

kun/earth 2



*Supreme offering.
Favourable augury for mares.
For a prince with somewhere to go.
First straying; later found.
For a ruler, favourable.
Gaining friends west and south,
losing friends east and north.
Augury for safety: AUSPICIOUS.*

Base (6): Frost underfoot again.

Solid ice comes soon.

(6) 2: Surveying the terrain.

*Great winds will blow.
Unfavourable for nothing.*

(6) 3: Jade baton sustain.

*Augury possible.
In royal service lack of success
will come to an end.*

(6) 4: Tying sacks of grain.

NO MISFORTUNE, no honour.

(6) 5: Robe dyed with yellow stain.

MOST AUSPICIOUS.

Top (6): *Dragons war above the wilds.
Blood falls as rain.*

All (6): *Long-term augury favourable.*

(2) **earth**

Edward Shaughnessy (S286–7), following some Chinese commentators, sees this hexagram as completing the calendrical theme of the first and referring to the harvest.

(Tag) This is the most difficult and puzzling of all the tags (see Diagram 15). The Han tablets form is the same as that in the Mawangdui manuscript, and consists of three vertical lines making the character now called *chuan*, meaning ‘a stream or river’. This is the character that occurs frequently in *Zhouyi* as part of the prognostic sentence ‘Favourable for fording a big river;’ but that sentence does not occur in the statements of Hexagram 2. If, like the majority of the other tags, *chuan* ‘stream’ was originally taken from the statements, then the statements have been changed.

The Mawangdui use of *chuan* for Hexagram 2 can be compared to the use of *jian*, the Mawangdui character for the tag of Hexagram 1. *Jian*, as has been noted, resembles a character assigned to the three-whole-line trigram by the 8th Wing (see page 292). *Chuan* ‘stream’ forms the left-hand part of *shun*, the character assigned by the 8th Wing to the three-broken-line trigram (which is reduplicated to form Hexagram 2). *Shun* means ‘receptive, compliant’ and expresses the *yin* interpretation of Hexagram 2, which was popular by Han times. It is a key word in the interpretation of Hexagram 2 in the 1st and 7th Wings (see pages 373 and 438); and it occurs in the Great Treatise (I.xii.1 twice; and II.xii.1).

There is another way of explaining the Mawangdui tag, which relates it to the *Kun* of the received text. *Kun* has an involved history, but refers primarily to the earth, and has elements in it that suggest partitioning land, appropriate to Line 2 as translated here. An archaic form of *kun*, however, written with three parallel chevrons pointing to the left, resembles early forms of *chuan* ‘stream’ (K422a-d), and is also a variant graph for three broken lines as they appear in the *bagua* symbols on bronzes. What looks like *chuan* or the left-hand part of *shun* may in fact be the all-broken-line trigram taken to be a primitive graph meaning ‘earth’, a graph which later received the full form of the character *kun*. Diviners inherited a preoccupation with the earth from the Shang cult of earth gods.

(Hexagram statement) With 29 characters, this is by far the longest of the hexagram statements.

Mares may have been a sacrifice (possibly to the earth), or auspices may have been taken from the behaviour of mares.

‘For a prince . . . For a ruler, favourable’ is capable of different punctuation, giving ‘A prince has somewhere to go; first strays, later finds a master. Favourable.’ My translation helps solve the curious problem of a prince finding a master, but is not entirely satisfactory. I wonder whether the reference to a prince’s journey is either

interpolated or displaced. It may have been the mare or mares mentioned above that strayed and were found.

Gao Heng notes that the word translated 'friend' might equally well be translated 'string of cowries'. See 41:5 and 51:2. (G166)

For the compass points mentioned see Hexagrams 39 and 40.

(Base) The first two characters mean literally 'frost underfoot'. Jeffrey Riegel refers this oracle to ceremonial walking on hoarfrost at the time of the autumnal sacrifices. ('A textual note on the *I Ching*' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103.3 (1983) pages 601–5. See also the note to Line 2.) Others have seen it as a sign of impending marriage. (Compare the note to line 5.) It occurs in a marriage song at Ode 107:

Finely twined, the fibre shoes,
fit for walking on hoarfrost.

The same two lines recur in Ode 203.2, as part of a picture of young men who are attractive to young women, though the setting is economic distress.

(2) Literally and apparently 'Straight and square.' The suggestion that this means surveying the fields at harvest time depends partly on comparison with characters used in Shang tortoiseshell inscriptions. Wen Yiduo gives justification for understanding it to mean a great survey. (W41, 587).

Gao Heng (G167) suggests that the whole of this line sentence means 'Controlling a raft; without much practice' – an omen of relative safety because a raft does not easily capsize.

Post-Han commentators divided this oracle after the first three characters, translated as 'Straight, square and big;' and took the last two characters as an indication: 'No repetition.' Jeffrey Riegel (see note to line 1), insisting that each of the six oracles in Hexagram 2 is of two characters only and all six have the same rhyme, punctuates this oracle after 'square'. In the indication he reads what in the present text appears to be the simple negative *bu* as an old form of the character now read as *feng* 'phoenix', here taken to represent *feng* 'wind'. Violent winds were expected in autumn. His translation of the oracle itself, however, is tentatively given as 'Directed toward the (proper) quarter.'

(3) An obscure line. *Han zhang* recurs in Hexagram 44:5. *Han* means 'hold in the mouth' or 'conceal'. *Zhang* means 'splendour', 'distinction', or 'pattern'; or it can be a short form of the same character with the jade radical (see Diagram 11), meaning 'jade baton'. Among suggested translations have been 'Eclipsed brilliance', 'Containing patterns' and 'Hold a jade talisman/baton in the mouth'.

The most satisfactory translation of the oracle seems to be 'holding a jade baton up before (or to conceal) the mouth' – 'sustain' being

used here to mean ‘hold up’ – which was the etiquette for audience with a ruler. (It is not clear whether the baton was at this date regarded as protecting the ruler from the suppliant’s breath. That explanation became normal; but the custom was also a means for preventing swift recourse to a concealed weapon.) The same protocol is invoked in Hexagram 42:3, where the baton is called *gui*, often translated as ‘tablet’ or ‘sceptre’. Both English words are misleading, because *gui* were about 9 inches long, pointed at the top and made of jade (see Hsu and Linduff *Western Zhou civilization* 182–4). They were insignia of rank, given by the king at investitures.

Zhang may be a generic word for such batons. In the Odes the expression *ru gui ru zhang* ‘like *gui*, like *zhang*’ occurs twice as a simile of nobility and elegance (Odes 252.6 and 254.6), while the high destiny of a nobleman’s son is foreshadowed when the child is given a *zhang* as a plaything (Ode 189.8). The oracle appears to be connected with ‘seeing great men’.

Gao Heng gives reasons for translating the whole oracle as ‘Overcoming Shang,’ referring to Wu Wang’s victory and the establishment of Zhou. (G167)

Wangshi ‘royal service’ is several times mentioned in the Book of Odes, where it usually means military service, building defensive earthworks and defending the borders. (Odes 40.2,3; 121.1,2,3; 162.1,2,3,4; 167.3; 169.1,2,3; 205.1,3.) These are songs of loneliness and exile.

(4) Literally ‘Tying sacks’. This makes sense as a reference to the autumn harvest of grain.

(5) Literally ‘yellow nether garment’ or ‘yellow skirt’. This was a man’s robe. There is a reference to making skirted robes, including yellow ones, for the young men at harvest time in Ode 154.3.

In the eighth moon we spin,
we spin black, we spin yellow;
the red is brilliant:
we make skirts for nobles’ sons.

In Ode 27.2 the same yellow garment for a man is mentioned in a love song.

Oh the green coat!
Green coat and yellow skirt . . .

Although Gao Heng (G167) insists that in *Zhouyi* yellow is always propitious, its exact significance eludes us. Yellow was not, as some later commentators have believed, an imperial colour. Imperial yellow was a Han idea. Autumn was the season for weddings, perhaps because pregnancies begun at the spring festivals were verifiable by autumn, but also because autumn brought the end of the heavy work season and an abundance of food for feasting.

(Top) Reading *xuanhuang* ‘dark and pale’ (‘dark and dun’ or ‘black and yellow’) as prototypes for homonyms meaning ‘flow’ (see Diagram 10). Rains were expected in autumn. Dragons struggling in the sky produced rain. Some commentators regard the struggle as sexual coupling and the rain as fertilizing. See also the comment in *Wenyan* on page 439. Wen Yiduo argued, less persuasively, that *xuanhuang* meant ‘dark yellow’ which was a way of indicating red, the colour of blood. (W 44). Gao Heng (G169) suggested that a black dragon was fighting a yellow one and, since both bled, the omen was indeterminate.

Xuanhuang can also mean ‘dark and dun (or yellow)’, signifying Heaven (at night) and (the yellow soil of) Earth. This has been the commonly accepted connotation since the sixth-century *Qianziwen* ‘the Thousand Character Classic’, where *xuanhuang* occurs in the first line, became popular as a reading primer, possibly in Tang times. (See also pages 18 and 439.) If Riegel’s theory that each oracle originally consisted of two characters only (in this oracle *xuan* and *huang*) is right, the fighting dragons may be an interpolation inspired by Hexagram 1. Or they may have been inserted as an explanation of the original oracle ‘Blood falls as rain’, which belongs to the rhyme scheme of the other five line statements.

(All (6)) See page 130 on the supernumerary line statements.