difficulties that lie ahead (upper trigram ☵).

SEQUENCE   This is the hexagram in which the protagonist leaves home to go and take a place in the outside world. In TÚN (3) GATHERING SUPPORT, he restrained himself until he had gathered enough support to be able to advance safely. In MĒNG (4) THE YOUNG SHOOT, he was restrained by someone else from a reckless advance. In GETTING WET, he braves difficulties to go and enter the entourage of his ruler.

Notes

1. GETTING WET — The traditional text has 需 *xū* "wait" rather than 濡 *rú* "get wet." In ancient times, both words were written in the same way (as 需). I base my reading on context, on the hexagram's structure, and on the fact that of the two words only 濡 "get wet" occurs elsewhere in the *Changes*, which it does several times (in hexagrams 22, 43, 63, and 64).

2. "allegiance" (opening text) — The word 孚 *fú* means "allegiance," "faithfulness," "faith," "trust." This was one of the most important virtues at the time of the *Changes* and a basis of the social order.

3. "raiders" (line three) — The word 寇 *kòu* "raid," "raiders," is the same word used in the Shang oracle records in referring to raids against Zhou.

4. "hole" (line four, top line) — In some areas of western China near the ancient Zhou homeland, people still live in cave houses neatly dug into the side of a hill and fitted with doors and windows. This may be why the word 穴 *xué* "hole" is used to refer to a home. In other parts of ancient north China, people lived in sunken-floored huts that might also have been referred to as "holes."