

36



明雉

MÍNG ZHÌ

THE BRIGHT PHEASANT

The bright pheasant.
Despite adversity,
it is favorable to persevere.

The bright pheasant represents a brilliant minister, who remonstrates with his unworthy ruler, attempting to reform him and save the state from ruin. The pheasant represents someone brilliant because it is a brilliantly colored bird. When a pheasant takes to the air, it shoots up out of the underbrush and whirrs along with great effort for a short distance before falling back to earth. The pheasant's difficulty in flying is like the upright minister's difficulty in reforming his ruler.¹

Lines

first line/9 ——— The bright pheasant takes flight,
beating his wings.
A lord goes on a journey,
for three days he does not eat.
He goes to have words with his ruler.

The upright minister represented by the pheasant begins an effortful journey, going to admonish his ruler. He is so intent on his goal that he does not stop to eat. It is because this is an active line (——) at the beginning of the hexagram that it shows someone starting out on a journey.

line two/6 — — The bright pheasant is wounded in the left thigh.
If his horse is strong, he will be rescued
and will have good fortune.

He needs the help of someone strong. Line two is the place of the subject, who is helped by his ruler. To be wounded in the “left” thigh may mean to be wounded from behind. See SHĪ (7) AN ARMY, line four.

line three/9 — The bright pheasant goes hunting in the south
And finds a great chief.
He must not continue to accept affliction.

The upright minister is no longer willing to accept the affliction of an unworthy ruler. He seeks elsewhere for a better one and finds him.

line four/6 — — Entering the left side of his belly,
He grasps the bright pheasant’s heart,
Just as he is going out the gate.

Just when the upright minister has given up hope of ever convincing his ruler to reform, the ruler begins to understand him. Line four is the place of the officer, an appropriate and therefore auspicious place for the upright minister. It is the first line of the outer trigram, therefore he is “going out the gate.”

line five/6 — — A bright pheasant like Prince Ji.
It is favorable to continue.

The great Shang minister Prince Ji (箕子 *Jīzǐ*) is a model of steadfastness and integrity. An uncle of the last Shang king, he remonstrated with him over his cruelty and dissipation. When his repeated warnings were ignored, he refused to continue as a minister, feigning madness, and was imprisoned as a slave. After Zhou had conquered Shang, Prince Ji was rehabilitated and asked to instruct the new rulers in the policies of the great Shang kings of old.

top line/6 — — Not bright but dark.
First he flies up to Heaven,
Then he descends into the earth.

The pheasant falls to the ground. This top line has to do with going too far and often refers to conflict between subject and ruler.

STRUCTURE ☴ ☵ Kūn Acquiescent (passive, weak)
 ☲ ☱ Luó Shining Light (bright, shining)

A shining subject (lower trigram ☲) has a weak lord (upper trigram ☴). The shining subject is the “bright pheasant.”

SEQUENCE In the inverse hexagram JÌN (35) ADVANCEMENT, one waited passively and was granted advancement by a shining ruler. Here one actively remonstrates with a weak ruler and is ignored.

Note

1. THE BRIGHT PHEASANT — The transmitted text reads 明夷 *míng yí* “the light is wounded.” I follow Gao (1947), who considers 夷 *yí* a mistake in transcription. He suggests that the mistake was made because 夷 *yí* “wounded” and 雉 *zhì* “pheasant” were once quite similar in pronunciation. In Lǚ (56) THE WANDERER, the character 雉 *zhì* “pheasant” itself appears in the transmitted text.