

yu/elephant 16



*Favourable for appointing to lordships.
Advance the army.*

Base (6): Trumpeting elephant.

DISASTROUS.

(6) 2: Pilloried on the stone.

*Not lasting till the end of the day.
Augury AUSPICIOUS.*

(6) 3: Watchful elephant raising its head.

*Trouble.
Slow movement: there will be trouble.*

(9) 4: Wary elephant.

*There will be great gain.
No doubt.
Why not loan couriers?*

(6) 5: Augury of sickness.

Perform the heng ritual and there will be no death.

Top (6): Elephant in darkness.

*There will be collapse of ramparts.
NO MISFORTUNE.*

(16) elephant

(Tag) The meaning, taken in the later tradition to mean ‘enthusiasm’, ‘joy’, ‘anticipation’ or ‘idleness’, makes best sense if taken to mean ‘elephant’, following the Han dictionary *Shuowen* (W25). Remains of Asian elephants have been found at Shang sites, some of them buried sacrificially. It is believed that they were more widespread in China at that time, because they appear to have been hunted by kings, though they may have been brought to the Shang capital from south of the Yangzi. Today about 200 wild elephants survive on Chinese soil in the Xishuangbanna nature reserve in southern Yunnan, near the Laotian border. (Zhao Ji *The natural history of China* (1990) pages 74, 76, 197 and 206.)

(2) Wen Yiduo took the stone to be a pillory, such as is mentioned in *Zhouli* (a compilation, probably of Han date, giving idealized details of Zhou government practice) xiii and xxxv. Disturbers of the peace are there described as being humiliated by exposure on the stone (a variant of exposure in stocks) before doing forced labour. Pillorying lasted no longer than a fortnight at most, so ‘not till the end of the day’ suggests a light sentence – hence the auspicious augury. Wen Yiduo read the word *jie* ‘border’ as a short form for the

same graph with the heart radical, meaning 'to be made miserable, to shame' – hence 'pilloried' (W33). Kunst says 'bound by rocks'.

(4) The first character of this two-character oracle has a variant form: *you* meaning 'monkey'. *Youyu*, 'monkey-elephant' is an ancient expression, probably going back as far as Zhou times, meaning a very timid wild animal. *You* may, however, simply be a loan meaning 'wary'.

'Great gain' may refer to a hunt.

'Why not loan cowries?': *dai* 'loan' appears in some editions instead of *zan* 'pierce (for threading on a string)'. 'Cowries' could also mean 'friends'. See also Notes 41:5 and 51:2.

Gao (G208) understands the last two sentences as one, meaning 'Do not be doubtful if friends sing your praises.'

(5) The appended prognostication is Waley's suggested translation. See Note 32:3.

(Top) *Cheng* 'fulfil' is read as a short form for *cheng* 'ramparts', following Gao (G210). (See Diagram 11)