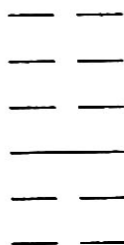


15 qian/rat



*Offering.  
Achievement for a prince.*

Base (6): Scrunching rat.

*A prince may cross a big river.  
AUSPICIOUS.*

(6) 2: Squealing rat.

AUSPICIOUS AUGURY.

(9) 3: Industrious rat.

*For princes,  
ultimately AUSPICIOUS.*

(6) 4:

*Unfavourable for nothing.*

Ripping rat.

(6) 5: Not rich, because of the neighbours.

*Favourable for a foray.  
Unfavourable for nothing.*

Top (6): Squealing rat.

*Favourable for mobilizing to attack a capital city.*

(15) **rat**

(Tag) This is the tag known to Confucian commentators and most translators as 'Modesty'. (For the meaning of 'modesty', see page 61.) Kunst reads it as a loan for the homonym meaning some kind of rodent (R268), which makes better sense of the line sentences. In later usage *qian* means a hamster. This would not be the tiny Golden Hamster, popular pet of the West, but *Cricetulus triton*, the Great Grey Hamster, also known as the Korean Grey Rat. The body length of this species may reach 20 cm and its tail 10.5 cm. It has a wide range in north China, Manchuria, Ussuriland and Korea, usually in association with man – whole populations have been known to migrate with farmers, living off their crops. It is colloquially referred to as a rat (see page 218).

Partly because of their infestation of dwellings and foodstores, rodents are a rich source of omen material. The behaviour of the Great Grey Hamster may appear particularly ominous, for it is a solitary, untameable animal that adopts a humanoid stance, standing on its hind legs with forepaws folded. It attacks other rodents and will even kill and eat others of its own species. For a detailed account of it see Anatole S Loukashkin in 'The Giant Rat-headed Hamster *Cricetulus triton nestor* Thomas, of Manchuria' *Journal of Mammalogy* 1944 Vol 24 pages 170–7. There is a further note on rodents at 35:4.

(Base) The tag character is reduplicated to make this oracle. The text may well be corrupt. The translation takes the word as a punning loan for two others: first the same character with the 'mouth radical' (see Diagram 13), and the second with the rodent radical. See also the Note to Line 3, below.

(2) The Great Grey Hamster under stress screams loudly.

(3) The tag character with the 'mouth' radical means 'cheeks' or 'to put food in the mouth'. Hamsters fill their cheek pouches with food which they then store in burrows. Chinese peasants have been known to dig up these caches, which may weigh several kilograms, to find food for themselves.

(4) Ripping, of course, with its teeth.

(5) On being rich, see 9:5 and 11:4.

(Top) *Yiguo* may mean 'city or state'. Some texts omit 'city'; but both capital and state can be meant by either word.