

li/oriole 30



*Favourable augury.
Offering.
Auspicious for raising cows.*

Base (9): Tread with care.

Giving respect.
NO MISFORTUNE.

(6) 2: Yellow orioles.

MOST AUSPICIOUS.

(9) 3: Orioles in sunset ray.
*No songs or beating drums of clay,
and the elders will cry 'Lackaday.'*

DISASTROUS.

(9) 4: Suddenly coming out:
burning, dying, leaving behind.

(6) 5: Weep away,
cry 'Lackaday!'

AUSPICIOUS.

Top (9):

Using this the king goes on campaign.
A triumph with beheading of the foe,
when all the captured chieftains are on show.

NO MISFORTUNE.

(30) **oriole**

(Tag) *Li*, which has become the name of the trigram reduplicated in this hexagram, is a character for 'oriole'. Gao Heng says it means a yellow bird, which suggests an oriole. This is not the familiar Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, but the more strikingly marked, and no less beautiful, north-east-Asian species, the Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*.

The oriole is a commonplace image in the Book of Odes, though it is there called by two other names, of which *li* is an equivalent (*Z youji* 159). These names are discussed in detail in C H Wang *The bell and the drum* (1974) pp 114–18. In the Odes the oriole's mellow song is often associated with tragedy, sadness, and sorrow. This suggests that orioles, for all the charm of their bright yellow plumage, with which no other bird in China can compare, could be birds of sad omen as well as of springtime joy. Sometimes the contrast seems to emphasize the sadness, as in Ode 131, quoted above at Hexagrams 29 and 30.

The spring days are lengthening,
plants and trees burgeoning.

Orioles sing together,
 people are gathering mountain herbs.
 We have many prisoners for the question,
 and we are returning home . . .

(The question was put before ritual beheading.) 168.6



Orioles, orioles,
 do not congregate in the oaks,
 do not eat our millet.
 Oh! the people here,
 I cannot stay among them!
 I must go back, go home,
 to see the elders of my clan.

187.3



And complaint about military service:

Pretty are the orioles
 that settle on the hillside.
 The road is so long –
 we cannot go on.
 Give us drink, give us food,
 urge us, encourage us –
 order those bag wagons:
 tell them to carry us.

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In the Mawangdui manuscript the tag of Hexagram 30 is given as *luo* 'net', which is a loan for *li*. The Great Treatise, in its brief essay on the history of civilization, somewhat fancifully explains the lines of Hexagram 30 as resembling a net or basket (see page 421), and the Old Chinese pronunciation of the two words was closely similar (*li* was *lja, *luo* was *la).

(Hexagram statement) Gao Heng (G246) makes the point that cows were used for breeding sacrificial bulls and other oxen.

(Base) Wen Yiduo thought that 'on a tiger's tail' had got dropped from this oracle. See Hexagram 10.

(3) The old folk want or require drumming and singing. An earthenware drum (that is, a resounding ceramic object) figures in Ode 136. See Note 53:top. Percussion instruments of clay remain in Confucian temple orchestras to this day.

(Top) See Note 17:5. A triumph means a victory celebration. The vocabulary echoes Ode 168.6, where orioles sing while war captives are being brought for questioning and execution (see the note on the

tag of this hexagram), and Ode 178.4, where a great military triumph is described.

Fei is understood as 'putting forth' (see Note 14:4). Kunst takes it as a negative and says 'The catch was not the enemy.'