

Ware, Ware, Snares For Hares

Ware, Ware, Snares for Hares (From the 詩經 (75 – 94E) ‘shījīng’, *Book of Odes*, *Book of Songs* or *Poetry Classic*, *Shih King*, ca. eleventh—sixth century BC)

肅 肅 兔 置
 sù sù / tù jū
 367 367 320B 368
 Ware, ware, snares for hares,

椽 之 丁 丁
 zhuó zhī / dīng dīng
 369 20 370 370
 Peg ’em down, tack, tack:

赳 赳 武 夫
 jiū jiū / wǔ fū
 371 371 372 110D
 Fair, fair, the Warriors—

公 侯 干 城
 gōng hóu / gān chéng
 114A 373 233A 178
 My Lord’s / Bucklers and Bastions!

•••

肅 肅 兔 置
 sù sù / tù jū
 367 367 320B 368
 Ware, ware, snares for hares,

施 於 中 逵
 shī yú / zhōng kuí
 374 375 72 376
 Spread ’em in the tracks:

赳 赳 武 夫
 jiū jiū / wǔ fū
 371 371 372 110D
 Fair, fair, the Warriors—

公 侯 好 仇
 gōng hóu / hǎo chóu
 114A 373 110F 377
 My Lord’s / Dearest Companions!

•••

肅 肅 兔 罝

sù sù / tù jū

367 367 320B 368

Ware, ware, snares for hares,

施 於 中 林

shī yú / zhōng lín

374 375 72 90

Spread 'em in the woods:

赳 赳 武 夫

jiū jiū / wǔ fū

371 371 372 110D

Fair, fair, the Warriors—

公 侯 腹 心

gōng hóu / fù xīn

114A 373 378 80C

My Lord's / Soul and Opinions!

This song is from the ancient anthology, traditionally believed to have been made by Confucius himself, of three hundred and five 'songs' or 'odes' out of a store of ten times as many existing in his day. The remainder he is said to have considered unworthy of preservation, because of indecency or for other lack of merit. Whether he made it or not, he attached great importance to the anthology and advised his son: 不學詩無以言 (10 - 187A - 75 - 149 - 11 - 73) 'bù xué shī, wú yǐ yán', 'unless you study the Odes, you will have no means of expressing yourself' (*Analects*: xvi, xiii, 2). Many of the poems, like that already given earlier, are simple folk-songs. Both that and this poem are from the first section of the anthology, which has the title 國風 (78B - 94B) 'guófēng'; where 風, 'winds', has the meaning of 'fashions, customs'. Others are country odes, hunting songs, wedding songs and songs of war, many of them great, though mostly relatively short, poems worthy of the Homeric Age in contemporary Greece. The advice Confucius gave to his son has been followed by literate Chinese, and others who share their script, for twenty-five centuries; so that a quotation from this anthology would be instantly recognised by the well-educated. Tags from the anthology, like Greek and Latin tags until recently in the West, were part of the *fabric* of the civilisation; as implied by 經 (94E) 'jīng', even if that is not its exact origin.

As with other works of great antiquity and vast prestige, there is a difference between the original meaning of some of its contents and the meaning acquired as a result of frequent quotation or of the work of pious commentators. The present poem is said to celebrate the good government of the Dukedom of Chou in the twelfth or eleventh century BC, just before it seized the government of the Empire from the Shang and became the long-lasting Chou Dynasty. This good government was exemplified by the fact that two famous men of humble origin, mere trappers of hares, were able to rise to positions of the greatest power. If the poem was contemporary with these events, it would certainly be among the oldest in the anthology; which itself represents the oldest Chinese literature apart from inscriptions.