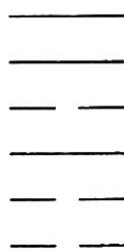


53 jian/settling



*Auspicious for a girl's wedding.
Favourable augury.*

Base (6): Wild geese settling on the stream.
Now a small one's troubles teem.

There are complaints.
NO MISFORTUNE.

(6) 2: Wild geese settling on the rocks;
feed and drink in honking flocks.

AUSPICIOUS.

(9) 3: Wild geese settling on the shore.
*Her man is not yet back from war.
She will bear no children more.*

DISASTROUS.
Favourable against raiders.

(6) 4: Wild geese settling on the trees.
They will roost there at their ease.

NO MISFORTUNE.

(9) 5: Wild geese settling on the hill.
*The three-years' bride, though barren still,
will not be overcome by ill.*

AUSPICIOUS.

Top (9): Wild geese settling on the peak.
Their plumes for dancers' use we'll seek.

AUSPICIOUS.

(53) **settling**

The species of bird intended here may have been a pelican or some other large water bird. (Wen Yiduo thought the character *hong* originally meant a toad (see Kai-yu Hsu *Wen I-to* (1980) pp 130–1). It came to be identified with the wild goose, whose autumn migrations became a poetic commonplace for melancholy. The verb translated as ‘settling’ is imprecise. It has also been translated as ‘skimming’ or ‘nearing’. Omens from bird flight are universally recognized.

Ode 248 is a poem of incremental repetition using almost the same image. Here the waterbirds are of a smaller kind, and the omen value is auspicious. The stanzas begin:

Mallard on the River Jing . . .

Mallard on the sandy shore . . .

Mallard on the shoals . . .

Mallard where the rivers meet . . .

Mallard in the river-gorge . . .

The second part of each stanza speaks of happy ceremonies for the ancestors, at which the impersonators enjoy food and wine on behalf of the dead. The River Jing joins another river to form the Wei, in the homeland of the Zhou people.

Ode 159 is also about wild geese and contains two stanzas that seem to be drawn from a poem of incremental repetition, strongly resembling the oracles of Hexagram 53:

Wild geese fly along the island:
When the lord goes,
 we'll have no chance to meet.
I will stay with you now.

Wild geese fly along the land:
When the lord goes,
 I'll not come back.
I will stay with you tonight.

(3) The wild goose was already an image for a man gone to the

wars or away from home for a long time. This is the theme in Ode 159, just quoted, and also in Ode 181:

The wild geese fly away,
beating their wings **sjek-sjek*.
These boys go on campaign,
hard service in the wilds.
Alas, poor chaps, they're lonely,
like their wives left at home.

The wild geese fly away,
flocking in the swamps.
These boys work hard at building;
a hundred yards of wall are up.
Although they labour hard,
they have a safe stronghold.

The wild geese fly away,
mournfully honking **ngag-ngag*.
They were wise who said,
'Just toil away.'
They were silly who said,
'Resist and mutiny.'

(Top) The dancers were the men and boys who performed in the ritual dances before the ancestral shrines. Ode 38.2,3 says:

Splendid, splendid are the tall men
dancing the *wan* in the ducal courtyard,
strong as tigers.
they hold reins like silken threads;
in their left hands they hold flutes,
in their right hands pheasant plumes.

Waley has long note on the *wan* dance (Waley 1937, 338–40), noting that in Odes 300 and 301 it is described as a sacrificial ceremony. Similar dances are performed to this day in honour of Confucius in Seoul and Taipei.

In Ode 136.2, 3 the dancer carries an egret plume:

Kan! he beats the leather drum
in front of the banqueting hill,
winter and summer,
waving an egret feather.

Kan! he beats the ceramic drum
on the way to the banqueting hill,
winter and summer,
waving an egret feather.