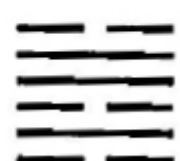


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47. *K'un / Oppression (Exhaustion)*

	<i>above</i>	TUI	THE JOYOUS, LAKE
	<i>below</i>	K'AN	THE ABYSMAL, WATER

The lake is above, water below; the lake is empty, dried up.¹ Exhaustion is expressed in yet another way: at the top, a dark line is holding down two light lines; below, a light line is hemmed in between two dark ones. The upper trigram belongs to the principle of darkness, the lower to the principle of light. Thus everywhere superior men are oppressed and held in restraint by inferior men.

THE JUDGMENT

OPPRESSION. Success. Perseverance.

The great man brings about good fortune.

No blame.

When one has something to say,

It is not believed.

Times of adversity are the reverse of times of success, but they can lead to success if they befall the right man. When a strong man meets with adversity, he remains cheerful despite all danger, and this cheerfulness is the source of later successes; it

1. [Literally, "exhausted."]

is that stability which is stronger than fate. He who lets his spirit be broken by exhaustion certainly has no success. But if adversity only bends a man, it creates in him a power to react that is bound in time to manifest itself. No inferior man is capable of this. Only the great man brings about good fortune and remains blameless. It is true that for the time being outward influence is denied him, because his words have no effect. Therefore in times of adversity it is important to be strong within and sparing of words.

THE IMAGE

There is no water in the lake:
The image of EXHAUSTION.
Thus the superior man stakes his life
On following his will.

When the water has flowed out below, the lake must dry up and become exhausted. That is fate. This symbolizes an adverse fate in human life. In such times there is nothing a man can do but acquiesce in his fate and remain true to himself. This concerns the deepest stratum of his being, for this alone is superior to all external fate.

THE LINES

Six at the beginning means:
One sits oppressed under a bare tree
And strays into a gloomy valley.
For three years one sees nothing.

When adversity befalls a man, it is important above all things for him to be strong and to overcome the trouble inwardly. If he is weak, the trouble overwhelms him. Instead of proceeding on his way, he remains sitting under a bare tree and falls ever more deeply into gloom and melancholy. This makes the situation only more and more hopeless. Such an attitude comes from an inner delusion that he must by all means overcome.

○ Nine in the second place means:
One is oppressed while at meat and drink.

The man with the scarlet knee bands is just coming.
 It furthers one to offer sacrifice.
 To set forth brings misfortune.
 No blame.

This pictures a state of inner oppression. Externally, all is well, one has meat and drink. But one is exhausted by the commonplaces of life, and there seems to be no way of escape. Then help comes from a high place. A prince—in ancient China princes wore scarlet knee bands—is in search of able helpers. But there are still obstructions to be overcome. Therefore it is important to meet these obstructions in the invisible realm by offerings and prayer. To set forth without being prepared would be disastrous, though not morally wrong. Here a disagreeable situation must be overcome by patience of spirit.

Six in the third place means:

A man permits himself to be oppressed by stone,
 And leans on thorns and thistles.
 He enters his house and does not see his wife.
 Misfortune.

This shows a man who is restless and indecisive in times of adversity. At first he wants to push ahead, then he encounters obstructions that, it is true, mean oppression only when recklessly dealt with. He butts his head against a wall and in consequence feels himself oppressed by the wall. Then he leans on things that have in themselves no stability and that are merely a hazard for him who leans on them. Thereupon he turns back irresolutely and retires into his house, only to find, as a fresh disappointment, that his wife is not there. Confucius says about this line:

If a man permits himself to be oppressed by something that ought not to oppress him, his name will certainly be disgraced. If he leans on things upon which one cannot lean, his life will certainly be endangered. For him who is in disgrace and danger, the hour of death draws near; how can he then still see his wife?

Nine in the fourth place means:

He comes very quietly, oppressed in a golden carriage.

Humiliation, but the end is reached.

A well-to-do man sees the need of the lower classes and would like very much to be of help. But instead of proceeding with speed and energy where there is need, he begins in a hesitant and measured way. Then he encounters obstructions. Powerful and wealthy acquaintances draw him into their circle; he has to do as they do and cannot withdraw from them. Hence he finds himself in great embarrassment. But the trouble is transitory. The original strength of his nature offsets the mistake he has made, and the goal is reached.

○ Nine in the fifth place means:

His nose and feet are cut off.

Oppression at the hands of the man with the purple knee bands.

Joy comes softly.

It furthers one to make offerings and libations.

An individual who has the good of mankind at heart is oppressed from above and below (this is the meaning of the cutting off of nose and feet). He finds no help among the people whose duty it would be to aid in the work of rescue (ministers wore purple knee bands). But little by little, things take a turn for the better. Until that time, he should turn to God, firm in his inner composure, and pray and offer sacrifice for the general well-being.

Six at the top means:

He is oppressed by creeping vines.

He moves uncertainly and says, "Movement brings remorse."

If one feels remorse over this and makes a start,

Good fortune comes.

A man is oppressed by bonds that can easily be broken. The distress is drawing to an end. But he is still irresolute; he is still

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influenced by the previous condition and fears that he may have cause for regret if he makes a move. But as soon as he grasps the situation, changes this mental attitude, and makes a firm decision, he masters the oppression.