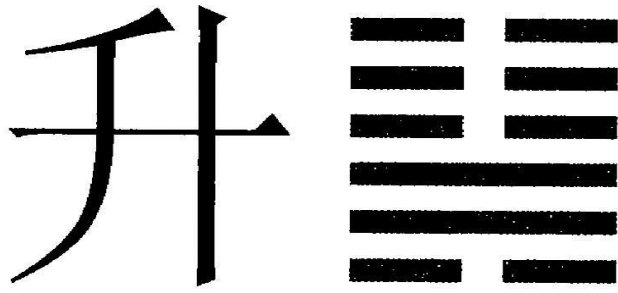


46



(shēng) Pushing Upwards

Pushing upwards: great success. Consult a great one now, to be without anxiety. Proceeding to the south brings good fortune.

- Six in the first place: Advancing upwards. Great good fortune.
- Nine in the second place: If you are sincere, then your making the summer sacrifice is effective. No blame.
- Nine in the third place: Going up to the empty city.
- Six in the fourth place: The ruler made an offering on Mount Qi. Good fortune without blame.
- Six in the fifth place: Persistence brings good fortune, pushing upwards in stages.
- Six at the top: Pushing upwards in the darkness just before dawn. An unswerving persistence is effective.

Image

Within the earth a tree grows: the image of pushing upwards. You should adhere to moral strength, piling up small things in order to attain great heights.

A tree is born within the earth, with the sprouting of a seed. As it grows, it pushes the earth aside as it stretches and grows towards the water and sun it needs to live. Trees can grow in rich or stony soil and attain sturdy trunks and branches that will live many decades, even for centuries. But their growth is so slow that at times it is barely discernible, especially when compared to the growth of short-lived plants.

For human beings also, the kind of growth that leads to enduring strength is measured and slow. The daily increment may be so small that at times it seems as if no progress is being made. For this reason, it is helpful to maintain rituals, such as regularly repeated visits with wise people. Reunions or annual gatherings of family or friends may seem pointless, but in fact they allow us to see how far those we know best have come since we last saw them. And they, in turn, may help us see our current state of progress more clearly. Some stages may seem hollow gains, like climbing to a city on a hill only to find that it is uninhabited. Taking part in rituals can help us assuage our anxieties and move beyond them, as we unite ourselves with others and with unseen forces in performing them.

In the long life of a tree there are many winters, when visible growth above ground pauses, and for months the tree may look dead. But beneath the snow and earth the roots continue to grow, deepening the tree's anchor to the ground, preparing it for times of drought, when water can only be found at great depth.

During winter, remember spring and Goethe's poem about trees: now only sticks, these trees will one day give shade and fruit,

as will we flourish if only we persist. As Xunzi said, even a lame turtle can reach her goal, if she just keeps putting one foot ahead of the other. In a fast-paced world, it can be hard to remember how long really solid growth takes. This hexagram reminds us of the tenacity of trees, the usefulness of sequential small steps and ritual celebratory gatherings. Giving to others with less helps us remember how many gifts we have; helping others learn can help us see how much we have learned.

Even seemingly impossible goals, like transforming ourselves into sages, are possible if we just keep piling up good deeds. Eventually, we will reach our goals. See Xunzi, chapters 1 and 2.

Shaughnessy, 116–117, 307.

Lynn, 423–428.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 178–181.