

mingyi/crying pheasant 36



Favourable augury in hardship.

- Base (9): A crying pheasant, flying on drooping wing.
A prince travels three days not eating a thing.
There is somewhere to go.
Those in charge grumble.
- (6) 2: A crying pheasant, wounded in the left thigh.
For gelding a horse: healing.
AUSPICIOUS.
- (9) 3: A crying pheasant:
 Shot at a hunt in the southern land.
Catching the headman of the band.
Speedy augury not possible.
- (6) 4: Entering the left flank,
 finding the crying pheasant's heart.
Leaving gate and courtyard.
- (6) 5: Jizi's crying pheasant.
Favourable augury.
- Top (6): The pheasant stops crying.
Trouble.
Rises first up to the skies,
then into the waters flies.

(36) crying pheasant

(Tag) *Mingyi* has traditionally been taken to mean ‘brightness dimmed’, but the emendation to *mingzhi* ‘crying pheasant’ is now generally accepted by scholars. Li Jingchi in his famous article in *Gushibian* 1931 showed that the word meant a bird. Gao Heng later

showed that the bird must be a pheasant (G263). For the development of the 'brightness dimmed' idea see the Note on the Top Line and the *Tuanzhuan* entry on page 378.

(Base) The image or omen of a pheasant slowly flapping its wings and crying occurs in Ode 33.1 and 2, where the singer is a broken-hearted lover:

The cock pheasant in flight
Slowly flaps his wings . . .

The cock pheasant in flight
Lifts and lowers his voice . . .

Other ominous pheasant cries occur in Ode 197.5:

A pheasant calls at dawn
Still seeking its mate . . .

More pertinently, in the Book of Documents (section '*Gaozong rongri*'), a pheasant appearing and calling at a royal sacrifice is taken as an indication that the sacrifice has been incorrectly performed. See also 61:top.

The Mawangdui text has the character for 'left side' inserted before 'wing'. This has either been carried over from the wounded left thigh in the following oracle (see note on Line 2), or affected by a line in Ode 216.2, where the mandarin duck 'folds (or, perhaps, stretches) its left wing' in a verbally similar sentence.

'Those in charge': *zhuren* literally 'the host(s)'.

(2) There is a legend that when a black bird alighted on the yoke of his chariot, King Mu of Zhou's driver struck it with the whip, the chariot overturned, and the king was wounded in the left thigh. (S225)

The same gelding omen appears in 59:base.

(3) In the Mawangdui manuscript the *yi* in *mingyi* at the beginning of this oracle is repeated. The translation follows the Mawangdui text, taking the second *yi* as meaning 'wounded (shot)'.

The southern hunt may have been a ceremonial hunt after a battle, or a sobriquet for the battle itself. Edward Shaughnessy suggests it may refer to a disastrous expedition southward in which King Zhao of Zhou was killed, probably in 948 BC. (S227). The 'headman of the band' would then be the king. This story is mentioned in *Chuci* (H 53, where, however, the word for pheasant is replaced by one meaning ox or buffalo).

Gao Heng (G265) suggests different emendations, in some ways more attractive. He believes that *fei* 'to fly' has dropped out after the particle *yu*, and that *shou* 'head' is a short form for *dao* 'road' (see Diagram 14); rhyme is of no significance, and the oracle means 'The crying pheasant takes flight. The southern hunt (gets lost in chasing it but) finds the high road. Augury of no progress in sickness.'

(5) 'Jizi', Viscount Ji, was a minister of the last Shang king. Though he suffered for remonstrating against the king's wickedness, he survived till the dynasty fell. Unable as a loyal subject of Shang to do homage to the Zhou king, he went with his followers to settle at P'yŏngyang, in north-west Korea (capital of the twentieth-century communist republic). Koreans pronounce his name as Kija. His admonition of the Shang king is likened to the warning cry of a pheasant. His story is known from various sources, including later parts of the Book of Documents (*Wucheng* 9; *Hongfan* 1–3) and *Shiji* (Books 3 and 4).

(Top) Where the present text literally means 'No light in the gloom,' Gao Heng (G266) understands this oracle to mean: 'It stops crying. Trouble.' He emends *ming* 'light' to read *ming* 'crying', as in the other lines; and *hui* 'gloom' to *hui* 'trouble', the frequently used prognostic (see page 134).

The last word in the present text is *di* 'earth'. Gao believes this is an error for *yuan* 'deep water' and cites evidence in *Liji* and *Yi Zhoushu* showing that this emendation gives a stock rhyming couplet referring to the legend that the pheasant dives into water at midwinter and becomes a mollusc. In Hexagram 1:base there is reason to believe that stars hidden below the horizon were thought to be hidden under the water. This may explain the use of *di* here.