

ding/tripod-bowl 50



VERY AUSPICIOUS.  
*Sacrifice.*

Base (6): Tripod-bowl with up-turned feet:  
*good for turning out bad meat.*  
*A slave-girl with a child to greet.*

NO MISFORTUNE.

(9) 2: Tripod-bowl full to the top.  
*Illness makes my comrades drop;*  
*before it hits me, it will stop.*

AUSPICIOUS.

(9) 3: Tripod-bowl with lugs awry.  
*Its proper use is blocked thereby,*  
*plump pheasant flesh left there to dry.*

*Rain imminent.*

*Trouble.*

Ultimately AUSPICIOUS.

(9) 4: Tripod-bowl with legs askew,  
*spilling out the duke's fine stew.*  
*Penalty of death is due.*

DISASTROUS.

(6) 5: Tripod-bowl with golden lugs and rod of bronze.

*Favourable augury.*

Top (9): Tripod-bowl with rod of jade.

VERY AUSPICIOUS.  
*Unfavourable for nothing.*

(50) **tripod-bowl**

(Tag) Shang and Zhou bronze ritual vessels come in many forms. The word *ding* may mean no more than a typical bronze pot, but it also means a particular shape that went back to neolithic times. Originally made of clay, it consisted of a round bowl in which food could be cooked over a fire. It had three solid legs, but was closely allied to the *li*, in which the three legs were hollow cones whose cavities formed part of the bowl. This form brought the cooking food into closer contact with the heat of the fire, and may have been the predecessor of the *ding*. There were one or two handles at the sides. When this form of vessel was cast in bronze, the handles were moved to the rim, usually as rigid rings through which a carrying-rod could be inserted.

There were also rectangular box-shaped *ding* bowls with four solid legs – usually called *fangding* ‘square *ding*’.

A legend found in the Zuo Commentary (Duke Xuan year 3: Legge pages 292–3) tells how Yu, founder of the Xia dynasty, had bronze sent in from the nine provinces and fashioned into nine highly ornamented *ding*. The ownership of these great vessels became a symbol of the monarchy, and they were passed from dynasty to dynasty until they were lost, it is said, at the end of Eastern Zhou.

The *ding* of Hexagram 50 is therefore a typical bronze vessel, used for banquets and sacrifices, a sign of legitimate royal power. Early translators, including Legge in the Zuo Commentary, translated *ding* as ‘tripod’; but in translating *Yijing* changed this to ‘cauldron’. Mrs Baynes followed suit. Unhappily the overtones of ‘cauldron’ conjure up the image of a huge rough cast-iron pot in which unlovely ingredients are boiled for unspeakable purposes. No single English word suggests an opulent vessel of high-relief bronze that is an emblem of power and at the time a pot for cooking rich stews. ‘Tripod-bowl’ merely describes the shape of this noble and ancient object.

(Base) The third line may have either of two meanings: getting a slave-girl and her child, or getting a slave-girl for the sake of the child she will bear, perhaps by her master. An alternative translation would be ‘A slave-girl for child-bearing meet.’

(3) *Gao*, usually translated ‘fat meat’, is here rendered as ‘plump’, because pheasant is famously free of fat. The word refers to appearance rather than to tissue. In the Odes it refers to sleek lambskins (146.3) and to swelling grainshoots (227.1).

(4) On this oracle see W37. Another possibility for the last line is ‘The punishment should be branding.’ (D645)

(5) The lugs were like fixed rings on the top edge of the *ding*. A carrying-rod could be slipped through them. Two different metals, perhaps different kinds of bronze, are implied. It is unlikely that gold was used. ‘Golden’ probably means yellowish bronze, strikingly distinctive to the contemporary eye.

(Top) A jade rod could not be very thin without being brittle, but a thick one for carrying the pot as in (5) would be feasible.