

## song/dispute 6



*Sacrificing captives.  
They titter in fear.  
In mid-course AUSPICIOUS  
Ultimately DISASTROUS.  
Favourable for seeing great men.  
Not favourable for fording a big river.*

Base (6): An assignment not lasting long.

*There will be some complaints.  
Ultimately AUSPICIOUS.*

(9) 2: Failed in dispute, making homeward tracks,  
where several hundred houses he can tax.

*No catastrophe.*

(6) 3: Eating stale forage.

*Augury of DANGER.  
Ultimately AUSPICIOUS.  
Though following royal service,  
no achievement.*

*Augury for a prince, AUSPICIOUS.*

(9) 4: Unable to succeed in dispute.

*Returning for orders.  
Matters will get worse.  
Augury for safety, AUSPICIOUS.*

(9) 5: . . . in dispute:

**MOST AUSPICIOUS.**

Top (9): Some are awarded a great belt of rank.

It is withdrawn three times in one audience.

**(6) dispute**

(Tag) The dispute is a matter for arbitration or judgement by a superior.

(Hexagram statement) Kunst (R251) takes *zhi* 'obstruct' as a loan character in a binome, *zhiti*, meaning 'fear'. Waley, taking *zhi* as a loan for *xi* 'laugh', and reading the prognostic as part of the sentence, suggests: 'If a *fu* (captive) laughs, this means good luck in the midst of fear.' In east Asia, nervous laughter or tittering is an expression of fear, and perhaps 'If captives laugh in the midst of fear, this means good luck (for the divining captor)' would be a more convincing

interpretation. Waley (A126) thought the dispute was likely to be about war-booty and possibly captives too. See also W590.

(Base) For complaints, see also 5:2.

(2) The man who has lost in the dispute is presumed to have to pay a fine or commute some fiercer penalty by payment, and can now exact the value of the fine from his fief (literally 'a city of three hundred houses'). *Bu* is taken to mean 'levy' or 'tax' rather than 'lose', which would mean he loses the fief.

Gao Heng (G178) thought the dispute was between the local ruler and the people of his fief-city, that the quarrel was taken before the king, and that the ruler lost the case.

For 'royal service' see Note 2:3.

(5) This line may have lost a character at the beginning, and may originally have had an oracle meaning 'Success in dispute' – contrasting with Line 4. Gao Heng (G179), following his usual approach to syntax, suggests that it means 'Extremely auspicious in disputes'.

(Top) Great belts were emblems of rank and authority that remained in use until the twentieth century. The character translated 'audience' originally meant 'morning', but early came to mean audience because the king held court at dawn and transacted state business early in the morning. The fickleness of the ruler and the transitoriness of honour provide a discouraging omen.