51 zhen/thunder

Offering.
When thunder comes, crack-crack,
there's laughing chat, yack-yack.
Though thunder frightens all the land,
no drop of wine falls from the hand.

Base (9): After thunder comes, crack-crack,
there's laughing chat, yack-yack.

AUSPICIOUS.

(6) 2: Risk and danger, thunder brings.
Perhaps one loses cowrie-strings.

Climbing the Nine Mounds, do not pursue.
There'll be restoration in seven days.

(6) 3: Thunder booms and rumbles.

Thunder when travelling: no catastrophe.

(9) 4: After thunder, mud.

(6) 5: Thunder goes and comes.

DANGEROUS.
There may be no loss.
There is service.

Top (6): When thunder splits the ear,
folk look around in fear.

For an expedition: DISASTROUS.
Thunder does not hit him,
it hits his neighbours.
NO MISFORTUNE.
A wife's kin are grumbling.

(51) **thunder**

The line oracles have no pattern of ascending tension.

(Tag) Zhen has become the name of the trigram reduplicated to form this hexagram.

Thunder has a double meaning. In the oracles the usual western attitude, seeing thunder as frightening and in itself dangerous, is expressed: yet the opening words of both hexagram and line statements suggest thunder is auspicious. This is because thunder was thought to assist women in childbirth, by making parturition easier. Hence it became an augury of fertility.

(Hexagram statement) 'All the land': literally 'for a hundred *li*', the *li* being the unit of long distance, equal to about a third of a mile. 'A hundred *li*' means 'all over the country'.

The second half of the statement is clearly about sacrificial libations, implying there is no unlucky spillage. All six line statements can be interpreted as relating to libations.

(Base) The translation of this oracle has one word different from that of the first phrase of the hexagram statement, reflecting a similar difference in the original. It may have originated in a copyist's error.

(2) The mysterious appeal of the cowrie is attributed to its resemblance to the vulva. Hence cowries, like thunder, were symbols of fertility. See Karlgren 'Some fertility symbols in ancient China' in *BMFEA* II (1930). For cowries, see also Note 41:5.

'Nine Mounds' may be a lost place-name, Jiuling; possibly it is a sobriquet for 'the whole land'. 'Nine Swamps' in Ode 184 may be comparable. Similar expressions, in which 'nine' has a geographical sense of 'all' occur in the Book of Documents and perhaps in *jiuqiu* in the Zuo Commentary (Duke Zhao year 12: Legge 638 col10/641b). See Granet *La pensée chinoise* page 175.

The indication is a striking example of Chinese not providing pronouns. What is to be pursued and will be restored might be 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'them'.