

53



JIÀN

GRADUAL ADVANCE

Gradual advance.

It is auspicious for a woman to marry.

It is favorable to keep on.

By accepting a gradual step-by-step advance, someone who has been stopped is able to go forward. He joins someone stronger than himself, as a woman marries a husband.^{1, 2}

Lines

first line/6 — — The wild goose advances to the shore.
 Dangerous for a child.
 Words are spoken against him,
 but he comes to no harm.

From the safety of the river, the wild goose swims to the shore, beginning a journey that will take it to the mountain peaks. This journey is described in the lines that follow. It represents the gradual advance of someone small and weak, first to union with someone stronger, then to a position of eminence. The lowest line, a weak line (— —), shows him at his smallest and weakest, as a “child.” That is why it is considered dangerous. Words are spoken against him by those who are already followers of the person whom he goes to join. See also RÚ (5) GETTING WET, line two, and FĒNG (55) ABUNDANCE, line two.³

line two/6 — — The wild goose advances onto the bank,
Eating and drinking with happy cries.
Auspicious.

The wild goose moves one step farther, from the water up onto the shore. There it is happy and well provided for, like the subject of a strong and benevolent ruler. Line two is the place of the subject.

line three/9 ——— The wild goose advances across the land.
A husband marches to war and does not return.
A wife becomes pregnant but does not give birth.
Misfortune.
It is favorable to repel raids,
not to make them.

The wild goose goes too far. Line three is associated with attempting something that is beyond one's ability.⁴

line four/6 — — The wild goose advances into the trees.
If it finds a rafter on which to perch,
it will escape harm.

Not only is the goose far from water, but its webbed feet are not suited to perching in trees. Fortunately, it finds a roof on whose protruding rafters it can perch. Line four is the place of the officer, who finds a place in a ruler's service.

line five/9 ——— The wild goose advances into the hills.
A wife is not pregnant for three years,
But at last nothing can prevent it.
Auspicious.

The wild goose finally reaches its goal. Line five is the place of the ruler and of success. The relationship between a subject and his/her ruler comes to full fruition.

top line/9 ——— The wild goose advances to the mountain slopes.
Its feathers may be used in the ritual dances.
Auspicious.

A step-by-step advance carries one to undreamed-of heights. Beautiful feathers were used as ornaments in some ancient sacred dances. When the wild goose becomes part of the worship of Heaven and the ancestors, it has reached the pinnacle of success.⁵

STRUCTURE ☶ 巽 Xùn Kneel in Submission
 ☶ 艮 Gēn Keep Still (stopped)

A subject who has been stopped (lower trigram ☶) kneels in submission to a ruler (upper trigram ☶) and is enabled to move forward (into the upper trigram).

SEQUENCE In the previous hexagram GĒN (52) KEEP STILL, the protagonist remained still and kept out of a conqueror's way. Now he kneels in direct submission to the conqueror, joins him, and is enabled to move ahead.

Notes

1. GRADUAL ADVANCE — The word 漸 *jiàn* simply means “advance.” The idea that the advance is gradual is derived from the texts of the lines.

2. “woman” (opening text) — Some hexagrams, such as TÚN (3) GATHERING SUPPORT, speak of a man who goes to marry a woman. In those cases, the man represents a subject and the woman a ruler. In this hexagram, the woman goes to the man and it is he who symbolizes the ruler.

3. “wild goose” (first line) — Apart from the fact that it is a water bird, we do not know precisely what bird the “wild goose” (鴻 *hóng*) is. Moreover, since Chinese does not usually distinguish between singular and plural, the text may be referring to a flock of birds rather than just one.

4. “not to make them” (line three) — This clause is supplied from context. See MÉNG (4) THE YOUNG SHOOT, top line, where it is included in the text.

5. “ritual dances” (top line) — Feather adornments are common among both East Asian and Amerindian shamans. For the wild goose's feathers to be used in the ritual dances is an honor similar to the officer's being invited to take part in his ruler's sacrificial feasts. See SUÍ (17) THE HUNT, top line, and SHĒNG (46) RISING, line four.