CONTEXTUAL HIERARCHIES IN
THE SHANG ORACLE-BONE INSCRIPTIONS

By

VERNON KEITH FOWLER

B.A., The University of Leeds, 1979

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Asian Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 1984

© Vernon Keith Fowler, 1984
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of  ASIAN STUDIES

The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date  7 AUGUST 1984
السادة
EPIGRAPH

In dwellings tabernacular
Upon those bones oracular
They wrote in the vernacular,
Those glorious kings of Shang.
In matters divinatory
Those gents were not dilatory
But joyful, exclamatory,
They cracked their bones - bang! bang!

Their jottings, hieroglyphically,
Now disinterred prolifically,
Have pleased us all terrifically
With ancient repartee,
And though their words now mystify
Today's philologist, defy
All reason, I'll persist if I
Can get a Ph.D.
ABSTRACT

In this thesis I discuss the nature and significance of three different layers of linguistic context that may be discerned in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions. I refer to these three contextual layers by the abbreviated Chinese titles duizhen, chengtao and tongban. I hope to show by this examination that the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions are not simply divinatory texts, but also comparatively sophisticated documents of an empirical and bureaucratic nature. I also show how each layer contributes a new understanding of the oracle-bone inscriptions, especially with regard to decipherment. I examine the three layers as follows:

1. Duizhen

Duizhen buci or 'antithetical pairs' refers to the pairs of divinations in OBI which both contain the same subject matter, but one of which is expressed in the positive mode and the other in the negative mode. This chapter is divided into two parts:

a. After a brief introduction on the possible significance of the direction of writing in various cultures as well as in China, I conclude (following Dong Zuobin) that the usual direction of writing in Shang times was probably the same as in historical times (i.e. vertical columns proceeding from right to left). However, on the oracle bones the usual right to left direction was often reversed in order to create a kind of symmetry between the antithetical members of a duizhen pair, one of which
would be inscribed on the right side of the shell running in one direction, and the other on the left side running in the opposite direction, so that the two inscriptions mirror each other. Individual graphs were also sporadically reversed. I suggest that the symmetrical arrangement of the inscriptions on the plastron was inspired by the natural symmetry of the plastron itself, but that the use of antithetical propositions in the divination ritual was intended to influence the course of events in the Shang's favour. This influence was achieved by the use of the particle ＱＩ 其, which served to distance undesired eventualities.

b. It is a feature of ｔｕｉｚｈｅｎ that quite often the positively phrased member will be inscribed on the right side of the shell, and the negatively phrased member on the left side. Some scholars have suggested that the Shang, in common with many other cultures, regarded the left as 'sinister', and therefore inscribed what they wanted to happen on the right, and what they did not want to happen on the left, hoping in this way to influence the actual outcome of the divination. However, sometimes the negatively phrased member is inscribed on the right side, and the positively phrased member on the left side. Some of these exceptions may be explained in terms of illocutionary force (e.g. in divinations containing disaster graphs, in which case a negated disaster, although grammatically negative, is positive in illocution, and thus would be placed on the right side, and its grammatically positive counterpart on the left side). However, there is also a small number of exceptions which simply have to be accepted as exceptions. I conclude from this that, although the antithetical pairing of positively and negatively phrased divinations, along with the use of the distancing particle ＱＩ 其, probably had a ritual and magical significance, which member was placed on the right and which on the left was probably not
the result of conscious effort, but of subconscious psychology. Clear-cut exceptions help to prevent us from feeling that we have to, or indeed can, force either a positive or negative meaning onto ambiguous inscriptions simply because of the side of the plastron on which they occur.

2. Chengtao

_Chengtao jiagu_ 成套甲骨 'shells and bones which form sets' refers to the phenomenon of sets of five plastrons (and also, but more rarely, scapulae) whose inscriptions duplicate each other to a large extent, but sometimes with significant differences. By comparing all the members of such a set, and exploring the ways in which they differ, much light can be thrown on the decipherment of the inscriptions that occur in such sets. It is not known how widespread this phenomenon was, as only a handful of such sets have been found. I examine all the sets and part sets in _Bingbian_ (the only collection in which such sets have been assembled), and discuss the variations found within each set.

The use of such sets represents a stage in the formalisation of the divination process, a formalisation which led to simplification, so that by the time of Period V even the _duizhen_ had almost disappeared.

3. Tongban

_Tongban buci_ 同版卜辭 simply means 'inscriptions occurring on the same plastron'. The context in OBI is very limited, and this makes it very difficult to be sure that one has interpreted a divinatory sentence correctly. It would therefore be very useful if one could expand
the context of single inscriptions by relating them to other inscriptions on the same plastron, but many tongban inscriptions at first sight appear to be quite unrelated. In this chapter, I examine how far it is justified to relate different inscriptions on the same plastron by appealing to the three criteria of: 1) cyclical dating; 2) shared vocabulary; and 3) grammatical parallelism. An examination of cyclical dating, in conjunction with the placement of the inscriptions on the plastron, suggests that none of the inscriptions were made until the last affair predicted for had been verified or otherwise by actual events. The record-keeping process which I infer from this suggests that on many plastrons the various affairs divined about formed a homogeneous context in the Shang world. Using this as a piece of corroborative evidence for my underlying assumption that most if not all of the inscriptions on a plastron are related in some way, I then go on to explore the sort of relationships between different inscriptions that can be established through the examination of shared vocabulary and grammatical parallelism. The establishment of such relationships helps to affirm the correctness of the interpretation of individual inscriptions. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the sort of divinations that one can expect to see on a plastron, and the sort of connections that may exist between them. In particular I argue that many plastrons, though by no means all, will contain a main topic, with possibly one or more contingent topics, together with divinations concerning the possibility of curses from the ancestors, and the proposal of methods (i.e. various sacrifices) by which the ancestors might be propitiated.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>p. iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the Corpus</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations used in this thesis</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Duizhen buci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part one: Direction of Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part two: The Sinister Aspect</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Chengtao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set one</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set two</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set three</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set four</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set five</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set six</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set seven</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set eight</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set nine</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: List of single surviving tao members in Bingbian</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Tongban - total context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclical dating</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion on cyclical dating</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Vocabulary</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Parallelism</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of Context in Decipherment</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Topics are there on a Plastron?</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envoi</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter One</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter Two</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes to Chapter Three</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Bingbian 1: An example of the symmetrical arrangement of inscriptions on a plastron p. 8

2. Bingbian 22: Displacement caused by display inscription p. 101

3. Bingbian 197: " " " " p. 106

4. Bingbian 198: " " " " p. 107

5. Bingbian 243: " " " " p. 118
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest debt of gratitude goes first and foremost to my sensei, Professor K. Takashima, who taught me how to read oracle-bone inscriptions, and who has enriched my stay at UBC in ways too numerous to mention, ranging from study to part-time jobs and advice on how to invest my funds. I would also like to thank Mrs. Takashima, who enriched my diet. Although individual interpretations may sometimes differ, Professor Takashima's detailed comments on my drafts have ensured a high standard of philological accuracy. His help in interpreting difficult inscriptions has been so pervading that it is impossible to acknowledge every specific instance. In addition, Professor Takashima often drew my attention to inscriptions that he knew of which helped to support or improve my arguments.

I would particularly like to thank Professor Pulleyblank for his numerous helpful suggestions and comments. His influence may be seen especially throughout the first chapter which, thanks to his guidance, now appears in a form which is a vast improvement on my initial draft. He also helped me with various aspects of Chinese phonology, and improved the amount of research that went into the thesis.

A critical eye was also cast on the religious and sociological aspects of the thesis by Professor D. Overmeyer, who made numerous useful suggestions for improving its scholarly tone and awareness.

I would also like to acknowledge my debt in general to the Asian Studies Department at UBC, whose generosity has kept body and soul together during my time here. The staff of the Asian Studies library also deserve a special mention for their unfailing helpfulness and friendliness.
I would also like to thank my fellow M.A. students, Alison Bailey and Iain Crofts for sundry helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Professor M. Soga, Mrs. N. Matsumoto, and Professor Leon Hurvitz (who initiated me into the arcana of kambun kundoku in a way that I can only describe as immensely entertaining) for enabling me to access Japanese sources. They all made learning Japanese seem like fun, which is something of a feat.

Last but not least I would like to thank Dale Johnson, who made many suggestions, some of which were relevant. His overwhelming enthusiasm I often found quite depressing.

Any shortcomings this thesis may have are of course entirely due to my own incompetence.
A Note on the Corpus

Although I am occasionally obliged to bring in evidence from other collections, I use mainly the Bingbian corpus (see Bibliography for details), which is one of the most important published collections of Chinese oracle-bone inscriptions. The chief advantage of this collection is that it contains many complete or almost complete plastrons. Other collections tend to consist mainly of fragments, and the inscriptions on them are therefore often incomplete. This also makes them of little use for studying the tongban relationships that I deal with in Chapter Three. The painstaking work of reassembling shattered plastrons still goes on at the Academia Sinica in Taipei under the valiant leadership of Zhang Bingquan, the author of Bingbian.

Another reason for using this corpus is the easy access to it granted me by a concordance to this collection which I was privileged to help compile, along with Miss Barbara Kong (also an M.A. student in Asian Studies here at UBC), under the guidance of my advisor, Professor Takashima, who was able to secure grants for the project from SSHRCC and the Canada Youth Employment scheme. The concordance was compiled during the summer of 1983, and has proved to be of inestimable value in accessing the Bingbian collection. It is the first complete concordance to this major collection to have been compiled.
ABBREVIATIONS

Bingbian


OBI

Oracle-bone inscriptions.

Shuowen

Shuowen Jiezi by Xu Shen.

Sorui or S.

Inkyo Bokuji Sorui by Shima Kunio.
CHAPTER ONE

DUIZHEN BUCI 對貞卜辭

Introduction

My primary concern in this chapter is the physical arrangement of the inscriptions on the plastron, and what we can learn from this arrangement. My discussion focusses on the so called duizhen buci or 'antithetical pairs' which are a common feature of OBI. This refers to the pairs of divinations which both contain the same subject matter, but one of which is expressed in the positive mode and the other in the negative mode (the exact formula for this will become clear later on in the chapter).

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I examine the possible significance of the direction of writing in various cultures as well as in China, and conclude (following Dong Zuobin) that the usual direction of writing in Shang times was probably the same as in historical times (i.e. vertical columns proceeding from right to left), and that therefore the frequent reversal of this arrangement on the oracle bones must have had a particular significance. On the oracle bones, the usual right to left direction was often reversed in order to create a kind of symmetry between the antithetical members of a duizhen pair, one of which would be inscribed on the right side of the shell running in one direction, and the other on the left side running in the opposite direction, so that the two inscriptions mirror each other. Usually, inscriptions starting at the edge of the shell proceeded in vertical columns towards the middle of the shell, while those starting in the middle proceeded in vertical columns towards the edge. Individual graphs were also sporadically reversed. I
suggest that the reason for this may have been partly aesthetic and partly ritual.

In the second part, I investigate whether there is any relationship between the positive/negative modality of an inscription and the side of the shell on which it is carved. It is a feature of duizhen that quite often the positively phrased member will be inscribed on the right side of the shell, and the negatively phrased member on the left side. Some scholars have suggested that the Shang, in common with many other cultures, regarded the left as 'sinister', and therefore inscribed what they wanted to happen on the right, and what they did not want to happen on the left, hoping in this way to influence the actual outcome of the divination. However, sometimes the negatively phrased member is inscribed on the right side, and the positively phrased member on the left side. Some of these exceptions may be explained in terms of illocutionary force (e.g. in divinations concerning disaster, in which a negated disaster, although grammatically negative, is positive in illocution and thus would be placed on the right side, and its grammatically positive counterpart on the left side). However, there is also a small number of exceptions that cannot be explained away like this and simply have to be regarded as exceptions. I conclude from this that, although the antithetical pairing of positively and negatively phrased divinations (along with the use of the particle qi 亻, which served to distance undesired eventualities) probably had a ritual and magical significance, which member was placed on the right and which on the left was probably not the result of conscious effort, but of subconscious psychology.

Since the act of inscription took place after the act of divination, the left and right distribution of the divination inscriptions actually
reflects precedence in time of utterance. What was said first was divined on the right, and hence inscribed on the right, while what was said secondly was divined on the left and inscribed on the left. Moreover, what was said first was whatever was uppermost in the mind of the diviner, which was usually the positive or beneficial alternative, but not necessarily so, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

1. Direction of Writing

The study of OBI has been approached through many different avenues (such as decipherment, dating, etc.), and one particular branch that has received a lot of attention is that of jiagu wenli 甲骨文例 - the placement and direction of writing on the bones, especially with regard to right and left parallelism. Before discussing the more complex issue of placement on the plastron, I would first like to say a few words about the direction of writing, which I shall begin by asking two questions:

1. Which direction is the most natural?

2. Is the direction of writing significant?

If all peoples share the phenomenon of the preponderance of dextrality over sinistrality, as seems to be the case 4, then it would seem most natural to begin writing at the righthand side. If one begins writing on the right side, at the top (which would seem more natural than starting at the bottom - as far as I know the vertical scripts of the world all go from top to bottom), then one can either go leftwards or down. The Chinese chose to go down first and then left. This is sometimes assumed to be due to the influence of the bamboo strips, but then there is no reason why a
bamboo strip should not be written along horizontally.

According to Labat⁵, the earliest Akkadian cuneiform, which occurs on ill-fashioned lumps of clay, was written in a completely disorderly way. On later clay tablets this settled down to regular horizontal lines proceeding from left to right on the front of the tablet, but when the tablet was turned over to continue writing, the scribe sometimes started on the left and sometimes on the right, so it seems that they had trouble deciding whether the back was a new 'page' or simply a continuation of the front. This is probably connected with their habit of dividing large tablets into vertical columns, rather like a modern newspaper. As for Assyrian cuneiform, this was invariably written from left to right⁶.

Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions consist of rows of hieroglyphs arranged in vertical columns or horizontal lines. These columns or lines, as well as the individual signs within them, usually read from right to left⁷. However, when an inscription was made round a door, it would divide at the top in the middle, and the signs on the left side would run from left to right, thus forming a symmetrical pattern with the inscription on the right side⁸. The obvious aesthetic intent of this forms an interesting parallel with the Shang turtle shell inscriptions. In modern printed books, Egyptian hieroglyphs are usually printed from left to right, so the original arrangement cannot be seen. As Semitic scripts are descended from the Egyptian, it is not surprising that they also run from right to left. When the early Greeks wrote in boustrophedon (going back and forth like an ox ploughing) they did not care if the first 'furrow' went from left to right or from right to left⁹. It took them a long time to settle down to a regular left to right order. When the Romans wrote from left to right, perhaps they regarded themselves, not as starting on the left, but as going towards the right. Thus two opposite phenomena may derive from
the same cause: unconscious attraction to the right. When presented with a vertical bamboo strip of course, if one starts at the top, there is only one direction one can go in, which is down. But whether one then arranges those strips in left-right or right-left order is pure convention. In fact, the variety of directions in which various peoples do write their several scripts proves that the direction of writing is pure convention. It is a pity that the hegemony of the alphabet has caused some peoples to abandon their native direction, as this is simply the replacement of one convention with another, thus destroying a native tradition for no good reason. The question is: do conventions arise through accident, or do they arise naturally from certain given conditions? As regards linguistic conventions, this is a point of great interest. If we are to follow the path pioneered by Chomsky, then the goal towards which we strive must surely be the discovery of the ultimate deep structure that lies beneath all human languages. If we are to believe that there are such things as linguistic universals, then we must assume that these conventions are not accidental, but the natural products of something deep-rooted within the human mind. The deep structure beneath human writing must be that, whatever direction we write in, we all write in some direction. One can make this a little more specific by saying that all peoples tend to write in straight lines, and in the same sequence that the segments of the spoken language are ordered (except for kambun kundoku, which is practised in Japan).

In his classic work on writing, Gelb states the rather useful belief that gaps in our knowledge can be filled by looking at children and primitive societies. We have to assume that the way they do things is similar to the way highly developed civilizations did things in their infancy. Gelb has this to say about the direction of writing:
"Another interesting point of contact [between children and primitive societies] can be established from the study of the direction and orientation of signs in children's drawings and primitive writings. It has been noted that children will draw individual pictures in undue proportion to each other and without any apparent sense of order or direction. Even a child learning how to write will frequently draw signs from left to right or from right to left without ever being aware of any difference in the two directions. Similar phenomena pertaining to the direction and orientation of signs can frequently be observed in almost all the primitive writings."

This may be due to the fact that objects in real life can appear in any position and still be the same object. To a child, the letters of the alphabet are just another collection of objects. In his short yet pithy work *The Formation of the Alphabet*, Petrie also makes the same observation about the cavalier attitude towards direction and orientation among children and primitives. Although Petrie was primarily an archaeologist, he had first hand acquaintance with the data that he uses, much of which he dug up himself, so his information on the development of the alphabet is certainly quite trustworthy (although of course his qualifications as an archaeologist do not make him a psychologist). He notes that uneducated people often reverse letters such as N, S and Z, and that "The turned S may even be seen in the epitaph of an archbishop at Ravenna." He also recounts the following humorous anecdote:

"Drawings may likewise be equally recognised in any position if they are understood. An Egyptian fellah may be in the stage of not understanding a drawing at all, for one insisted that a picture of an Eton boy represented a fish. But if there is the perception of form, the position is immaterial, and the fellah will observe and describe a drawing without taking the trouble to turn the paper the right way up."
However, it seems a trifle caddish to expect an Egyptian fellah to recognise a picture of something he is unlikely to be acquainted with. On the other hand, I am sure he was very familiar with fish.

In view of all this, should we adjudge the Shang writing to be primitive? After all, the writing on the bones goes in all different directions, and graphs are often reversed at random. This can be seen from the chengtao plastrons which I examine in the next chapter, in which graph reversal is not faithfully copied from one plastron to the next. Sometimes a graph is reversed, and sometimes it is not. In their 'mirror' writing on the plastra, by no means all the graphs are reversed, and there is no 'correct' orientation for a graph of which the opposite orientation may be considered the reverse. It is rather like a coin - it is difficult to say which is the front and which is the back. Numismatists adopt the convention of calling the side with the head on the 'obverse', and the other side the 'reverse'.

However, the fact that many of the graphs in the left/right duizhen inscriptions do mirror each other, and the fact that these inscriptions either run towards each other or away from each other, but rarely in the same direction, suggests that the Shang were perfectly conscious of the orientation of their signs and the direction of the writing, and they used them in a very intricate way for a particular effect, which was probably mainly aesthetic. For an example of the symmetrical arrangement of inscriptions on a plastron, please see fig. 1, which is a tracing of Bingbian 22. The lines round the arabic numerals indicate the direction of the inscriptions. Inscriptions 1/2 and 5/6 start at the outer edge of the shell and proceed in more or less vertical columns towards the centre. All the other inscriptions run from the centre towards the edges.
Fig. 1
Bingbian 22: an example of the symmetrical arrangement of inscriptions on a plastron
The inscriptions that mirror each other are all duizhen pairs, and they form a very clear pattern on the shell. Only a handful of graphs are reversed, and these not consistently so. For example, the diviner's name Que 鬆 (殼) is reversed in 1/2 but not in 5/6. Similarly, the warrior's name Jia 筮 (簋) is reversed in 11/12 but not in 13/14. As for the divination cracks, these are invariably symmetrical. They are shaped like the graph bu 卜 (卜), and always point towards the centre of the plastron, which is marked by a natural suture known to palaeographers as the qianliulu 千里路 or 'thousand mile road'. It will be seen that the bu 卜 graphs in inscriptions 1/2 and 5/6 point in the same direction as the divination cracks on their home side, but this is by no means always the case. The shape and direction of the cracks is of course dictated by the gouges made on the back of the shell as part of its preparation for use in divination.

Considering the religious context of Shang divination, it would seem rather superficial to regard this symmetry as purely aesthetic. After all, such symmetry would not have been possible had it not been for the fact of duizhen, the purpose of which I feel was not simply to find out the future, but to influence it by making the undesired alternative sound less certain through the use of the word qi 其, which may be translated as 'perhaps'. The word 'magical' is desperately ambiguous and over-used, and so I hesitate to use it. However, the use of duizhen, and their symmetrical arrangement on the shell, was definitely an integral part of the ritual of Shang divination, and the purpose of this ritual was to ward off evil and secure the favour of the ancestors and natural spirits. All religions have their ritual and formulae, and so it is not surprising that the Shang followed a set pattern in the consultation of the oracle.
As we know from archaeological excavations, plastromancy was also common before the Wu Ding period, but no writing is found on these early bones. In many cultures, the birth of writing is intimately associated with religion. One example is the Egyptian hieroglyphics. The word 'hieroglyphics' means 'priestly writing', and was developed by the priestly class. However, many of the bones from the Wu Ding period are also blank, so the connection between writing and divination in Shang times is not so intimate as it might first appear. Why were some written on and others not? This problem has been discussed by a number of scholars, but it has proven impossible to come up with anything that is more than speculation. In view of the awe in which writing is held in largely non-literate societies, one might be tempted to look for some sort of magical connection between writing and divination in Shang China. After all, it is the fact that the Shang wrote on their bones that sets their divination apart from other peoples' methods of divination. According to Gelb:

"The concept of the divine origin and character of writing is found everywhere, in both ancient and modern times, among civilized as well as among primitive peoples. In the main it is due to a widespread belief in the magic powers of writing."

By 'primitive peoples' I assume he means those that have not yet acquired their own writing system. As for 'civilized' peoples, it must be borne in mind that up until recently the majority of people living in cultures that have writing have been illiterate, so the awe in which writing is held may be ascribed to the common cause of fear of the unknown. Gelb also notes that it is a widespread phenomenon for the origin of writing to be ascribed to a divinity. In China, it is ascribed both to Fu Xi, China's legendary first emperor, who got the signs from the back of a tortoise, and to Cang Jie, a minister of the legendary Yellow Emperor, who was inspired by bird tracks. However, the earliest recorded sources for these legends are
comparatively late, and come mostly from lost books, so their origin is rather suspicious. They share the common theme of taking their pattern after nature, which is after all just what the originators of the Chinese script did: they drew what they saw.

Gelb also suggests that there is a connection between writing and divination (although of course this does not mean to say that writing originated as a means of divination):

"Among primitives, writing and books are the subject of astonishment and speculation. To them, books are instruments of divination. A book can predict the future and reveal what is hidden; it is a guide and a counsellor and, in general, a mystic power."18

However, this cannot apply in the case of the Shang, as they did not write on the divinatory bones until after the divination, sometimes many days after. It was plastromancy that they used for divination, not writing. The act of inscribing the content of the divination onto the shell or bone had quite a different significance, and was rather for the purpose of keeping a record on the bone of which predictions came true, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3 when I come to examine cyclical dating on the bones. The writing was a record of transactions with powerful beings. It did not in itself influence the future. It was the way in which the spoken charges which were addressed to the oracle were phrased that, consciously or unconsciously, had this influence, but of course we only know what the charges were through the written records. Thus it is necessary to distinguish between the act of addressing the charge to the oracle, and the writing that was used to record it. The writing, then, was the final embodiment of the divinatory process as a whole, but it was not part of the attempt to influence the course of events.
If the writing was not part of the 'magical' aspect of Shang divination, what then was the purpose of arranging the inscriptions in a symmetrical fashion, so that the right and left sides of the plastron to a large extent mirror each other? As we have witnessed, there is undoubtedly a deliberate striving for symmetry in the tortoise shell inscriptions. This can be seen from its peculiar nature, as other Shang writings, for example on bronzes and other implements, are mostly in the usual Chinese style of vertical columns from right to left. In his Written on Bamboo and Silk, Tsien talks about the direction of writing on Shang and Western Zhou bronzes:

"They are generally arranged vertically and from right to left in the traditional order as in other documents. We have found, however, at least ten cases in which the text is read in alternate lines, that is, the first, third, and fifth lines read from top to bottom, but the second and fourth lines from bottom to top."

Thus one can see that there are very few exceptions to the general rule. According to Li Daliang, the symmetry of the tortoise shell is born of a quest for the beauty of symmetry and balance, while to Zhou Hongxiang it is a testimony to the Shang's depth of literary refinement. 'Literary refinement' is a somewhat extravagant way of putting it. It seems to me that the very symmetry of the plastron itself, divided down the middle by a natural suture, is probably what inspired the Shang to complement this symmetry in the script with which they adorned it (though the scapulae, being asymmetrical, do not reflect such a pattern). I have thus arrived at the same conclusion as Li Daliang, though he did not support his claim with any reasoned arguments. However, one must not forget that this superficial symmetry was made possible only by the duizhen phenomenon that lies behind it, and I doubt if one could argue that the practice of
pairing charges in this way was carried out so that when they came to be inscribed they would form a symmetrical pattern on the shell. The symmetry of the inscriptions is a surface phenomenon that reflects a ritual that was an integral part of the actual divination. The ritual was a pairing of positive and negative forces which may be part of the duality that some authors see as pervading Shang culture. Light was pitted against dark, good against bad, in a constant battle for the favour of the ancestors. All this is reflected in the timeless symmetry of the oracle shells. One cannot help being reminded of those immortal words that Blake addressed to the tiger:

"What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"

2. The Sinister Aspect

In the oracle bone inscriptions, most divinations occur in paired sentences, one positive and the other negative, known as duizhen. The curious fact that the positive member usually occurs on the right side of the plastron (viewer's right), while the negative member occurs on the left side, was first noted by Zhang Bingquan in his groundbreaking article "Bugui fujia de xushu"，in which he ascribes it to the common phenomenon of shangyou 'supremacy of the right'. In itself this sounds very plausible. However, before one can even consider such a proposal, it is necessary to explore whether the Shang really did or did not associate bad meanings with the left. Only then can one investigate whether or not they exploited such connotations in their divination. I
shall do this by appealing to comparative studies, and also to internal linguistic evidence from Chinese.

The natural tendency for one hand to be stronger and more dextrous than the other is a universal human feature, and the cause of this has been the subject of much speculation. One of the earliest hypotheses ascribed it to the greater development of the left cerebral hemisphere (it is well established that the left side of the brain in most people controls the right side of the body, and vice versa). Hertz refers to Broca's statement that "We are right-handed because we are left-brained", but suggests that the superior development of the left side of the brain may have been stimulated by the greater activity of the right hand, and turns Broca's statement round to read "We are left-brained because we are right-handed." However, Hertz was writing at the turn of the century, and scientific research since then has gone a long way in confirming that the origin of handedness is, as one would expect from the fact that right-handedness is predominant in all human societies, biological. According to Corballis and Beale, for example, handedness and cerebral lateralization are for the most part determined at birth, but are not coded directly into the genes. Rather they depend on positional information that is coded in the cytoplasm of the oocyte (the cell in the mother that undergoes meiosis to form the ovum). However, my concern here is primarily with the psychological and sociological significances that various societies have attached to handedness.

Because the majority of people use their right hand mostly, those who use their left hand are regarded as 'sinister'. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, referring to the pioneer of the study of left and right symbolism, says: "Robert Hertz has shown us in a brilliant essay how in primitive societies the polarities of thought and values divide the person also into two
contrasted and opposed sides, the right and the left, the right being associated with strength, goodness, and life, and the left with weakness, evil, and death. A slight organic asymmetry is made the symbol of absolute moral polarity. This means that the left hand becomes the object of ambiguous attitudes — it is a helper, and yet at the same time there is something sinister about it. We see this ambiguity clearly reflected in the Chinese term zuo 左. The OBI form 左 is clearly a drawing of the left hand. It is significant that the depiction of the abstractions 'left' and 'right' should be taken from the hand. The term zuo 左 is ambiguous because it has two quite contradictory meanings: to help, and to hinder (oppose). The negative connotations of zuo are easily derivable from the meaning 'left', as is the positive meaning 'assist'. The two uses of zuo 左 are well borne out in the classics. However, the word you 右, which comes from a drawing of the right hand (OBI form 右 ), can only mean 'assist'. It has no negative connotations. These two words may be combined to form the expression zuoyou 左右, which means 'to assist' or 'assistants'. This shows the conflict between the natural usefulness of the left hand, and the sinister aspect that human society arbitrarily attaches to it.

In the oracle bones, it is clearly the sinister meaning that preponderates. The word zuo 左 is used to signify that a certain ancestor or even Di 帝 himself is opposed to some proposed activity, and will prevent the Shang from carrying it out successfully. This may be seen from the following pair of inscriptions:

太陽至女川瘀于下
王脳多屯，不若左于下上。

"If the king beheads many Tun tribesmen, it will not meet with approval (and) will be 'left' to (i.e. go against the will of) the lower and upper spirits."
"If the king beheads many Tun tribesmen, it will not go against (the will of, but) will meet with the approval of the lower and upper spirits." (Bingbian 523.1/2)

It is evident from this that the Shang did attribute bad connotations to the left. In contrast, the word 右 is always used to refer to divine assistance. Can this give us a clue as to why the positive or desirable member of a duizhen was often placed on the right side of the plastron, while the negative or undesirable member was usually placed opposite it on the left side? At first sight it seems almost like the relation between Yang and Yin -- a world of light and hope contrasted with a world of fear and terror, made more remote and mysterious by the particle 其, and relegated to the dark nether world of the left side of the plastron. But is it justified to claim that this was a deliberate and conscious act on the part of the Shang? If the attachment of negative values to the left is a universal human feature, this suggests that there is some unconscious, irresistible law at work, which people might not always be aware of. The Chinese use of the words 'left' and 'right' for 'hinder' and 'help' respectively may merely be one reflection of this, and not necessarily something that they appealed to in their divination. Let us first see if there is a relationship between right and left and divination in other cultures.

Hertz refers to "the primary religious significance of the contrast between the right and the left", and indeed when we come to look at divination in contemporary primitive societies, we find the same Manichaean distinction. Among the Nyoro of Africa "... the diviner places a wand on the left shoulder of the client and says, "Sickness be gone, ... sorrow be
gone, barrenness be gone;" ... he then places the wand on the right shoulder and says, "Come wealth, come children, come long life, ... come all goodness". Among the Kaguru, a Bantu-speaking people in Africa, "Right and left also seem to be associated with certain magical acts. In divination (maselu or mulamuli) it is said that the signs must appear on both the right and left before the prognostication may be regarded as complete." (Unfortunately this source does not say the right and left side of what). Here we see the use of left and right incorporated into a divinatory ritual. Thus I think it is at least safe to say that the duizhen phenomenon was not so much in order to find out the future more completely (as Li Daliang claims), but was simply a ritual formula. One can only speculate on its original significance, but my guess is that the turtle was capable of only one response, which was interpreted as varying degrees of auspiciousness or probability of occurrence, and therefore both sides of the coin had to be presented to the oracle in order to determine which of the two possibilities was likely to happen. As this practice established itself, it was further refined by introducing an element of uncertainty into the undesired alternative. This is the process whereby I envisage simple enquiry turned into an attempt at influencing the future. The epitome of this trend is realised in the xun wang huo formula, which is not really an enquiry at all, but rather like a prayer. One might translate it as "Deliver us from evil."

Further light can be shed by examining references to divination in Chinese ritual literature, and also by examining the oracle bones themselves. According to K.C. Chang, "Oracle bones suggest shamanistic communication, but the inscriptions found on them are acts that are more political than religious." However, as I see it, there is no contradiction here. The oracle bones were indeed used for shamanistic communication -- it was a
communication with the ancestors through the medium of the turtle. It was political at the same time, because divination was the state religion, and like any state religion, one of its side effects was to corroborate the authority of those in power. However, the duizhen formula itself is unlikely to have been of any political significance. This belongs to the religious aspect. Clearly it is necessary to distinguish between the ritual formula of duizhen, and the act of inscribing them, along with the prognostications and verifications, which bolstered the king’s position as ruler by publishing his continuing effective dialogue with the spirits of his ancestors. Let us now look at some references to divination in Chinese literature.

In his book *Handedness: Right and Left*, Wile also refers to this peculiarity of Chinese divination, saying that "Omens were interpreted in terms of right and left." His statement is based on Ferguson, who claims that "Neither the upper nor the lower portion of the carapace was taken into consideration; it was only the right and left sections which were interpreted." He gives his source as *Zhouli* 周礼 ch. XXIV (Chunguan zongbo.xia 春官 宗伯下), which actually says something quite different:

凡卜, 辨龜之上下, 左右, 阴陽。
"Dans toutes les augurations, il distingue sur la tortue le haut et le bas, la gauche et la droite, les côtés des deux principes mâle et femelle."

Although the left and right are mentioned as being important here, so also are the top and bottom, and the yin and yang, which is interpreted here as referring to the sex of the tortoise. It is possible that this Zhou practice evolved from an original Shang practice which distinguished only between the left and right. That Zhou plastromancy was quite different from Shang plastromancy may be seen from the fact that they used it in conjunction with the bagua 八卦 and the hexagrams of the *Zhouyi* 周易. Columns of
three and six numbers have been found on some of the oracle bones from Zhouyuan which some scholars identify as the forerunners of the hexagrams. Only a few such numbers have been claimed to have been found on Shang bones, although of course the cracks are numbered. The Zhouli mentions this joint usage:

大卜掌三兆之灑。一日玉兆。二曰瓦兆。三曰原兆。其經兆之體。皆百有二十。其頌皆千有二百。掌三易之灑。一日連山。二曰歸藏。三曰周易。其經卦皆八。其別皆六十有四。

"Grand Augur. Il est proposé aux trois méthodes pour l'observation des fissures sur l'écaillde de la tortue. La première est appelée fissure de jade; la seconde, fissure de poterie; la troisième, fissure de plaine. La contexture sacrée de l'écaillde de tortue présente, pour les trois systèmes, cent vingt configurations de fissures et douze cents réponses. Il est proposé aux trois méthodes pour les changements des lignes divinatoires. La première est appelée: Liaison des montagnes; le seconde: Retour et conservation; la troisième: Changements des Tcheou. Pour toutes, il y a huit lignes symboliques sacrées, et soixante-quatre combinaisons de ces lignes."  

Although the text does not actually say that the hexagrams were used to interpret the bones, it is clear that both types of interpretation were based on numbers. Although extremely obscure, it is nevertheless very complicated, and makes the Shang left/right opposition look very simple, but then we do not know how the Shang interpreted their oracles, so it is rather early to pass judgement. Apart from this, the actual meaning of the technical terms used in the above passages is impossible to ascertain, so their value is rather limited. Nevertheless, they do suggest something of the ritual involved which is now lost to us.
Turning now to the oracle bones themselves, we find the interesting phenomenon that "the practice of placing desired charges on the right and undesired on the left of the front of the bone or shell was apparently reversed on the back of the shell, indicating that the bifurcation was thought to inhere in the bone or shell itself, not in the viewer." However, it was the viewer's right (looking from the front), and not the turtle's right, that is supposed to have been considered good. The Shang were carving their desired charges on the turtle's left. So although they may have seen the bifurcation as going through the shell, it never occurred to them that their right was not the turtle's right. Thus, even when communicating with the spirits, man is still the measure of all things.

The above mentioned phenomenon would appear to prove that the Shang's use of the left and right side of the plastron was in fact deliberate. However, I believe I can offer a different explanation. As I have already mentioned, the inscription was not part of the actual divination ceremony, but a record of the spiritual transaction which was added after the event. Divinatory charges (mingci) are usually inscribed on the front of the plastron, while the back is usually reserved for prognostications and verifications and records of tribute and plastron preparation. Each charge is associated with a particular crack, and each crack carries a particular number. However, when a charge is inscribed on the back of the plastron, there is no crack there for it to be associated with, since the cracks are all on the front. Since the charges on the front are usually written very close to the crack with which they are associated, it seems highly likely that the charges on the back are associated with a crack on the front in a corresponding location, so that the relative left/right position is reversed. Why some charges were inscribed on the back, has not yet been ascertained. It may have been a question of space.
Whatever the case, the 'inherent bifurcation' proves nothing as regards the claim that the Shang deliberately placed their hopes and desires on the right side of the plastron, and their fears and trepidations on the left side thereof. Once again, it is necessary to bear in mind that the cracking of the turtle was the act of divination, and that the inscribing was only a sort of postscript.

As mentioned earlier, in the classics the word zuo 左, used as a verb, can have a favourable or an unfavourable meaning, and only context can decide. Can the context of left and right help in interpreting this word as used in the bones? Does it in fact have both these meanings in the bones? In all the examples that Chow Kwok-ching gives, zuo has an unfavourable meaning: 'obstruct, oppose'. He was able to arrive at this conclusion by the contrast with ruo 若 'to approve'. Let us now consider a more ambiguous example:

**RIGHT:**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{日月} \\
\text{贞: 咸允左王。} \\
\end{array}
\]

"Testing: Xian is indeed left-ing the king."

**LEFT:**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{口月} \\
\text{贞: 咸弗左王。} \\
\end{array}
\]

"Testing: Xian is not left-ing the king." (Bingbian 41.16/17)

Zhang Bingquan in his commentary glosses zuo 左 here as zuozhu 佐助 'to assist', but gives no reason. If we are to follow the left/right hypothesis, then we should in fact expect such a favourable meaning on the right, so ancestor Xian "left-ing" the king should be something good, and the use of the word yun 允 'indeed' in the positive member should help to support the theory that this was what the Shang wanted, as it makes the proposition sound more certain (cf. qi 其 makes undesirable alternatives
seem less certain). However, on the same plastron we also find:

RIGHT: 真: 祖乙帝王。

"Testing: Zu Yi is punishing the king."

LEFT: 真: 祖乙弗其相王。

"Testing: Zu Yi is not perhaps punishing the king."

(Bingbian 41.12/13)

There is nothing ambiguous about 真 , which is well established as a disaster graph. I assume that the king is suffering from some setback, and the purpose of the divination is to find out which ancestor is causing it, so that a sacrifice may be offered in appeasement. Although, as Keightley puts it, "This hypothesis about right and left placement ..... depends, of course, on the unverifiable assumption that we can tell what the Shang king was wishing for", I think it is safe to assume that he did not wish to be punished by the ancestors. It therefore seems likely that in these examples the illocutionary force is being ignored, and the right and left placement is determined entirely by the presence or absence of a negative grammatical particle, the sentence without such a particle being placed on the right, and the sentence with such a particle being placed on the left. Thus despite the fact that 左 occurs in the positive form on the right, I still regard it here as having a negative meaning: 'hinder, oppose'. This is further supported by inscription no. 18 on the same plastron, which proposes a sacrifice to ancestor Xian which will result in 'approval': 若 (as mentioned earlier, 左 is often contrasted with 若):
In his book Guiban wenli yanjiu, Li Daliang gives a list of exceptions to the general rule that positive inscriptions occur on the right while negative ones occur on the left. His sole criterion is the occurrence of negative particles. However, there are cases in which illocutionary force must be taken into account. I shall now show how some of his 'exceptions' can be accounted for by this.

**RIGHT:**
"Guiwei-day cracking, Bin testing: this shower does not mean descending disaster."

**LEFT:**
"Guiwei-day cracking, Bin testing: this shower means descending disaster." (Bingbian 61.3/4)

Li Daliang's first example is typical of what he calls zheng zai zuo fu zai you inscriptions. There are certain words, such as huo (灾), which come under the general heading of disaster graphs, and have a 'bad' meaning. Their negation thus becomes something good. As Zhang Bingquan explains it:

...
... what they hoped for was still to obtain a favourable response, so that when they asked: "There will be no disaster?", the hoped for response was: "Yes, there will be no disaster!", and when they asked: "He/she will not die?", the hoped for response was: "Yes, he/she will not die!" Thus although these questions were negatively phrased, the response was still favourable, so divinations like these must still be classified as positive questions, and are thus placed on the right side of the plastron. Because of this, one cannot group indivinations as positive or negative simply on the basis of their literal meaning; one must decide by looking at whether the hoped for answer is positive or negative, and by looking at their position on the plastron."

(Author's translation)

However, as one can see from Bingbian 41.16/17, which I quoted earlier, the position on the plastron is by no means an infallible guide. Zhang also suggests:

"... we should also look at the king's frame of mind at that time..."

(Author's translation)

Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to evolve a criterion for determining the king's frame of mind. Such a criterion would certainly prove very valuable to palaeographers.

Other examples of this sort of inscription are:

RIGHT: 十八卜, 方貞: 雨丁亡貝 (=敗).

"Jiashen-day cracking, Bin testing: Yu Ding will not get defeated."
"Testing: Yu Ding perhaps will get defeated."

(Bingbian 61.5/6)

不能被解释为‘'offer cowries’ as the negative wang. In the other member of this duizhen couplet means that 卜 can only be you 有 'have' or 'get'. The assumption of a military context strengthens the reading of 貝 as bai 敵. Adopting Akatsuka's tongban hypothesis for the moment, we see that inscriptions numbers 1 and 2 on this plastron talk about the king following Wang Cheng 望乘 in battle (this topic with this particular general occurs many times in Bingbian), so a military context is quite feasible. One may further speculate, though more tentatively, that the ling 風 precipitation was regarded as an omen in connection with the other military affairs divined about on this plastron. The use of qi 其 in inscription number 6 also suggests that 貝 was something undesirable, the not having of which was considered something positive, and hence placed most naturally on the right side.

"Wuwu-day cracking, Dun testing: Ban going and coming will not have disaster."

(Bingbian 130.1/2)
'disaster' is clearly something whose not having is desirable. In the second inscription, *qi* makes the possibility of *huo* seem more remote by adding the modality of uncertainty. Ban is the only character reversed (although a number of the other graphs are enantiomorphic and thus incapable of reversal). I suspect that this reversal was not simply for aesthetic reasons, but was also a magical practice. However, a detailed study of graph reversal in OBI is required, and at present one can only speculate. It may be that the reversal of the personal name Ban is a symbolic attempt to ward evil away from that person. Similarly, the partial reversal of the graph *jiang* in *Bingbian* 61.3/4 (see p. 38) may be an attempt to prevent the *huo* from descending. It is interesting that in this example only the element has been reversed, while the feet remain the same and are not reversed. This could simply be because the foot element already shows a partial symmetry.

**RIGHT:**

"Testing: Jia will not have disaster. At Yi."

**LEFT:**

"Testing: Jia perhaps will have disaster." (*Bingbian* 223.1/2)

This is another cut and dried case of *亡祸* / *有禍*. There is no reversal of graphs in this pair.

More difficult to explain are those examples in which the illocutionary force of the righthand inscription seems to be negative (as well as containing a negative particle), while that of the lefthand inscription is positive:
Recovery from sickness is clearly desirable, and the possibility of not recovering is marked by qi 其 to make it seem less real. Zhang Bingquan interpolates a qi 其 into the positive inscription, but this is probably wrong, as qi does not occur often in both members of a duizhen, for obvious reasons. The graphs shen 身 and chong 龍 are reversed. Cases like this, in which a sentence which is negative, both grammatically and illocutionarily, occurs on the right, while its positive counterpart occurs on the left, simply have to be accepted as exceptions to the general tendency. A clear-cut exception like this helps to prevent us from feeling that we have to, or indeed can, force a positive meaning onto ambiguous examples.

From the point of view of divinatory modality, two types of inscription may be identified:

1. Those seeking information (e.g. 'Will it rain?').
2. Those seeking guidance (e.g. 'Should we attack the Bafang?').

Both of these types exhibit the 正在左，勿在右 phenomenon, but must be explained differently. Those seeking guidance are marked by the prescriptive negative wu 切 (the positive form may be marked by hui 由，
but not necessarily, though of course if the negative form is *wu* *wei* then the positive form is almost nearly always *hui*. In these cases we have to be able to read the minds of the Shang, to know what they were wishing for. In the example *Bingbian* 96.20/21, it is safe to assume that the Shang king did not want illness. This is an inscription seeking information (i.e. as regards recovery). However, in an inscription seeking guidance, it is much more difficult to decide:

**RIGHT:**

"*Xinsi*-day cracking, Que testing: should not summon Qiao to attack the Jun(?)".

**LEFT:**

"*Xinsi*-day cracking, Que testing: summon Qiao to attack the Jun."

(Bingbian 119.5/6)

According to the right/left hypothesis, this should mean that the Shang did not want to summon Qiao to attack the Jun. This is a rather bold and arbitrary assumption. In order to see whether it is justified or not, we must examine the rest of the inscriptions on this plastron:

**RIGHT**

1. "*Xinsi*-day cracking, Que testing: summon Qiao to smite Sang."

2. "*Xinsi*-day cracking, Que testing: summon Qiao to smite Gu."
Apart from no. 8, all these divinations took place on the same day, xinsi (18th), and are to do with Qiao's military exploits. No. 8 is dated yiwei (32nd), and is all about an activity performed by 'boar-netters', or perhaps, considering the logographic nature of Chinese, this should simply be translated as 'capturers'. Unfortunately the xiphiplastron is missing. The graphs \( \frac{1}{3} \) 鬚 are just visible at the start of no. 7, so this inscription was quite likely connected with the other xinsi-day divinations, and there was probably a parallel inscription on the left side of the xiphiplastron, which would have been the 'real' no. 8. What Zhang Bingquan numbers 8 should really be no. 9, and probably had a corresponding no. 10 facing it, but the surface of that part of the plastron is severely damaged and no writing can be made out.
The first pair of inscriptions (119.1/2) does not present an antithetical pair, but a contrast in the objects of Qiao's proposed smiting, i.e. should he be summoned to smite Sang or Gu. According to Keightley, "The inscriptions give some indication that when a pair of charges was cracked, the right side of the shell was cracked before the left." We can tell this because it is the inscriptions on the left that are most subject to ellipsis (especially simplification of the preface). It seems likely then that the inscription first carved, the one on the right, represents what was uppermost in the mind of the Shang. From which one may deduce that they were keenest on having Sang smitten, and Gu was second choice, although the absence of qi from both inscriptions shows that their feelings were not particularly strong in this matter.

In 119.3/4, the prospect of Qiao's failure to defeat Xuan and Wo (two tribes often mentioned in the bones) is probably undesirable, so the placing of the positive inscription on the right here and the negative on the left is in perfect conformity with the usual practice. Qiao here is clearly very busy. According to Zhang Bingquan's commentary, "大概這時翟正與亖,我交戰, 行將獲勝, 而殷王要想令其乘勝討伐桑, 亖, 周等".

That Qiao may already have been engaged in battle with the Xuan and Wo is indicated by the use of the verb de 'get', i.e. the battle was already raging, and the Shang wished to know if it would end in the capture of these enemy chieftains. With so much military activity going on, it may be that the Shang considered it unadvisable to attack Jun as well, but thought they would divine about the matter seeing as how the Jun were in the vicinity of the present campaign. All of the inscriptions on this plastron carry the crack notation '2', so this must be part of a tao 'set'. Unfortunately the others in this set have not been found. They
would undoubtedly have thrown further light on this interpretation. There are no inscriptions on the back of this plastron either, so altogether the context is extremely limited.

In common with certain other races, the weather was a favourite topic with the Shang, and there are many inscriptions concerning rain. Now rain is a thing whose advent is sometimes welcome, and sometimes not. Chow Kwok-ching has discussed this concerning the use of the phrase gou yu 遇雨 versus you yu 有雨: "Depending on the particular situation, rain may be something either desirable or undesirable, i.e., the intended effect of an action or an unwelcome possibility."72 Chow concluded that gou yu 遇雨 'encounter rain' was undesirable, while you yu 有雨 'get rain' was desirable (and usually the result of a rain seeking ceremony). When rain was not sought after, you 有 (and its negative counterpart wang 亡) rarely occur, which suggests that the absence of 有/亡 also indicates that the rain was undesirable. Rain was especially undesirable during an important sacrifice or ceremony. In the Book of Rites, "Zeng Zi wen 曾子問", Confucius gives four reasons for the cancellation of the rites of audience when the princes have come to appear before the Son of Heaven:

大廟火,日食,后之喪,雨霤服失容,則廢。

"The grand ancestral temple taking fire; an eclipse of the sun; funeral rites of the queen; their robes all unsightly through soaking rain."73

Clearly it would not do to attend such an event looking all bedraggled.

Let us now examine a rain inscription:
RIGHT: 己卯卜，殹貞:不其雨。

"Jimao-day cracking, Que testing: it will not perhaps rain."

LEFT: 己卯卜，殹貞: 雨。王固其雨。壬午允雨。

"Jimao-day cracking, Que testing: rain.
The king read the cracks: the raining will be on a ren-day.
On renwu-day it did indeed rain." (Bingbian 235.1/2)

The absence of you 有 combined with the right hand placement of the negative inscription should mean that the Shang did not want rain on this occasion, since you 有 implies that they 'got' rain as the result of a rain-seeking ceremony. However, the presence of the particle qi 其 completely contradicts this. The prognostication also suggests rather strongly that rain was desired. As an opposite argument, it is also worth bearing in mind the fact that the king is a predictor of both good and ill fortune, although naturally, in most cases, the king predicts good fortune, in an effort to secure favours for his people. Let us now contrast this with another rain inscription:

RIGHT: 父午卜，殹貞:今日其雨。

"Guisi-day cracking, Que testing: today perhaps it will rain."

LEFT: 父午卜，殹貞: 今日不雨。允不。

"Guisi-day cracking, Que testing: today it will not rain.
Indeed it did not." (Bingbian 263.9/10)
It is quite clear from these inscriptions that rain was not desired. We can tell this from the presence of \( qi \) in the positive member, which makes the possibility of rain seem remote, and the resounding affirmation after the negative member that "indeed it did not" rain. The placement of these two inscriptions with respect to left and right must have been prompted by grammar, not by illocutionary force.
CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have discussed some of the counter-examples to the usual tendency that, out of two alternatives, the desirable will occur on the right side of the plastron while the undesirable will occur on the left side. There are of course many more examples to be found elsewhere. Although this corpus is small, it provides a good cross-section of the types of exceptions that occur, and I believe certain conclusions can be drawn from them.

1. The fact that there are very clear exceptions that cannot be explained away, shows that the Shang probably did not consciously strive to put the positive inscription on the right and the negative on the left. From the fact that prefaces are usually omitted on the left, and that later Chinese writing goes in columns from right to left, we may assume that the first member of a duizhen would be inscribed on the right. It is only natural psychology that the positively phrased proposition should come to mind first, and then the negatively phrased counterpart. When the concept itself was negative (e.g. huo and other disaster words), then confusion sometimes arose, so that the negatively phrased proposition was placed on the right (e.g. wang huo and ) and the positively phrased one on the left (e.g. you huo ). However, on the whole, disaster graphs also follow the general trend.

2. As the placing of positively and negatively phrased propositions with respect to the right and left side of the plastron is sometimes confused, there is always some doubt as to what the Shang actually wanted in a certain divination. By appealing to the whole plastron, including the back, we can gain some guidance in resolving such problems. Determining
what the Shang felt was or was not desirable can sometimes help in the interpretation of unexplained or problematical graphs, as it can tell us whether we should be looking for a 'good' meaning or a 'bad' meaning.

Having denied that there was any conscious striving on the part of the Shang to place positive inscriptions on the right and negative inscriptions on the left, we are reduced to regarding the left/right opposition as purely one of symmetry. However, not all divinations occur in antithetical pairs. The types of exceptions are:

1. Both inscriptions are positive.
2. Both inscriptions are negative.
3. There is some other contrast (e.g. number of animals to be sacrificed).
4. An inscription on one side has no corresponding inscription on the other side.  

Thus we can see that, although symmetry was the general rule, it was by no means a hard and fast rule. The fact that there are exceptions to the general symmetry makes it easier to accept the fact that there are exceptions to the general left/right trend.

The superficial symmetry of the oracle bone inscriptions is thus an artistic by-product of the Shang divinatory ritual. Although it has no magical significance in itself, it reflects the way in which the Shang diviners attempted to influence the outcome of their divinations through the use of antithetical charges, one of which was 'loaded' (like a dice) by the use of the particle *qi*  

_which made it sound more remote and less likely to happen. The Shang culture has bequeathed to us many artifacts of great beauty and craftsmanship, so it is not surprising that_
the duizhen formula, combined with the natural symmetry of the plastrons, should have inspired the inscribers to pour their artistic talent into the calligraphy of the inscriptions that recorded their dealings with the divine world.
CHAPTER TWO

CHENGTAO 成套

INTRODUCTION

Chengtao is the largest type of context found in OBI. This is the phenomenon of the occurrence of sets of plastrons, the subject matter of whose inscriptions, and often even the wording itself, are largely identical. This phenomenon was first noted by Zhang Bingquan in his article "Bugui fujia de xushu 卜龜腹甲的序數" (1956). He later expanded on this subject in an article entitled "Lun chengtao buci 論成套卜辭" (1960). He made the discovery during his compilation of Bingbian, in which there are a number of instances of chengtao. It appears that the maximum number of plastrons in a 'set' is five. It may well be that a set always consisted of five plastrons, but there are many cases in which not all five have been discovered. It is possible that the Shang regarded 'five' as a natural unit, as they created a special graph for it (OBI form: 仧), which breaks away from the simple line system (————), and probably arises from counting on one's fingers. It is also a traditional Chinese unit for troops, as is reflected by the term wu 伍, originally meaning 'a group of five men'. This usage is found as early as the Zuozhuan. The position of a chengtao plastron within its set may be easily discerned from the crack numbering. Thus all the cracks on the first plastron will be numbered 'one', and all the cracks on the second plastron will be numbered 'two', and so forth. This is quite different from plastrons which are not in a set, each of whose inscriptions may be related to up to ten cracks that are numbered successively.
As I have just mentioned, the wording of the inscriptions on each plastron in a set is often identical, or else there may be minor variations. Usually the same inscription will also be in the same position on each plastron. Sometimes, one or two of the plastrons will have an additional inscription not found on any of the others in the set, such as a tribute notation. Although the reasons for *chengtai* are unknown, the surprisingly small amount of ellipsis suggests that five faithful copies were required. Unfortunately, very few complete sets have been discovered; most are fragmentary.

Zhang quotes as evidence for this tradition from the classics the following passage from *Zhouli*, "Chunguan zongbo.xia":

> 龜人掌六龜之屬...各以其物,入于龜室...若有祭事,則奉龜以往。^2^  

This seems to be a slight distortion of the text, which reads in whole:

> 龜人。掌六龜之屬。各有名物。天龜曰靈屬。地龜曰繡屬。東龜曰翠屬。西龜曰奮屬。南龜曰獵屬。北龜曰若屬。各以其方之色與其體辯之。凡取龜用秋時。攻龜用春時。各以其物。入于龜室。上春鬬龜。祭祀先卜。若有祭事。則奉龜以往。

"Préposé aux tortues (kouéï-jîn). Il s'occupe des six tortues et de leurs variétés. Chaque espèce a son nom spécial. La tortue céleste est de l'espèce Ling. La tortue terrestre est de l'espèce I. La tortue d'orient est de l'espèce Ko. La tortue d'occident est de l'espèce Louï. La tortue du midi est de l'espèce Lie. La tortue du nord est de l'espèce Jou. Il distingue chaque espèce, d'après la couleur du terrain où l'animal se trouve, et d'après la forme de son corps. En général, il reçoit les tortues dans la saison d'automne. Il travaille les tortues dans la saison du printemps. Chaque tortue, d'après son espèce, entre dans la maison des tortues. Au commencement du printemps, il enduit de sang l'écaille de la tortue; il sacrifie au premier des augures."
What this passage is actually talking about is the six types of tortoise, and does not mention anything about repeating the same divination on six shells. Zhang also quotes a passage from the *Book of Documents*, "Jin teng": 乃卜三龘: "Then he divined with the three tortoises."\(^4\) The text continues: 一習吉:"(with one and the same repetition=) all in the same way were auspicious."\(^5\) This sounds very much as if the same subject was divined on three different shells, and obeys the injunction in the *Book of Rites* that "Divination by the shell or the stalks should not go beyond three times" (卜筮 不過 三)\(^6\). This does not actually tally with the sets of five found in the bones, but may be a legacy of this tradition. Considering the number of bones that have no writing on them, it is certainly curious that in some cases exactly the same thing should be carved on several bones.

I shall now examine the various *chengtao* sets that occur in *Bingbian*. Due to the repetition, I shall give a modern transcription and translation into English for the first member of each set only, unless there is a major variation in the text.

The purpose of this examination is simply to interpret the inscriptions, and discuss the differences between the members of a set. After this, I shall give a concluding discussion on the nature and significance of *chengtao*.
12.1. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: This autumn the king should follow Wang Cheng in attacking the Xia Wei, for he will receive abundant assistance."

2. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: This autumn the king should not follow Wang Cheng in attacking the Xia Wei, for he will not perhaps receive abundant assistance."

3. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: The king should follow Zhi Jia."

4. "Testing: The king should not follow Zhi Jia."

5. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

6. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: It should not be [Zhi] Jia that the king follows."
7. "Testing: Offer dog to Fu Geng, split open sheep."

8. "Testing: If the priest brings these, the sick teeth will definitely improve."

9. "The sick teeth will improve."

10. "They will not perhaps improve."

14.
16.1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

18.1. 
2. 
3. 
4. [令王勿从夏]三 
5. 
6. [辛丙卜,毁:王勿从夏]三 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. [不其-event]三
20.1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

13.1. 住父庚。  
"It is Fu Jia."  
2. [父庚] 住父庚。  
"It is not Fu Jia."  
3. [父庚] 住父庚。  
"It is Fu Geng."  
4. [父庚] 住父庚。  
"It is not Fu Geng."
13.5. [方木平]
佳父亲。
"It is Fu Xin."

6. [木方平]
不佳父亲。
"It is not Fu Xin."

7. [方方]
佳父乙。
"It is Fu Yi."

8. [木木方]
不佳父乙。
"It is not Fu Yi."

9. 上飞入二。在油
"You Fei contributed two. At X."

15.1. 方木十
2. [方方方]
3. [木方木]
4. [木木木]
5. [方方方]
6. [方方方]
7. [木木木]
8. [木木木]
"If it is a wu-day that there is thunder, it is not auspicious."

"The king read the cracks and said: There will not perhaps be thunder."
"The king read the cracks and said: On dingchou-day if there is thunder, it is not auspicious. If it is a jia-day that there is thunder, it is auspicious. If it is a xin-day that there is thunder, it is also not auspicious."

"You Fei contributed two. At X."

This set is one of the few complete sets so far identified. The inscriptions on the front of each plastron repeat each other almost perfectly, with only the occasional omission of the cyclical date and the diviner's name. The same inscription is always in the same place on each shell in the set, so that they look almost as if they were photocopied. However, on the reverse of two of them (17, 19) there is an additional inscription, which is a prognostication (there is no verification) concerning
the auspiciousness of thunder. If the thunder came on certain days it was
auspicious, and if it came on certain other days it was inauspicious. These
inscriptions are written in a large, bold calligraphy in the mode which
Keightley terms 'display inscriptions'. He defines the essential
characteristics of a display inscription as:

1. bold, large calligraphy
2. the prognostication and verification written as a single,
   continuous unit, and usually placed immediately next to the charge
3. the verification, frequently detailed, confirms the accuracy
   of the prognostication

Actually, Keightley is hesitant to classify the above inscriptions as
display inscriptions, since there is no charge or verification. However,
their large, bold calligraphy is exactly like that used in display inscrip-
tions, and there are examples (Bingbian 207.3 and 208.2) of other
inscriptions concerning which meet all of Keightley's criteria for
display inscriptions.

The most curious thing about 17.9/10 and 19.9 is that they seem to
bear absolutely no relationship to any of the inscriptions on the front of
the plastron. Nor do they appear to be related to the other inscriptions
on the back. They only occur on two shells in the set, and they do not
duplicate each other in the way that chengtao inscriptions do. They seem
to be quite extraneous to the set. Keightley suggests that the was
a response from the spirits of the ancestors expected by the Shang in
answer to their inquiries about the king's toothache, which was delaying
his campaign plans. This would be taken as a sign, whose inter-
pretation as a good or bad omen depended on the day on which it occurred.
If that is so, then it means that the turtle, as an oracle, was not always
sufficient in itself -- some other sign was desired.
On the third plastron (17) the king predicted that the occurrence of thunder was unlikely. On the fourth plastron (19) he then goes on to predict on which days, if it does occur, it will be auspicious or otherwise. This seems very strange. The negative fu has been supplied in 17.10 by Zhang Bingquan, as the part of the plastron where it might have occurred is missing. However, there is no basis for it. It is more likely that a cyclical date should be supplied, or perhaps even that the space should be left blank. The Shang were clearly expecting thunder on some day, otherwise one wonders why they were trying to guess on which day it would occur.

It is commonly assumed that the prognostication and verification of a divination will occur on the back of the plastron, directly behind the divination on the front with which it is associated. If this holds good, then these thunder inscriptions should be associated with 16.1/2 and 18.1/2, which are about receiving "abundant assistance" from the ancestors if the king follows Wang Cheng in attacking the Xia Wei. The size of the calligraphy, fullness of the text (no ellipsis), and position of these inscriptions at the top of the plastron, clearly mean that this issue was a very important one, the most important on the whole plastron. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that the anticipated thunder was seen as a divine omen to confirm whether 'abundant assistance' would be given or not.

Further down the plastron (inscriptions 3 and 4 on the front of each plastron) we find the possibility being divined that the king should follow Zhi Jia (presumably instead of Wang Cheng). It is phrased very elliptically compared with the first and second inscriptions. However, the turtle must have given a favourable or perhaps ambiguous response to this, as this possibility is then divined again, but with added emphasis, using the
auxiliary verb hui, the negative counterpart of which is wu wei, as opposed to the simple negative wu in the fourth inscription. The construction also causes the main verb and its object to be inverted (wei itself is negated by bu wei, as can be seen from the back of this set -- this is not an emphatic construction).

The ellipsis in the fourth inscription also sheds light on the true nature of the construction in the second inscription. Some scholars have interpreted the double negative construction as equivalent to a positive, thus:

"... This autumn, if the king does not follow Wang Cheng to attack the Xia Wei, he will not receive abundant assistance."

However, this gives it the same illocutionary force as the first inscription (i.e. 'go ahead and attack the Xia Wei!'), thus destroying the antithesis of the duizhen. The fourth sentence is clearly an elliptical form based on the second, but it cannot be translated "... If the king does not follow Zhi Jia", as there is no apodosis. It can only mean: "The king should not follow Zhi Jia", and therefore the second sentence must mean: "This spring the king should not follow Wang Cheng to attack the Xia Wei, as he will not perhaps receive abundant assistance".

Because the members of a tao are meant to be duplicates of each other, we can learn from them the amount of variation acceptable in the writing of graphs. In this particular set we have such variations as:

西: 西, 西。
殷: 殷, 殷, 殷。
受: 受, 受, 受。
The Shang script was still very close to its pictographic origins, and so naturally there are variations according to the inscriber's conception of the objects they represent, e.g. the differing number of teeth in the graph for \( \text{chi} \).  

Also there appears to be no strict set of rules for character reversal on opposite sides of the plastron. For example, in 12.1/2 and 14.1/2 \( \text{fa} \) is reversed, but not in 18.1/2 and 20.1/2 (in 16.2 the graph is obliterated, so its orientation cannot be known). In some inscriptions, even the graph \( \text{bu} \) and the name of the diviner are also reversed. Sometimes the reversal is only partial, e.g. 12.1 versus 12.2, in which only the lower portion (the legs) is reversed, while the upper portion (the eye) remains the same. Thus, although the content and positioning of the inscriptions on each plastron in the tao is copied quite faithfully, the orientation and exact calligraphic form of the graphs are quite capricious. The flexible orientation of graphs may be partly ascribed to a deliberate striving for a mirror image, and partly to the phenomenon that Gelb describes as being common among children and primitive literate societies. One graph that is never reversed is \( \text{you} \), which is a simplified representation of the right hand. The reason is simply that if it were reversed it would get confused with \( \text{zuo} \), the left hand. These two words have the quite opposite meanings of 'help' and 'hinder' respectively.
One curious feature in 18.2 is that you is written quite capriciously in the more complex form, from which I deduce that the copier was getting bored. However, thanks to a whim of the copier, we are provided with the useful information that is an abbreviated form for when it is used as a cyclical character.

Dong Zuobin ascribes the form to part of the graphic evolution that took place over the five periods into which the oracle bones have been divided by Dong Zuobin. However, as we have both the forms and on the same plastron here, they were clearly contemporaneous. One may list other examples where a graph that is frequently used in an extended meaning or just for its sound, develops a simplified form in that usage, thus becoming graphically distinct from the mother graph. The best known example is the graph, a pictograph of a sacrificial vessel, which is usually written when it means 'to divine', although even in this usage the form still occurs sometimes. The graph occurs in practically every inscription, so it is not surprising that a simplified form developed.

Set Two

1. "Wuyin-day cracking, Que testing: Zhi Jia perhaps will come.

2. "Testing: Zhi Jia will not perhaps come."
Wuyin-day cracking, Que testing: Dian Feng perhaps will come.

"Dian Feng will not perhaps come." (Xucun 388, front)²⁰

Reverse

"The king read the cracks and said: Jia will perhaps sally forth.²¹

It should be a geng-day. Perhaps he will be first.

Jia arrived."
"The king read the cracks and said: (The day on which) Feng will sally forth will perhaps be a ding-day; if he does not sally forth on the ding-day, he is perhaps suffering from illness."

(Xucun 388, back)

29.1. 大国曰: "王曰: "王曰: "The king read the cracks and said: (The day on which) Feng will sally forth should be a ding-day; if (he) does not sally forth on the ding-day, he is perhaps suffering from illness (and) might not (be able to) recover (from it)."

25.1. 大国曰: "王曰: "The king read the cracks and said: (The day on which) Feng will sally forth should be a ding-day; if (he) does not sally forth on the ding-day, he is perhaps suffering from illness (and) might not (be able to) recover (from it)."

Here we have the second, third, and fourth members in a set. The name of the general Zhi Jia  is always abbreviated as Jia . As  is common as a place name in the bones , the name Zhi Jia may be analysed as 'the person called Jia who comes from Zhi', or, to give it a Germanic ring, 'Jia von Zhi'. There are many other names like this in OBI, such as Xuan Huo  or 'Huo von Xuan'. Dian Feng  ( = 電風 ), on the other hand, is sometimes abbreviated as Dian  and sometimes as Feng  . Dian does not occur as a place name in OBI . Considering the close semantic connection between 'lightning' and 'wind',
both being meteorological phenomena, it seems likely that they are being used in their full meaning here. The name Dian Feng can thus be considered a nom de guerre, which was given for reasons upon which one can only speculate. There are other examples of such names in OBI.26

Another contrast is that between qi wei ding (Xucun 388 back. 2, Bingbian 31.2) and hui ding 由丁 (Bingbian 29.2). 由 is much stronger and more emphatic than 其住址. For the day of Zhi Jia's sallying forth, 由 is consistently used, but for the day of Dian Feng's sallying forth, 由 is used only once, while 其住址 is used twice. Unfortunately two of the plastrons in this set are missing, so we do not know if they used 由 or 其住址. The lesser degree of certainty implied by the use of 其住址 must be connected with the statement of Dian Feng's possible illness. In 28.4, the statement that "Dian will not perhaps come" carries the crack notation = 告. Up till now, western scholars have transcribed this as shang ji 上吉 'highly auspicious', but many Chinese scholars have for a long time regarded it as er gao 二告 'two reports', i.e. two responses from the turtle towards a particular divination. Whatever the truth of the matter, this crack notation is probably the basis for the greater degree of certainty expressed in the prognostication concerning this general in 29.2.

The divinations on the front of these plastrons are all about whether Zhi Jia and Dian Feng will or will not lai 来 'come', while the prognostications and verifications on the back talk about chu 出 'sallying forth'. The verification about Jia says that he zhi 至 'arrived'. The exact significance of all these verbs of motion requires more research, but it at least seems likely that the context is a military one.

The layout of the inscriptions on the front of this set is
particularly interesting, as it exhibits so well the symmetry the Shang inscribers were striving for. The two duizhen face each other diagonally across the shell thus:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{3} \\
\text{4}
\end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{1} \\
\text{2}
\end{array} \]

This cross-wise symmetry led to the placing of the positive inscription no. 3 on the left, and the negative inscription no. 4 on the right. So it seems that symmetry was more important than the right-positive/left-negative tendency. A further piece of symmetry is introduced by writing 2 and 4 in the opposite direction to 1 and 3, as I have indicated by the arrows. In view of this complex symmetry, the Shang oracle bones might also be regarded to some extent as works of art. The quest for aesthetic balance comes through very clearly in cases like these.

An interesting graph reversal occurs in 31.1, where the graph for Jia \( \text{啇} \) is reversed within the same inscription. Such reversal usually only occurs between duizhen.

Set Three

34.1. 十月十鼓月太公不天卜，于謎入，入。
甲辰卜[殼]貞：王勿（衣）[入]于利。入。一
"Jiachen-day cracking, Que testing: The king should not enter into Li. He entered."

2. 十月十殼月太卜，
甲辰卜，殼貞：王入。一
"Jiachen-day cracking, Que testing: The king should enter."
3. "Testing: when the king has finished you and deng ceremonies, he should not treat-as-guest the following day."

4. "Jiachen-day cracking, Que testing: The king should treat-as-guest the following day."

5. "Yimao-day cracking, Que testing: The king should preside over the millet activity."

6. "Testing: The king should not preside over the millet activity."

35.1. [甲辰卜, 贊: 王勿衣入于利。入。二]
This is a complete set of five plastrons. There is no writing on the reverse. One thing that makes this set different from the previous sets I examined, is that there are two separate days of divination on it, to wit,
jiachen 甲辰  (41st) and yimao 乙卯  (52nd). They are thus a little over one xun 旬 apart. The jiachen divinations apparently fall into two topics: inscriptions 1/2 about ru yu li 入于利 , and 3/4 about bin yi 里翌日.

The question of how far one can relate the different inscriptions on a given plastron is one which I would like to reserve for my last chapter. However, in order to facilitate discussion of the present example, I must somewhat pre-empt that by stating my opinion that not only topics divined on the same day, but also those divined on different days, are likely to be thematically connected. My basis for this assumption is that, if a plastron is retrieved again some time after its initial use, then there must be some rationale behind this. The rationale, I assume, is that these affairs are in some way related.

Zhang Bingquan punctuates the first sentence on each plastron in this set thus: "...王勿衣入于利入." He does not underline li 里 , but presumably he understands it as a place name. It certainly seems analogous to the many 王入于商 'the king should enter into Shang' inscriptions, which must refer to whether or not the king should enter their cult centre, the holy city of Shang. 30

The graph which Zhang Bingquan transcribes as li 里 is here written 里 , which is somewhat different from the usual form 里 , etc. In fact, Shima classifies it under 里 (S.360.4), which from the context is clearly an agricultural activity, perhaps reaping (the graph consists of a sickle cutting through a cereal plant) 32. It is possible that the place Li 里 was associated with this activity. It seems possible that there may be a relationship between 1/2 and 5/6, i.e. the king's entering into Li may have set the scene for the activity called li shu 立 , which is generally understood as meaning '(stand over=) supervise
the shu-millet (harvest?).

According to Zhang Bingquan's punctuation, the first sentence could be translated as:

"... The king should not yi-sacrifice (and) enter, (but) to Li enter."

Zhang interprets yi 稲 as a heji 合祭 'joint sacrifice', i.e. a combined sacrifice to more than one ancestor. However, it is difficult to make sense of his punctuation. It is probably better to punctuate as I have done after Li, regarding the last ru 入 as a verification. Zhang's interpretation is unsatisfactory because it presents a choice within the same inscription, which would make the duizhen unnecessary, and violates the general nature of OBI. For each inscription is a proposition seeking confirmation, and it is extremely unlikely that there is such a thing in OBI as an inscription that presents a genuine choice (although there is the problem of the final bu (fou) 不 inscriptions). One hypothesis that might be considered to account for this, is that the turtle could not say 'yes' or 'no'. It only had one response, which was interpreted as degrees of certainty (xiaoji 小吉 'small certainty', shangji 上吉 'greater certainty', hongji 弘吉 'great certainty'). This would help to explain why one never sees buji 不吉 'not certain' as a crack notation, or why one sees bu wu gui 卜不悟龜 'it does not go against (the will of) the turtle', but never wu gui 卜悟龜. It was positive thinking on the part of the Shang, that they only ascribed positive responses to the turtle, and no negative ones.

I would now like to turn to some of the graphic variations that occur among the plastrons in this set.
As with \textit{chi} and \textit{you} in the first set I examined (see pp.49-50), the inscriber must still have been fully aware of the pictographic origins of \textit{yu} 'feather' and \textit{yi} 'upper garment' in order to permit himself these free variations.

In \textit{Sōrui}, \textit{} is transcribed as \textit{衣} (S.257.4) and is separated from \textit{} (\textit{等} etc.), which is transcribed as \textit{卒} (S.259.1). Here we have both forms used in the same context: \textit{勿衣卒} \textit{VERB}. This suggests that the inscriber regarded them simply as variations of the same graph. However, according to the examples in \textit{Sōrui}, these two graphs are usually kept strictly apart in their usage. The more complex graph occurs almost exclusively in the \textit{勿卒 VERB} construction, while the simpler graph occurs mainly as a place name and as a sacrifice\textsuperscript{37}. The two exceptions here, 36.4 and 38.4, have the graph written as \textit{和} and \textit{}, respectively, and the text in both cases reads: \textit{王衣室羽日}. These also happen to be two of the three cases in which \textit{bin} \textit{室} (= \textit{賀}) is written \textit{室}, with a woman instead of a man inside, (the \textit{bin} of 36.4 is not very clear on the rubbing, so I am relying here on Zhang's transcription).

In view of the strong evidence for maintaining a distinction between \textit{yi} and \textit{卒}, it seems better to regard the form \textit{} here as incomplete, i.e. it has strokes missing. There are many examples of incomplete graphs in \textit{OBI}, sometimes even to the extent of making one graph look like another. A good example may be seen in another set in \textit{Bingbian}:
The graph which looks like xu 我 in 73.6 should clearly be wo 我 , but three horizontal strokes have been left out. The fact that in the corresponding inscriptions 34.4, 35.4, and 37.4, the graph 我 卒 is omitted, suggests that it was not essential, and therefore more likely to be an auxiliary verb or adverb rather than a full verb. If we interpret it as yi 衣 , then it could mean 'enrobed', but then, why does it not occur in both members of the duizhen? Li Xiaoding suggests that it is being used for cu 糊 'hastily', but this word seems to me to have too high a semantic content to be so readily omissable. In the present set of inscriptions, we find that 卒 is used either in the positive or negative member of a duizhen, but not both.

34/36/37/38.1. 甲辰卜，殷贞: 王勿卒入于利。入。
34/35/36/37.2. 甲辰卜，殷贞: 王入。
34/35/36/37/38.3. 贞: 王咸酗登，勿寔翌日。
36/38.4. 贞: 王卒寔翌日。

It seems probable then that, rather than being a sacrificial verb or a full word of some kind, it contributes to the modality of the sentence in some way, although exactly how is difficult to determine. It may simply emphasize the obligation to do or not to do something. I therefore feel more inclined to interpret this graph, not as cu 糊 , but simply as
zu 卒, which in classical Chinese is used as an adverb meaning 'in the end, after all'. If that is the case, then the significance of recording the positive verification ru 而 'he entered' after the negative proposition that 'the king should not enter' in the first inscription, is that this action was carried out despite the fact that it was not felt to be advisable. There are other examples of such short verifications directly following a charge with no intervening prognostication.

Turning now to the graph identified as bin 寶, we find two interesting variants:  and 1. One contains , which represents a kneeling person of either sex, and the other contains , which represents a kneeling woman. This variation could mean that both men and women could perform the bin ceremony. The performer of bin here is clearly the king (whom I assume was male), and the use of  or  is mixed up quite at random. From this we can deduce that the variant with  was not a form of the character 寶 used specifically when the performer of the ceremony was a woman. The variant arose from the fact that, in general, this ceremony could be performed by a man or a woman. This is important, because it tells us that the Chinese script at this time was already logographic: the graph  or  was not seen as representing a man or a woman performing the bin ceremony (otherwise how could the form  be used for the king?), but as representing the word bin.

Lastly, I would like to examine what appears to be a major discrepancy between these plastrons, which is the addition of the graph  (i.e. Shang Jia 上甲) at the end of 36.3. This is the only inscription in the whole set in which this occurs. It does not even occur in the duizhen to 36.3. The word order is also strange. The expression ' 資 Ancestor 日 (i.e. treat as guest such-and-such an ancestor's sun/day) is common in OBI, but here we have 資翌日上甲 'treat as guest the next day Shang
Jia'. Also the day of the ceremony should correspond to the cyclical character in the ancestor's posthumous title. As the date of this divination is jiachen, the next day would not be a jia day. So the graph here would seem to be a mistake.

One way of getting round this problem is to interpret the phrase yiri 翌日 as the name of a sacrifice, although the wing and sun elements are normally written together as one graph in this usage. This is one of the sacrifices that by Period V became one of the standard wusi 五祀 'five sacrifices'. In Period V examples, the wing and sun elements do not always seem to be written as a single graph, e.g.

"Guiyou-day cracking and testing: The king in the next ten days will not have misfortune. In the seventh month. On jiaxu-day perform yi-sacrifice to Shang Jia." (Xubian 1.4.3, ap. S.513.1)

"Guichou-day cracking and testing: The king in the next ten days will not have misfortune. In (the Xth month). On jiayin-day perform you-sacrifice and yi-sacrifice to Shang Jia."

(Xucun 2.966, ap. S.513.1)

If the present inscription can be interpreted as 'perform bin-sacrifice and yi-sacrifice to Shang Jia', then this avoids the problem of the sacrifice to Shang Jia taking place on the following day, which was not a jia day, as we can posit that it was to take place on the day of the divination, which was a jia-day. However, this still does not explain
why the all-important name of Shang Jia, if he was indeed the recipient of these sacrifices, occurs in only one inscription in the entire set.

Set Four

71.1. Bingchen-day cracking, Que testing: God will perhaps end this city.

2. Testing: God will not end this city.

3. Testing: God will perhaps end this city.

4. Testing: God will not end this city.

5. Next gengshen-day, tie up (a dog?) to Huang's mate.

6. Testing: If we dance, it will rain.
"Qiao contributed 150."

Only the second and fourth plastrons in this set remain, and the main subject of divination is whether or not God will put an end to 'this city'.

Considering the magical nature of Shang divination, with its complex symmetry, reversal of graphs, positive and negative oppositions etc., one might be forgiven for wondering if the purpose of chengtao were also magical, i.e. to increase the likelihood of what they wanted to happen happening. Yet here we find that the record of tribute also appears to be duplicated. As this is simply a straight-forward record, obviously there is no question of trying to influence the future. In the first set I examined (Bingbian 12-21), all five plastrons are present, and yet the tribute record 'You Fei contributed two; at X' occurs on only two of them (13.9 and 21.9, see p. 44 and p. 46). It
therefore seems quite likely that, as two is the quantity that You Fei contributed, Bingbian 13 and 21 are in fact his shells. It makes good sense that the record of tribute would be inscribed on the tribute itself. The other shells, without any tribute record, were probably from turtles raised by the Shang themselves. They cannot have relied entirely on tribute for these shells which were so important to the functioning of their society. The record of tribute must have been inscribed at the time the contribution was made. That the record was inscribed on all the plastrons so contributed also explains why there are so many unrelated plastrons bearing the record 雀入二百五十 'Qiao contributed 250' — there must have been 250 shells bearing this inscription. The contribution of turtle shells was clearly an act of great merit, rather like accumulating karma through good deeds, and thus it was important that the contributed shells be marked with the contributor's name and the quantity of the tribute (to repeat the Buddhist analogy, like the pillars in the balustrades around Buddhist temples, recording the names of those who have donated to the building of the temple). The fact that a tribute record may be repeated in a chengtiao set is thus pure coincidence, and has no bearing on the nature of chengtiao.

As for the alternation between 71.6 .Trim and 73.6 .Trim, I have already discussed this on page 61.

Set Five

76.1. 鬱血明四世定化受又。二
"Dingwei-day cracking, Zheng testing: Cha Dinghua will receive assistance."
76.2. "Dingwei-day cracking, Zheng testing: Cha Dinghua will not perhaps receive assistance."

3. "Testing: The Fang will perhaps beat our envoys."


5. "Testing: Our envoys will perhaps beat the Fang." highly auspicious

6. "Our envoys will not perhaps beat the Fang."

7. "Testing: Xuan will not have disaster."

8. "Xuan will perhaps have disaster."

9. "The Many Yin who went west, will bring to the king captives."
"Testing: Cha Dinghua will not have disaster."

"Perhaps he will have disaster."

"Testing: Our envoys will not perhaps have attack."

"Testing: Our envoys will have attack."

"The Many Yin who went west, perhaps will bring captives."
78.12. [往西多紇弗其氏伐。三]

"The Many Yin who went west, will not perhaps bring captives."

13. 会外矢大田三

令尹作大田。三

"Order the yin-officers to do big hunting."

14. 会外矢大田三

勿令尹作大田。三

"Should not order the yin-officers to do big hunting."

Reverse

77.1. 大国曰: 未兹伐

王(国)曰: 隹戍伐。

"The king read the cracks and said: It will be a wu-day that we beat them."

2. 大国曰: 亦八世自良日伐

王曰: 吉! 隹其亡工言。由其德。五九。

"The king read the cracks and said: Auspicious! It will be perhaps that they do not attack Yan. He should perhaps intimidate them."

79.1. 大国曰: 隗王曰。六九

王曰: 隹勾六九言。由徒。不徒。六一。

"The king read the cracks and said: It will be that they harm Yan. He should march.

He did not march."
Here we have the second and third plastrons in a set. I have assumed so far that the members of a set were all copied from an original, and that the actual divination was all performed at the same time (except where different dates appear on the plastron) by the same person. However, according to the two remaining plastrons in this set, 76.1/2 was divined by Zheng 郞, while the duplicate pair of inscriptions 78.1/2 was divined by Que 齊 62 (the preface to 78.1 is missing 63, but we may assume, as Zhang Bingquan does, that the diviner was the same as for 78.2, as there do not seem to be any examples of diviners swapping over in mid-duizhen 64. Both divinations are dated dingwei, so they were at least divined on the same day. For the diviner to change like this, suggests that the actual divination must have been performed five times over, although it is difficult to say what the action of zhen 真 actually consisted of. Obviously the bu 鈈 - cracking had to be done to each shell separately, and it seems that the same thing went for the zhen. The alternation of divination between Que and Zheng is seen quite frequently on other plastrons, but not usually within a duizhen.

There are many other discrepancies between these two plastrons, which make them far from perfect copies of each other. For example, the inscriptions 78.13/14 do not appear on 76, but this is probably due to the fact that the lower portion of 76 is missing, and this is exactly where they should have occurred. They may well have been there on the complete plastron. Another oddity is that 76.10/11 carry a crack number, but no inscription. Their position corresponds to 78.3/4, so we may assume that their content was the same. As for 78.12, which Zhang fills in himself on
the basis of the duizhen principle, this may also have occurred on the missing portion of 76.

The prognostications and verifications on the reverse are also quite different. 77.2 and 79.1 both concern Yan (perhaps the name of an envoy), but are worded differently. 77.2 is the prognostication for Zheng's divination, and 79.1 is the prognostication for Que's. This provides further proof that these plastrons were not divined simultaneously. If my interpretation is correct, then the two prognostications appear to be somewhat contradictory, for 77.2 says "Auspicious!", while 79.1 says "It will be that they harm Yan." However, the real contrast, as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me, is between the two different solutions that are proposed for Yan's problem. The prognostication in 77.2 offers the possibility that "Yan should perhaps intimidate [the Fang]", while 79.1 says that "Yan should march". The qi of 77.2 shows that "intimidation" was the less favoured of the two strategies, and that "marching" was preferable in view of the fact that, although there was to be no attack from the Fang, there was still the likelihood of hai (= 害 ) 'harm' befalling Yan and his envoys. However, in spite of this, Yan did not march, as the record informs us.

Set Six

1. "Jimao-day cracking, Que testing: If we dig a [deer?] pit, we will catch."
Apart from these two inscriptions, the rest of these plastraons is quite empty. Only the first and fifth plastraons in this set have been found. On many plastraons, the same divination is made several times over, and yet in this case it was felt necessary to use five different shells. Clearly there must be some rationale behind this. There is good evidence that the Shang sought through divination to influence the future, so the phenomenon of plastral quintuplication might be regarded as an attempt to influence the future five times as much. It is not uncommon in various types of divination to keep on divining until one gets the answer one wants. However, the fact that always the same number of shells was used (as far as we can gather), suggests that this practice had become ritualised. One would assume that this rite would be reserved for topics that the Shang felt to be particularly important. The catching of large game was obviously high on their list of priorities.
Set Seven

207.1. 丁亥卜, 殿貞: 羽庚寅侑于大庚。

"Dinghai-day cracking, Que testing: Next gengyin-day, offer to Da Geng."

2. 丙申卜, 殿貞: 羽辛卯侑于祖辛。

"Testing: Next xinmao-day, offer to Zu Xin."

3. "Bingshen-day cracking, Que testing: Coming yisi-day, you-sacrifice to Xia Yi.

The king read the cracks and said: You-sacrifice. There is a baleful influence. Perhaps there will be thunder.

On yisi-day we you-sacrificed. At dawn it rained. When we began the decapitation sacrifice, it fully rained. When we finished the decapitation sacrifice,

it continued to rain. We tuo- and liu sacrificed. There was birdsong.

4. 丙午卜, 殿貞: 來甲寅酌大甲。

"Bingwu-day cracking, Zheng testing: Coming jiayin-day, you-sacrifice to Da Jia."
207.5. 巳见田一

偄于上甲。一

"Offer to Shang Jia."

209.1. 田甲及出干[庚]=

2. 甲午[卯]出[于祖辛]=

3. "Bingwu-day cracking, Que testing: The king heard voices. It means disaster."

4. [偄]天田 [=]

5. =

6. 内卜[.Xml]天[封]入一

丙午卜, 鼓贞: 王聽。隹禍。一

"Bingwu-day cracking, Que testing: Three Qiang tribesmen to the Many Ancestral Mothers."

Reverse

208.1. 乙丑出天田一降申小南

乙丑。偄于上甲一伐, 劉十小民。

"Jichou-day: Offer to Shang Jia one human captive and split open ten small penned sheep."
On the ninth day, *jiayin*, we did not *you*-sacrifice. It rained. On *yisi*-day in the evening there was thunder in the west.

From the crack notations these two plastrons appear to be the first and second in a set. However, the inscriptions 209.6/7 do not occur on the first plastron, only on the second, and yet its cracks are numbered 'one'. Usually in a set, all the numbers on a particular shell will be the same, so it is difficult to account for this exception. This phenomenon of mixed numbers also occurs on some of the *chengtao* shells of which only one member has been found. 71

Another discrepancy is the date in 208.1, *jichou*. I have interpreted it as the date on which the inscription was made, as a sacrifice to Shang Jia would of course have to take place on a *jia*-day. The corresponding inscription on the front of the plastron is 207.5, which is about an offering to Shang Jia, but is undated. The date may be supplied from 207.4, which is about offering to Da Jia on the day *jiayin*. The common subject matter of these inscriptions is which *jia* ancestor to offer to on the day *jiayin*. The first half of inscription 208.2 is a verification recording what actually took place on the day *jiayin*, which it refers to as the 'ninth day'. The Shang counted their days inclusively (as can be seen from other examples of cross-referencing between dates). This makes the day *jiayin* nine days forward from *bingwu*, which proves that 208.2 is
the verification for 207.4, which is in fact in exactly the same position on the other side of the plastron. It seems to be the general rule that divinations and verifications should correspond to each other on either side of the plastron in this way. However, the back of the plastron is not exclusively reserved for prognostications and verifications, as divinations are also sometimes found on it.

The second half of 208.2 is not continuous with the first half, and is in a much larger 'display' type of calligraphy, so it seems that Zhang Bingquan is mistaken in combining them. I would split them up, as it is also obvious that the topic of thunder in the west on yisi-day is the verification for 207.3. It is inscribed in the same large, bold calligraphy in the same position on the other side of the plastron. It is quite clear from this set that the purpose of the you-sacrifice was to seek rain, of which thunder is a good omen. However, the you-ing to Xia Yi on yisi-day and the you-ing to Da Jia on jiayin-day are two quite separate ceremonies. Their juxtaposition on the same plastron must be due to their sharing the same topic -- performing the you-sacrifice to seek rain.

As I have already mentioned, the bingshen-day divinations (207.3 and 209.3) are what Keightley would call 'display inscriptions'. As they are already given a prognostication and verification on the front of the plastron, the rear inscriptions 208.2 (second half) and 210 form a sort of postscript. They both record that "On yisi day in the evening there was thunder in the west."

For ease of reference, I shall now give a table showing how the dates relate to each other:
Date of Divination
丁亥 dinghai 24th  
己丑 jichou 26th  
丙申 bingshen 33rd  
丙午 bingwu 43rd  

Date Predicted for
庚寅 gengyin 27th and 辛卯 xinmao 28th  
甲寅 jiayin 51st  
乙巳 yisi 42nd  
甲寅 jiayin 51st  

The time span covered by these inscriptions is thus 27 days (or 28 days counting inclusively) from dinghai 24th to jiayin 51st.

Set Eight

568.1. (父)未卜, 舖贞, 离 ==  
(癸)未卜, 舖貞, 离, 玉氏羌, 一上吉

"Guiwei-day cracking, Que testing: Ji will bring Qiang (tribesmen)."

2. [貞: 疊不其氏羌。一]

"Testing: Ji will not perhaps bring Qiang."

3. [貞: 何氏羌。]一

"Testing: Ho will bring Qiang."

4. 疊何不其氏羌。一

"Testing: Ho will not perhaps bring Qiang."

570.1. 父未卜, 舖貞, 玉氏羌 =  
2. 父未卜, 舖貞, 玉氏羌 =  
3. 玉氏羌 =  
4. [貞: 何不其氏羌] =
572.1. [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤]
2. [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤]
3. [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤] [犤]
4. [犤: 何 不 其 氏 美 三]

574.1. [癸 未 卜 歲 貞: 伐 氏 美]
2. [癸 未 卜 歲 貞: 伐 氏 美]
3. [犤: 何 氏 美]
4. [犤: 何 氏 美]

576. [犤: 乎 [不] 乎 [氏 美]
577. [犤: 乎 [氏 美]

Reverse

569.1. [王 也 日 [氏]
王 固 日: 其 氏。

"The king read the cracks and said: Ho will perhaps bring."

2. [王 固 日: 其 氏]

"The king read the cracks and said: Ho will perhaps bring."

3. [不]

畫 來

"Hua brought (so many)."
There are fragments from five different shells here, but the last two are so fragmentary that it is impossible to say which is four and which is five. The fragment 577 could go with 574 or 576. That it comes from a positive inscription can be deduced from the orientation of the graph \(^\uparrow\). It faces the same way as in 570.3 and 572.3, which are positive inscriptions, and the opposite way to in 568.4, which is a negative inscription.

The duplications are quite faithful copies, even preserving the mirror-like switching of graph orientation between the left and right sides of the plastron. Ji 疊, Ho 何, di 氷, and Qiang 羌 are all reversed in this way.

One curious feature on the back is that the prognostication (see 571.1/2 and 573.1/2) is repeated on the same side and with exactly the same wording. Their positions correspond respectively to 570.1/3 and 572.1/3 on the front, from which one can deduce that the first refers to the possibility of Ji bringing Qiang tribesmen, while the second refers to the possibility of Ho doing the same. The subject did not have to be specified, as it was clear from the plastral position what these prognostications referred to. This careful arrangement shows that, although writing on bones may seem rather primitive, the way the Shang used them was in fact quite sophisticated, and they fully merit being called documents.
"Xinyou-day cracking, Zheng testing: The king should follow Wang Cheng to attack the Xia Wei."

"Xinyou-day cracking, Zheng testing: It should not be Wang Cheng that the king follows."

"Testing: The king should follow Wang Cheng to attack the Xia Wei."

"Testing: The king should not follow Wang Cheng."

"It should be Wang Cheng that the king follows."

"It should not be Wang Cheng that the king follows."

"It should be Cheng that he follows."
"It should not be Cheng that he follows."

"Testing: It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows to attack the Bafang."

"Testing: It should not be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

"It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

"It should not be Zhi Jia that he follows."

"It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

"It should not be Zhi Jia that he follows."

"It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows to attack."

"The king should not follow Zhi Jia to attack."

(highly auspicious)
13. P 大同之眾竹
王由征夏从。一
"It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

14. Q 大同之眾竹
勿从夏。一
"He should not follow Jia."

15. R 大同之眾竹
贞：王由征夏从。一
"Testing: It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

16. S 大同之眾竹
王勿从夏从。一
"It should not be Jia that the king follows."

17. T 大同之眾竹
王由征夏从。一
"It should be Zhi Jia that the king follows."

18. U 大同之眾竹
王勿从夏从。一
"It should not be Jia that the king follows."

19. V 大同之眾竹
贞：王由夷征。一
"Testing: It should be the Yi Ding that the king marches against."

20. W 大同之眾竹
贞：王勿从夷征。一
"Testing: It should not be the Yi that the king marches against."
21.X

"Testing: It should be the Longfang that the king attacks."

22.Y

"It should not be the Longfang that the king attacks."

3797.A

"From Xian report as far as Ding."

B.

"Should not from Xian report."

C.

"Report to Shang Jia together with Xian."

D.

"Should not report."

E.

F.

G.

"Report to Shang Jia together with Xian."

H.

"Should not report."

I.
Both of these plastrons are more or less complete, so we know that there are no inscriptions missing. It is curious then that the fifth plastron in this tao contains only twelve inscriptions, compared to the twenty-two inscriptions of the first plastron. It does not omit any of the topics, it is simply that it devotes only one duizhen to each topic. Thus the four duizhen 1266.A-H, about whether or not the king should follow Wang Cheng to attack the Xia Wei, correspond to the single duizhen 3797.A/B, while the six duizhen 24.7-18, which um and ah over whether the king should follow Zhi Jia to attack the Bafang instead, correspond to the single duizhen 3797.E/F. It seems from this that the subject matter was more important than exact duplication, although the tao I have examined so far have been quite faithful copies. Far from omitting topics, the fifth shell in fact adds a new topic that does not appear on the first shell, to wit: reporting to the ancestors Xian and Shang Jia (3797.C/D and C/H). The subject of the report is not expressed, so it may have been a standard ritual. The gao inscriptions at S.120.2-124.1 show that many different subjects were announced to many different ancestors, but the subject is not always stated.

In his annotations to these plastrons, Zhang Bingquan notes that the first plastron contains many unnumbered cracks, and also two cracks which are numbered but have no inscriptions to go with them. He suggests that the extra topic recorded on the fifth plastron may have been divined on the first plastron but simply not recorded, perhaps to save time. However, the other tao in Bingbian are remarkable for the painstaking duplication of practically
everything, even repeating dates. Nevertheless, there does seem a definite tendency for successive shells in a set to abbreviate the text of the first. One also notices a certain 'sloppiness' creeping in, with graphs being left incomplete. Some examples from the sets I have examined are:

16.4  for  (从)
   for  (证)
18.7  for  (庚)
18.9  for  (疾)
20.2  for  (受)
37.1  for  (勿)
73.6  for  (我)
570.1  for  (殷)

This suggests that they were not inscribed at the time of divination, but later copied, perhaps in a rather hasty fashion, from a master copy. According to the Zhouli, the inscriptions were made on a piece of silk, and then examined at the end of the year to see if they came true or not. The Shang may also have had a prepared list of divinations which they wished to put to the turtle, and which were not actually inscribed on the turtle till after the divination ceremony. This would help to explain the discrepancies that creep into the tao.
Zhang Bingquan regards chengtāo jiāgu as a subcategory of chengtāo buci ‘divinations which form sets (on the same plastron)’. He defines chengtāo buci thus:

“Chengtāo buci refers to groups of sentences on a plastron or bone which can be linked together into a set. Or to put it another way, chengtāo buci are formed from those groups of positive and negative divinatory sentences which were divined on the same day, share the same topic, are carved in succession by the side of a certain number of cracks, have a similar meaning, and whose crack numbers follow on from each other.” (Author’s translation)

Such groups are usually rather obvious, as their wording tends to repeat each other to a large extent. This phenomenon is very common in OBI, but the number of times that the same subject is divined seems to be quite irregular. Even the number of times that the members of a duizhen are divined is often not equal. The number of cracks often appears to be determined by the size of the shell. The regularity of the chengtāo jiāgu is quite striking in contrast to this. The five shells are clearly carefully selected, as they are generally all of similar size, and the same sentences usually occur on all five shells, thus each is divined exactly five times.
Keightley has observed that "Generally speaking, the Shang diviners preferred making cracks in multiples of five, but in Period I there appears to have been no standard number of cracks per set." In Period I, crack numbers could be anything up to ten. In successive periods, they never exceed five. It is interesting that the greatest irregularity in crack numbering should occur in Period I, as it is precisely from this period that all the tao in Bingbian come, as can be seen from their diviners' names: Que, Zheng, Bin, and Nei. These all belong to the Wu Ding period. There are also some examples from Period I of a shell devoted to a single topic, with five cracks for the positive member and five cracks for the negative member of the duizhen (e.g. Bingbian 5, 7 and 8). It seems then that chengtao jiagu is simply the distribution over five shells of a series of divinations, each of which might just as easily have had its own shell devoted to it, with all five of its cracks on the same shell. According to Zhang Bingquan, there is really no difference between these two formats:

"The nature of these sets of divinations (spread over five shells) shows no striking differences from those which are all carved on the same shell." (Author's translation)

The only difference is that, when a divination is repeated on the same shell, the inscriptions for successive divinations may be severely abbreviated, whereas when the divination is repeated on five different shells, this abbreviation was not possible. The ostensible reason for such repetition was probably that the will of the ancestors was not easily discerned. The repetition would also provide enough ambiguous responses
for the king to interpret them as he desired. Why the Shang should hit on the number five in particular probably has no mystical significance — they simply felt it to be a natural unit. However, the fact that the same group of topics may be divined together five times suggests that there is some connection between them, a connection which is not readily apparent from the wording of the inscriptions themselves. In the third set I examined, there are two days of divination. The order of inscriptions and crack numbering is quite faithfully copied for both days, so the set must have been stored intact in between those two days. This suggests even more strongly that the topics of these two days are intimately connected.

The use of plastron sets is only one aspect of the extensive formalisation that the Shang brought to divination. The meticulous repetition and recording of dates, diviners, charges, prognostications and verifications, apparently shows an intensely empirical attitude towards divination. The constant proffering of two possible outcomes, as exemplified by the duizhen, appears to show a genuine interest in knowing what was going to happen and what should be done. However, the fact that the interpretation of the oracle lay entirely in the hands of the king, and that this interpretation was necessarily subjective, caused it to degenerate into a mere tool of political power. The scientific attitude towards divination was lost. By the time of Period V, even the duizhen had almost disappeared, so that Period V chengtao buci become monotonous repetitions of what the Shang desired to happen. The xun wang huo 旬亡禍 ('in the next ten days there will be no disaster') inscriptions that became so prevalent by Period V are not, strictly speaking, divinations, but simple spells to ward off evil. The chengtao plastron sets represent an early attempt at the reduction of the divination process to a simple, unvarying ritual.
Unfortunately, the oracle bones from later periods are so fragmentary that it is impossible to know whether this practice continued after Period I.

Appendix to Chapter Two

There are also a number of plastrons in Bingbian whose crack numbering marks them as a member of a set, but the other plastrons in these sets have not been found, so I have been unable to compare them. These plastrons are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diviner</th>
<th>Plastron No.</th>
<th>Crack no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>骼</td>
<td>22.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 方</td>
<td>25.</td>
<td>2 (except sentences 5 and 6, which are unnumbered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>争 骼</td>
<td>47.</td>
<td>4 (sentence 15 was originally numbered '5', but it was scraped off and corrected to '4')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>争</td>
<td>75.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>争</td>
<td>197.</td>
<td>2 (except for the 28th sentence, which has no graphs, but bears the crack number '4')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>骼</td>
<td>275.</td>
<td>1 (except sentences 9, 10 and 18, which have no crack numbers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302.</td>
<td>3 (except the 5th sentence, which is numbered '6'; Zhang says this may be part of a tao, and the '6' could be a mis-carve)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王, 争</td>
<td>307.</td>
<td>1 (except the first and second sentences, which are unnumbered, and the sixth, which carries the two numbers '1, 2')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>骼</td>
<td>317.</td>
<td>2 (except the fifth sentence, which carries the crack notation '1 highly auspicious', and the sixth, which is numbered '1')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diviner</td>
<td>Plastron No.</td>
<td>Crack no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>竜</td>
<td>344.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>竜</td>
<td>358.</td>
<td>1 (there are only two inscriptions on this shell, so it is hard to judge if it is really part of a tao)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>禬</td>
<td>370.</td>
<td>1st and 2nd sentences: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd and 4th sentences: 4 (Zhang considers this must be part of a set, as the numbers leading up to '3' and '4' do not appear; there are also cases on non-tao shells where the crack numbering does not start at '1')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>469.</td>
<td>3 (Zhang says this may be part of a tao)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>475.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 争</td>
<td>477.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>禬</td>
<td>479.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>竜</td>
<td>529.</td>
<td>1 (some cracks unnumbered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>竜</td>
<td>531.</td>
<td>1 (some cracks unnumbered)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the previous two chapters I have been looking at individual inscriptions. Now I would like to go on to examine the plastron as a whole. This is what I mean by tuongban buci: inscriptions which appear on the same plastron. This is the term used by Chinese and Japanese scholars.

Considering how limited the context is in OBI, which makes it very difficult to be sure that one has interpreted a sentence correctly, it would be very useful if one could expand the context of single inscriptions by relating them to other inscriptions on the same plastron. The members of a duizhen pair or of a group of chengtao buci are obviously connected, as their wording is usually largely the same. However, as they merely repeat the same thing, they do not particularly widen the context. Their main use is for filling in the odd ellipsis. Outside of these two groupings, many of the inscriptions on a plastron appear to be quite unrelated. In this chapter, I examine how far it is justified to relate different inscriptions, and what sort of criteria one can appeal to in order to substantiate such relationships. The criteria I appeal to are as follows:

1. Cyclical dating
2. Shared vocabulary
3. Grammatical parallelism

There are perhaps other things that one could look at, such as diviners' names (in relation to subject matter) and crack numbering, but these do not seem to be so valuable.
So far, the view "That different divination topics carved on the same oracle bone are frequently related thematically"\(^4\) has merely been an assumption. This is in fact what Keightley calls assumption number one in his critical review of Akatsuka Kiyoshi's 1977 book on religion and culture in ancient China\(^5\). Akatsuka uses this assumption for his reconstruction of Shang rites:

復原の方法は、甲骨文に明記されている少数例の外は、主として同一版に刻されている卜辞の相互関係、または相類似すると見做される版の卜辞の関係によって推定する。

"The method of reconstruction, apart from a small number of exceptions which are expressly stated in the oracle bone texts, relies mainly on the relationships between inscriptions carved on the same plastron, and [their] relationships with inscriptions on [other] plastrons which appear to be of a similar nature."

(Author's translation)

Keightley's main criticism of Akatsuka is that "The only criterion offered is that of plausibility."\(^7\) Keightley takes the role of the "devil's advocate", and suggests that, in period one at least, "the diviners used oracle bones rather like scratch-paper, taking whichever plastron or scapula was at hand."\(^8\) Chow Kwok-ching bewails the lack of objective criteria in establishing tongban relationships, but does not allow this to stand in his way:

"Undeniably, subjective interpretation is sometimes the only means left to us in positing the contextual relationship between sentences. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that there is no other way, we must exploit this 'larger context' as fully as possible on the assumption that the sentences appearing on the same plastron are related in one way or another. Without this assumption, a lot of information, including that concerning the determination of the type of composite sentence, cannot be recovered."\(^9\)
However, just because we need this context, does not mean to say that it is justified. Clearly, we must offer more than "plausibility" if we are to make such connections. The exact relationship between different inscriptions will always be a matter of conjecture, but I hope at least to establish a set of criteria by which one may justify the view that there is often a connection before embellishing on that connection. According to Keightley, it is Period I inscriptions that show such a wild profusion of topics on the shell or scapula, and the practice of devoting a bone to a single topic arose later. Even so, there are Period I bones which are obviously devoted to a single topic (e.g. Bingbian 529, which is concerned only with rain), which suggests that other Period I bones may have been regarded as having only one topic, though not necessarily all of them. It is on Period I shells that I shall concentrate to test my criteria, as these offer the most problems. In discussing various plastrons as examples of how each criterion may be applied, there will inevitably be some overlap, as all aspects have to be taken into account in order to arrive at a holistic understanding. After examining how each criterion may be applied, I shall take a look at the whole problem of how many topics there are on a plastron.
CYCLICAL DATING

Ganzhi 千支 dating and cross-referencing of dates

The Shang inscriptions are quite meticulous about dating. Usually, only cyclical dates are used, which shows that the realisation or otherwise of most divinations took place within sixty days of the initial divination. However, there are some notable exceptions (e.g. Tiejun 5.3, which I examine on pp. 122). In such cases, it was particularly vital to state how many days elapsed between the divination and the verification, as it was beyond the cycle of 60, so a simple ganzhi identification would not have been sufficient. The annus regni is also sometimes recorded, but much more rarely, and only in Period V11.

The commonest use of ganzhi dates is in the preface to a charge, which names the day on which the divination took place. The charges themselves also often contain dates, saying that such and such an event will happen 'so many days from today' or 'on such and such a ganzhi day'. Prognostications and verifications normally contain dates, as they had to be specific in order to be of as much use as possible as oracles, enabling the Shang to plan for specific contingencies. The prognostication often refers to a day simply by its tiangan 天干, omitting the dizhi 地支. The dating of predictions and verifications is one of the clearly empirical aspects of Shang divination, as its purpose is to check the accuracy of the predictions, and this is also what converts these divinations into historical records.

By a detailed examination of the interaction between dates, it is sometimes possible to discern a coherent context behind the various inscriptions on a given plastron, and the unfolding of a particular affair.
I shall start by examining the first plastron in the Bingbian collection, which is complete with a prognostication and verification. From time to time it may be necessary to bring in my other criteria, but the main thrust of this examination will be on the dating.

Bingbian 1

1. "Renzi-day cracking, Zheng testing: From today five days, we will beat the Zhou."

2. "Testing: From today five days, we will not perhaps beat the Zhou."

3. "Guichou-day cracking, Zheng testing: From today until dingsi-day, we will beat the Zhou."

The king read the cracks and said: On dingsi-day we are not perhaps to beat [them], on coming jiazi-day we will beat [them].

Eleven days later, on guihai-day, Che did not beat [them], but as that night cut into jiazi-day he did in fact beat [them]."
4. "Guichou-day cracking, Zheng testing: From today until dingsi-day, we will not perhaps beat the Zhou."

5. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: I will attack the Bu."

6. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: I should not attack the Bu."

7. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: I will attack the Bu."

8. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: I should not attack the Bu."

9. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: Capture the Fou."

10. "Gengshen-day cracking, the king testing: Qiao will not perhaps capture the Fou."
"Qiao will not perhaps capture the Fou."

"Xinyou-day cracking, Que: Tomorrow, renxu-day, the Bu will arrive."

"Guihai-day cracking, Que testing: Our envoys will beat the Fou."

"Guihai-day cracking, Que testing: Our envoys are not perhaps to beat the Fou."

"Guihai-day cracking, Que testing: The day after tomorrow, yichou-day, the Duo Chen will beat the Fou."

"The day after tomorrow, yichou-day, the Duo Chen will not perhaps beat the Fou."
17. "Yichou-day cracking, Que testing: Zi Shang will not perhaps capture the Xian."

18. "Bingyin-day cracking, Zheng: summon Long, Lao and Hou Zhuan to plague the Bu."

19. "Testing: Dagong will not perhaps carry out (successfully) the king's affairs."

20. — = 三 [四五]

21. [— 二] 三 五

Reverse (Bingbian 2)

1. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: We will not have necessity."

2. "Xinyou-day cracking, Que testing: ...not...disaster."

3. "Que."
The divinations on this plastron are all quite close to each other in time, taking place over a period of fifteen days inclusively. Divination was conducted on seven of those days:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divination</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Inscr. no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Renzi (49th)</td>
<td>for (5 days hence=) bingchen (53rd)</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Guichou (50th)</td>
<td>for dingsi (54th) and jiazi (1st)</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gengshen (57th)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-11, 19?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Xinyou (58th)</td>
<td>for renxu (59th)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Guihai (60th)</td>
<td>for yichou (2nd)</td>
<td>13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yichou (2nd)</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bingyin (3rd)</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On four of these days, the divination refers to a future date when the proposed event should or should not happen. Only one of these days appears again on the shell, to wit yichou (1.17), which is referred to on the guihai-day (1.15/16). This means that the shell was definitely taken out again on yichou-day, but unfortunately the content of the yichou-day inscription seems to have no bearing on what was predicted for that day. The renzi and xinyou divinations refer to '5 days from now' (i.e. bingchen) and renxu (i.e. the next day) respectively, but these dates do not crop up again.

The only 'successful' divination on this shell is the guichou day divination, which divines whether the Shang will beat the Zhou at any time between that day and dingsi-day. The king reads the cracks and predicts that they will not beat the Zhou on dingsi-day, but on the coming jiazi-day. A jiazi-day was probably considered to be particularly auspicious, so the king may have felt that by predicting the great victory for a jiazi-day his prediction was more likely to come true. Among all the many divinations
on this plastron, as to whether Qiao would capture the Fou, whether the Bu would come, whether the Shang envoys or the Duo Chen would beat the Fou, or whether Zi Shang would capture the Xian, this is the only one to carry a prediction. And lo and behold, it came true. Eleven days after guichou-day, as the end of guihai-day cut into the beginning of jiazi-day, the Shang forces did indeed beat the Zhou.

There are two other features that make this particular divination stand out. Firstly, the charge was made before the outcome of the first divination (the renzi-day divination) had a chance to be realised. The renzi-day inscription divined for five days thence, and 1.3/4 was divined the very next day. It concerns the same topic (beating the Zhou), but makes a different prediction. Secondly, it is inscribed in the most enormous characters which take up about one third of the shell, and which were also filled in with a red pigment (the smaller graphs of the other inscriptions are filled in with brown). Although this divination was made on the 50th day, it clearly displaces the gengshen-(57th) day inscriptions, whose left and right duizhen do not mirror each other (see Fig. 2). This means that, although the cracks must have been made on the day of divination, the inscriptions were probably all put on together at a much later date, probably after the date of the last divination on the shell (in this case, bingyin).

It is clear then that this plastron represents more than an ingenuous enquiry about the future, otherwise there are many questions that cannot be answered: Why is it that there is only one prediction? Why is it that it also happened to come true? Why is it that the whole inscription, including the charge, is inscribed in the same outsize, incarnadine characters? I suggest that the king made predictions for all the divinations on this shell (otherwise there would have been no point in consulting the oracle),
Fig. 2
Displacement caused by display inscription on Bingbian 1. Inscriptions 9/10 are a duizhen pair, but have been severely displaced.

Areas enclosed by dotted lines show the extent of each inscription.
but the inscriptions were not made until the last day predicted for had passed, and then whichever predictions came true were selected for inscribing\textsuperscript{21}. They were inscribed in a dramatic fashion in order to underline the fact that the oracle really worked, thus maintaining its function among the ruling echelons as an instrument of guidance and cohesion. The appeal to a higher authority, in the guise of the oracle, was perhaps a method of uniting various powerful factions into a single government. The power of Fu Hao, for example, must have been quite considerable\textsuperscript{22}, and the various warriors that the king proposes to follow into battle were also probably largely autonomous. The oracle may have helped to bind these various powerful personages together.

What the dates on this plastraon tell us primarily then, is that the inscriptions cannot possibly have been made at the time of divination, or even shortly afterwards, but had to wait until all the divinations intended for that shell had had an opportunity to be realised. Only two of the divinations on this shell are dated after \textit{jiazi}, to wit 1.17 \textit{yichou} and 1.18 \textit{bingyin}, but these were probably also inscribed at the same time as the rest of the inscriptions. As I have already mentioned, in connection with \textit{chengtao jiagu}, the divination charges must have been kept as a separate record before being inscribed onto the bone\textsuperscript{23}. That the present set of inscriptions, despite being divined on several different days, were all divined on the same shell, and the propositions filed together until verification occurred, and then inscribed together, suggests that there is an intimate connection between them. The inscriptions are obviously all military, as one can see from the vocabulary employed: \textit{cai} \textsuperscript{24} 'beat (vanquish)', \textit{fa} \textsuperscript{24} 'attack', \textit{huo} \textsuperscript{24} 'capture' (also a hunting term), and the expression \textit{gu wang shi} \textsuperscript{25} 'to be in charge of the king's affairs'. In addition, the objects of these verbs are all various
fangguo or fangguo personalities, such as Zhou 鬼, Fou 封, Bu 不, and Xian 先. Duo Chen 多臣 and Shi 史 are also military units of the Shang. The scenario may perhaps be summed up as follows:

The Shang are engaged in protracted warfare against the Zhou. The divination sequence begins on the 49th day of the cycle, when they divine if they will beat the Zhou on the 53rd. Not waiting for the result of this divination, they again divine on the 50th, asking if they will beat the Zhou on the 54th. The king predicts that they are not destined to beat the Zhou until the 1st day of the next cycle.

On the 57th day, which may be dated from inscription 1.5 as being in the third month, the king divines whether he should go and attack the Bu. This proposition may have been prompted by the fact that they knew they could not beat the Zhou until the 1st, and so the king felt free to engage himself in some other activity. It may also be on this day that it is divined whether 多 should take charge of the king's affairs, but the relevant inscription is undated. I tentatively assign it to this date on the basis of its proximity to the 57th day inscriptions. This inscription (1.19) is phrased negatively, and occurs on the left side of the plastron, but does not have a positive duizhen on the right side, which may be due to the fact that the right side is occupied at this place by the display inscription 1.3. If it is indeed to be thus dated, then it suggests that the king was divining whether he should attack the Bu in person, or whether he should entrust someone else with this task. There are other plastrons bearing inscriptions which ask whether the king should do something himself or whether he should call on somebody else to do it. On the 58th it is divined whether the Bu will arrive on the following day, the 59th, so it seems that the king did not go and attack the Bu after all.

On the 60th it is divined whether 'our Shi' or the Duo Chen will
beat the Fou. Also on this day, Che, a warrior allied to the Shang, attempts to beat the Zhou, but his attempt is not successful. Then as the night of the 60th dawns into the 1st day of the next cycle, just as the king predicted, the Zhou are finally beaten. The king's ability to interpret the oracle is dramatically confirmed. The victory over the Zhou was of course not simply a true prediction, but also a major event.

On the 2nd it is divined whether Zi Shang (perhaps the leader of the Shi or the Duo Chen?) will capture Xian (perhaps the leader of the Fou?). Here we have another example of a negatively phrased divination on the left with no corresponding positive duizhen on the right. This again is probably due to the space taken up by the display inscription. We are not told of the upshot of this affair. As for the Bu, presumably they did not arrive after all, as the latest inscription, divined on the 3rd, inquires if certain warriors (Long, Lao, and Houzhuan) should be called on to go and plague them (I understand 不 and 及 as variants of the same graph).

One can see from this that the Shang and their allies were engaged in fighting both the Zhou and the Fou at the same time, and were also considering attacking the Bu. The outcome of the wars against the Fou and the Bu are not recorded here, but the Zhou were certainly dealt a resounding defeat. One can also see how the king both directs various troops and allies against different enemies, and also seeks guidance from the oracle as to what he himself should do. By paying careful attention to the dates in the inscriptions, we are able to reconstruct something of what was going on in the Shang world at that time.

The establishment of such all-plastraon contexts helps to corroborate the interpretation of individual inscriptions. For example, in the present instance, the fact that inscriptions 1.5-8 mention attacking the Bu, helps
to prevent us from misinterpreting the *bu* 不 in 1.12 as the negative particle, i.e. as "someone (unstated) will not arrive", when in fact it refers to the Bu tribe.

The shell *Bingbian* 1 which I have just examined happens to provide a very good example of a display inscription displacing a non-display inscription. But are there any other examples which would help to support my thesis that the Shang waited until all the affairs divined on a particular plastron came to a conclusion, and then and only then inscribed them?

Display inscriptions are hard to come by, and the fragmentary nature of the shells often makes it difficult to ascertain whether or not there was such displacement. Before one can be certain, one needs to find a relatively complete, fairly crowded plastron (as in *Bingbian* 1) where the necessity for displacement might arise. Nevertheless, there are one or two other such examples in the *Bingbian* collection, which I introduce here in order to support my thesis further. Apart from displacement, I also appeal to the complete omission of *duizhen* counterparts. This sort of evidence is more nebulous of course, as I have to assume that there was an antithetically phrased counterpart, and it is by no means the case that every divination occurs in such pairs. However, where the rest of the shell contains largely antithetical pairs, there is a good case for assuming that all the divinations on that shell were made in pairs. It should of course be remembered that *duizhen* pairs are not necessarily antithetical in their relationship to each other, as I mentioned at the end of chapter one. I shall now examine *Bingbian* 197 and 243 as examples of displacement and *duizhen* omission respectively.
Bingbian 197

1. "Testing: We will use (in sacrifice) the Jun captives."

2. "Dingwei-day cracking, Que testing: You-sacrifice and (make ascent=) present human victims (to the number of) ten, (and) ten penned sheep."

3. "Yimao-day cracking, Que testing: Coming yihai-day, you-sacrifice (to) Xia Yi fifteen human victims, (and) split open ten penned sheep. Twenty-one days later, on yihai-day, we did not you-sacrifice; it rained. Fifth month."

4. "It should not specifically be on yihai-day that we you-sacrifice (to) Xia Yi fifteen human victims, (and) split open ten penned sheep (and) four ....."

5. "Coming jiashen-day, offer to Da Jia."
6. "Next dingyou-day, offer to Zu Ding."

7. "Next xinchou-day, offer (to) Zu Xin."

8. "Next yisi-day, offer (to) Zu Yi."

9. "Next xinyou-day, offer (to) the ancestors penned sheep. We used (them in sacrifice)."

10. "The ancestors."

11. "Exorcise (in the presence of the ancestral tablet or spirit of) Fu Yi."

12. "It is the (intended) human victims that Fu Yi is cursing."
13. "It is not the (intended) human victims that Fu Yi is cursing."

14. "If this evening we use (in sacrifice), it will make things right."

15. "Hu Jia is afflicting the king."

16. "Fu Geng is afflicting the king."

17. "Fu Geng is not afflicting the king."

18. "Fu Xin is afflicting the king."

19. "Fu Xin is not afflicting the king."

20-27. (crack notation only:)
1. 

癸卯卜，敲。

"Guimao-day cracking, Que."

2.  

于來乙卯侑祖乙。

On coming yimao-day, offer (to) Zu Yi."

3.  

鹿，羊二。

"Deer (and) sheep (to the number of) two." 

4.  

乙卯卜。

"Yimao-day cracking"

5.  

三卩來甲申。

"In thirty days time, coming jiashen-day....." 

6.  

由乙亥酢。

"It should be yihai-day that we you-sacrifice."
7. "We should not specifically on yihai-day sacrifice."

8. "Offer dog to Xian Wu."

9. "...Xue Wu."33

10. "To E exorcise Fu."

11. "To E."

12. "Next ding-day, should not (offer) to Zu Ding."

13. "Zu Ding."

14. "Dispatch to Bi Ji the punished ones."
15. 它白豕，二牛。
 "It should be white pig (and) two oxen."

16. 辛卜殷。
 "Xin-day cracking, Que."

17. 勿赐下乙。
 "Should not offer (to) Xia Yi."

18. 下乙。
 "Xia Yi."

19. 宰侑。
 "Penned sheep offer."

20. 庚申卜殷。
 "Gengshen-day cracking, Que."

21. 早拜入
 "Zi Shang contributed..."
Here we have a clearly marked display inscription (197.3/4). The graphs are large and bold, and filled in with a red pigment. Inscription no. 3 carries a verification, but no prognostication. We may assume that the prediction was implicit in the charge. Actually, it is not so much a prediction, as an appeal for guidance: whether or not to perform the you牺牲 to Xia Yi on the coming yihai (12th) day. The divination is dated yimao (52nd), so the divination was for an event two xun旬 (10-day weeks) in the future (or 21 days counting inclusively). All the other inscriptions on the front of this shell are written in small, neat graphs, which are filled in with a brown pigment. The verification to inscription no. 3 informs us that "It rained without you-ing", so we know from this that the purpose of the you-sacrifice was to seek rain. This is also seen in the two surviving members of a plastron set, Bingbian 207 and 209, where the performance of you results in a most welcome spell of rain. The inscriptions on the present plastron are all concerned with performing sacrifices to various ancestors. The layout of the display inscription is very similar to the one in Bingbian 1, in that the right side inscription (no. 3) occupies a larger area than the left side inscription (no. 4), as it is the one that carries the verification. The free area on the left side across from inscription no. 3 is positively crowded with inscriptions, while the right side is of course hegemonized by the display inscription. Curiously, the rest of the plastron is almost empty, only the lower part being crowded in this way. We also find the same situation on the back, where it is precisely this lower area that is crowded with inscriptions, while the top part is almost unoccupied. This is because the inscriptions had to be engraved next to their related divination cracks. They could not be written just anywhere on the plastron. As it happens, there are no
cracks in the uninscribed areas, as the holes on the back in these places were not scorched. Thus the inscriptions, like the cracks, are concentrated in the lower half of the shell. According to my hypothesis, it was the large area taken up by the display inscription on the front that necessitated the inscribing of a number of divinations on the back, there being no room for them near their associated cracks on the front. It can be shown that many of the inscriptions on the back lie directly behind thematically related inscriptions on the front, and are thus associated with the same divination crack. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>197.1. 贞:我用癸辛。</td>
<td>198.1. 癸卯卜,殻。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 羽辛酉侑祖辛。用。</td>
<td>20. 庚申卜,殻。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 來甲申侑于大甲。</td>
<td>4. 乙卯卜。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5. 三旬來甲申...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 羽乙已侑祖乙。</td>
<td>16. 辛卜,殻。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 羽丁酉侑于祖丁。</td>
<td>13. 祖丁。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(12. 羽丁勿于祖丁。)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 祖。</td>
<td>2. 于來乙卯侑祖乙。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. 今日夕用。</td>
<td>15. 甲白豕,二牛</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the rear inscriptions are not directly behind, but are clearly associated from their wording. These I have put in brackets. As one can see, in a number of instances, the rear inscription supplies the date for an undated inscription on the front, and sometimes it also supplies the name of the diviner. Inscriptions 197.1 and 9 (and hence also 198.1 and 20) do not concern us here, as they are at the top of the plastron,
free from interference by the display inscription. However, the inscriptions at the bottom which should have formed duizhen with the left side inscriptions appear to have been displaced to the back. These inscriptions are not necessarily antithetical, but also supply other information, such as the date of divination or the animals to be sacrificed (as in 197.14-198.15). As in my first example of displacement, it is necessary for me to prove that the displaced inscriptions record divinations that were made prior to the display inscription which occupies pride of place on the plastron. It is a pity that the dates of only two of the rear inscriptions can be inferred. 198.4 is dated yimao (52nd), and lies directly behind 197.5, so 197.5 was probably divined on yimao-day. Another inscription on the back, 198.5, also refers to "The thirtieth day, coming jiashen (21st)." Counting back thirty days inclusively brings us again to yimao-day. This is the same day that the display inscription was divined on, so it is impossible to say whether these inscriptions were divined before or after the display inscription. One can only state that they were divined on the same day. However, as they were divined on the same day, they were probably divined at the same ceremony, without stopping to inscribe the one that was divined first. If the non-display inscriptions had been inscribed before the verification of the display inscription, one would expect them to form a more symmetrical pattern on the shell, so it is highly probable that they were inscribed after the verification of the display divination. The divination in the display inscription was verified on yihai (12th), while the other yimao-day inscriptions divine for a later day, jiashen (21st), so although this proves that the non-display yimao day divinations were not inscribed until after the verification of the display yimao day divination, it is not possible to tell whether the display inscription was inscribed as soon as it was verified, or whether it had to wait until jiashen-day, when
the results of the non-display divinations would be known. Be that as it may, the continuous, homogeneous calligraphy of the display inscription shows that this divination was selected for display treatment AFTER the verification.

I shall now examine Bingbian 243.
Fig. 5

Bingbian 243
Bingbian 243

1. 内卜
丙寅卜，殷贞，今来歳我不其受年，一～三～四～五～六～
"Bingyin-day cracking, Que testing: This coming sui-period\textsuperscript{34}, we will not perhaps receive harvest."

2. 戊辰卜，其来甲成其雨，一～三～四～五～六～七～八～
"Wuchen-day cracking, Wei: Coming jiaxu-day perhaps it will rain."

3. 壬辰卜，贞：臣得。王曰：其得仕甲乙。
"Guiyou-day cracking, Xuan testing: The ministers will obtain."

The king read the cracks and said: Perhaps they will obtain. It will be a jia-day or an yi-day.

On jiaxu-day the ministers crossed the river by boat and went as far as Xian. They did not report it. Fifteen days later, on dinghai-day, they shackled (some prisoners?). Twelfth month.～

4. 壬酉卜，贞：不其得。～
"Guiyou-day cracking, Xuan testing: They will not perhaps obtain."

5. 疾。
"Illness."

7. "Testing: If we to Qiang Jia exorcise, we can overcome and drive away the illness."

8. "Yihai-day cracking, Dun testing: Fu Guo's birth will be good."

Bingbian 243

The inscriptions 243.3/4 are engraved in large characters, but are filled in with the same black pigment as the other inscriptions on this plastron, so perhaps one should refer to them as 'semi-display'. Inscription no. 8 is also carved in the same large characters, but carries no prognostication or verification, so it cannot be considered to be 'display'. It was divined on yihai (12th), and is inscribed on the left side of the plastron. There is no duizhen counterpart on the right, as this area is taken up by inscription no. 3, which has a long prognostication and verification. It was divined on guiyou (10th), which is two days before the divination recorded in inscription no. 8. Its verification refers to two different dates. The first is jiaxu (11th), which is the day between guiyou and yihai, so this date would not preclude the possibility that this inscription was carved before the divination recorded in inscription no. 8.
was made. However, the second date referred to is "Fifteen days later, on dinghai (24th)." This means fifteen days after guiyou, the day of the divination. This is certainly many days after yihai, so it is quite possible that the position of the yihai day inscription was affected by the guihai 'semi-display' inscription.

In positing displacement for inscription no. 8, there are two possibilities. One is that it should have had a duizhen counterpart on the right. The other is that the inscription itself was originally intended to appear on the right side, with perhaps a negatively phrased counterpart intended for the left side where the positive inscription now stands. I am inclined towards the latter possibility, for two reasons:

1. Inscription no. 8 is positively phrased, and the preface is complete (i.e. both date and diviner are mentioned). As I have mentioned in chapter one, positively phrased inscriptions with full prefaxes usually occur (for reasons of natural human psychology) on the right side of the plastron.

2. In order to accommodate the semi-display inscription (no. 3), some unassociated crack numbers were erased. I suggest that the cracks marked by these erased numbers were in the first place cracked for the divination recorded in inscription no. 8, but this divination could not be inscribed beside these cracks because the verification to inscription no. 3 displaced it. This verification refers to dinghai (24th), which is twelve days AFTER yihai (12th), the date of inscription no. 8.

Inscription no. 8 is also written in the same handwriting as 3/4, which also suggests that it was carved at the same time, so 3/4 cannot have been carved at the time of divination. As in the case of Bingbian 1, I believe
this indicates that the inscriptions on this plastron were not added until after the upshot of the last date predicted for. In this case, the last date is not actually mentioned in the prognostication, which only says that the event will occur on either a \textit{jia} day or an \textit{yi} day, but it can be seen from the layout of these inscriptions that the Shang in fact waited until the whole affair was over before they 'committed it to writing', so to speak. This further supports the \textit{Zhouli} passage about \textit{其占之中否} \textsuperscript{37}. Whether the Shang waited till the end of the year before inscribing the divinations, one cannot tell, but we do know that in some cases they waited for many, many days, as one can see in the following example, which Professor Takashima very kindly pointed out to me:

\begin{verbatim}
... 且卜日 訴 滑 [汛] 有疾。旬有二日...未 滑... \\
百日有七十日......候 八月有[汛]...七月内之有
一百日有七旬有[汛]...[汛] 晚, 滑亦有疾...[乙]未夕 萧丙左
申...死。
\end{verbatim}

"Xshen-day cracking, testing: Kun\textsuperscript{39} will recover from his illness. 22 days later, on Xwei-day, Kun did indeed recover [from his illness]. 175 days later, on Xyin-day, Kun again had illness. As yiwei evening cut into bingshen-day, he died." \hspace{1cm} (Tieyun 5.3, Yicun 128)

In this example, 175 days elapsed between the date of divination and the date of the last verification. The inscription is written as a continuous text in a homogeneous hand, which suggests that the whole inscription, including the charge, was inscribed at the same time. The subject of the divination is a prolonged illness that eventually resulted in death.
A variety of evidence thus helps to support my thesis that none of the divinations were carved onto the shell until the final upshot of all the affairs predicted for. Whether they were carved on the same day or not, I hesitate to say, but the mixture of handwriting that one often finds suggests at least that the inscriptions on a particular shell were not necessarily all carved by the same inscriber. A particular shell may have been carved over several days by several different inscribers. However, that is purely to do with the workaday matter of the physical process of inscription, and has nothing to do with the divination. The important point is that the Shang had to wait until the outcome of all the events divined for had transpired, in order to select those that came true in a particularly dramatic or obvious way for 'display' treatment. As for the purpose of display inscriptions, one can only speculate, but it seems fairly clear that it had something to do with underlining the efficacy of the oracle (in bringing about the desired result) and the king's authority as the oracle's interpreter.

Apart from supporting in a general way the valuable hypothesis that all the divinations recorded on a given plastron were regarded by the Shang as a contextual unit, dating can also be used to decipher time-related graphs. An obvious example of this is the graph \( \text{cut} \), the decipherment of which was helped greatly by its contextual occurrence with cyclical dates. This graph has already been well studied\(^{40}\), so I shall not go into it here. Suffice it to say that it occurs between consecutive cyclical dates, and refers to the time when one day cuts into the next. This graph is also used as a method of sacrificing animals, so a common meaning had to be found that would apply to both usages. This helped the identification of it as \( \text{zhuo} \) 'cut', the graph itself being a depiction of a \( \text{dou} \) wine vessel\(^{41}\).
Another time-related graph, which I happened to decipher in the course of this thesis, is . Previous explicators, such as Guo Moruo and Tang Lan, were confused by the fact that the dates between which it occurs are not consecutive. Also, they misidentified it as the non-existent characters 倉 and 象 respectively. A careful examination of the context in which it occurs, reveals that it always occurs in the same formula: "So many days such-and-such a ganzhi day." The number of days mentioned is always the same as the number of days there are between the date of divination and the date that follows the graph . This formula is used to introduce a verification. Its meaning must therefore be something like 'elapse' or 'pass'. I identify it as , which is the primary form of 'to complete'. It means that so many days were completed between the day of divination and the day of verification. For example:

"Guiyou-day cracking, Bin testing: ...... Seven days elapsed, jimaо-day.....evaluated ......" (Qianbian 7.22.3, ap.S.224.4)

This inscription is somewhat fragmentary, but there is no doubt that seven is the number of days, counting inclusively, between guiyou (10th) and jimaо (16th). Sun Yirang also identified  as , but said it was used for 隊. This usage may apply in some inscriptions, but very few. The graph is used mostly as a time-related word.
CONCLUSION ON CYCLICAL DATING

In Period I, the intervals between cyclical dates do not usually show any regularity, but there are some interesting exceptions to this. For example, Bingbian 122 and 126 contain some divinations that are ten days apart, but the subject matter does not appear to be related, so these are probably coincidences. Bingbian 529 contains nine duizhen pairs and one unpaired inscription, which were divined mostly on successive days, each asking if there would be rain the next day. The inscriptions repeat each other more or less verbatim, so there is little difficulty in establishing their relationship. They ask if Di will or will not order rain. As Zhang Bingquan remarks in his annotation, this must have been a time when the Shang particularly needed rain, which leads him to place it in the spring.

Thus there are no general criteria that apply to all bones. The date relationships on each bone must be worked out separately, but they are definitely one of the criteria that should be appealed to when establishing tongban relationships. The meticulous recording of dates, the constant retrieval of bones on subsequent days for further divination, and the storing of bones until their predictions came true or otherwise -- all this clearly had some rationale behind it. I suggest that that rationale is an intimate relationship between the purposed events recorded on the plastron or scapula, which their terse wording has now rendered opaque to us. By establishing the time relationships between different inscriptions it is sometimes possible to work out the temporal development of a particular affair. This also helps to corroborate the tongban hypothesis, which enables us to avoid certain misinterpretations, particularly with regard to whether a certain graph should be understood as a personal or place name, or in its original meaning. This is sometimes a problem in the oracle bones.
The sentences that make up duizhen and chengtao buci are obviously related as they often repeat each other word for word, so there is no need for me to dwell on them here. However, there are other instances in which the amount of shared vocabulary may be much less, perhaps even a single graph. I believe that in such cases a relationship may still be established. The reason why I feel that this approach is justified is that, as is widely acknowledged, there is a great deal of ellipsis in the oracle bone language. Such sentences as:

* "Jiazi day cracking, Que testing: This month will arrive."

* "Testing: This month will not arrive." (Bingbian 269.9/10)

are obviously elliptical, but in this case the duizhen does not supply the missing subject of "arrive" (and, in fact, neither does the rest of the plastron, which has a number of fragments missing). Another example is:

* "The king will not reign. At Long."

which I am tempted to translate as *"The king will not reign. At Long."

However, it is obvious that the king is the diviner here, and the graph shen 貞 should be supplied after wang 王. In view of this omission of what appear to be quite essential elements, one might begin to wonder whether it is even feasible to attempt to link different inscriptions together on
the same bone whose amount of shared vocabulary is minimal. However, as I shall demonstrate, although there is of course a limit as to how far one can go, it is not only possible, but also rewarding. It enables one to fill out elliptical inscriptions and thus understand them better. A single shared graph may be the surface vestige of a deeper connection. In some cases, a plastron may contain only one or two dated inscriptions, or sometimes even none (e.g. Bingbian 25 and 43), so we cannot appeal to the dating in order to establish relationships. In such cases, we can appeal to shared vocabulary. Grammatical words (xuci 虛辞), to a large extent, have to be excluded from this analysis, but they may be dealt with under my third criterion of grammatical parallelism.

In order to illustrate how the present criterion may be applied, I shall now examine Bingbian 3, which contains only two dated inscriptions (both jiwei, the 56th day in the cycle). I shall consider not only shared graphs, but also graphs that belong to the same general semantic category (e.g. place names, methods of hunting, etc.)
Bingbian 3

1. "Jiwei-day cracking, Zheng testing: Wang Hai is hexing us."


3. "It should be Zi Bu whom we call to lay (deer?) traps."

4. "It should not be Zi Bu whom we call."

5. "It should be Zi Shang whom we call."

6. "It should not be Zi Shang whom we call."

7. "It should be the king who goes."
8. [Image]
勿往王往。一

"It should not be the king who goes."

9. [Image]
贞: 王子龕鱼。一

"Testing: The king at Gong will camp."

10. [Image]
勿子龕鱼。一

"Should not at Gong camp."50

11. [Image]
贞: 我其有禍。一上吉二

"Testing: We will perhaps have misfortune."

12. [Image]
贞: 我亡禍。一

"Testing: We will not have misfortune."

13. [Image]
由王往。一

"It should be the king who goes."

14. [Image]
勿往王。一上吉

"It should not be the king."
15. 今夕雨。——三
   "Tonight it will rain."

16. 今夕不其。——三
   "Tonight it will not perhaps."

17. "Qi."

18. "Should not at."

19. 己未卜, 殷貞: 我于雉入(zhi)鱼。——吉
   "Jiwei-day cracking, Que testing: We will into Zhi enter and camp."

20. 常: 勿于雉鱼。——
   "Testing: Should not at Zhi camp."

21. "XX day cracking, Que testing: . . . . . . . net . . . . . ."

22. "Testing: The boar-netters will not perhaps."
23. 

"It should be the king."

24. 

"It should not be."

As I have already mentioned in regard to my first criterion, the Shang were usually quite meticulous about dating their inscriptions. In fact, the whole preface (qiāncì 前辞) is often repeated even when it is quite clear from a related inscription what the date was and who the diviner was. However, there were certain instances in which the date and also the diviner's name could be omitted, only the character zhen 贞 being left (and sometimes not even that). The preface is often omitted on one of the members of a duizhēn pair -- usually in the negatively phrased member, which usually occurs on the left side of the plastron. The preface is often omitted after the first inscription when a series of inscriptions repeats the same proposition verbatim or more or less verbatim (i.e. the so called chéngtāo bucí, e.g. Bīngbiān 5 and 7). Carving the inscriptions onto the bone must have been a time consuming process, so the preface was often omitted when it was felt to be dispensable. I therefore seems quite likely that the divinations recorded on the present plastron were all made on the same day (although 3.21 presents a problem, as it obviously had a date, but the part of the shell on which it occurred is now missing). This provides a good background for my attempt to link these inscriptions in a more detailed way on the basis of shared graphs.

The subject of 3.1/2, 11/12 and 19 is 我 'we', so these inscriptions all refer to things that affected the particular group of
people who made this divination. 3.1/2 and 11/12 are more closely connected by containing disaster graphs: yi in 3.1/2, and huo in 3.11/12. According to Mickel's analysis, " and complement each other in the oracle inscriptions. was used to ask if any sort of disaster would happen, and was used to indicate that a disaster of some sort had already occurred." Although Mickel is a little off the mark and somewhat vague, I believe he is right in suggesting that refers to something that already exists. Zhang Bingquan identifies as sui, and defines it as "鬼神作祟", i.e. a hex from the spirits, and he defines as "人世(包括人和物)受害", i.e. an actual misfortune. Thus the purpose of 3.1/2 is to find out if the ancestor Wang Hai is exercising a malevolent influence over the Shang's proposed activities, while 3.11/12 attempts to determine if there will be any specific disaster ensuing from such an influence.

Inscription 3.19 contains no disaster graphs, but the subject here is also wo, the same as in 3.1/2 and 11/12. It states a proposed activity (and its counterpart 3.20 negates it), which is entering into Zhi to camp. This activity (and probably also the others proposed on this plastron) would have been susceptible to disaster. We can see from this that and usually form the background to some proposed activity, as one might expect.

The graph in 3.19/20 further links this divination to 3.9/10 (this graph occurs in 3.10 only, but 3.9 forms a duizhen pair with it), so these two pairs of divinations are both concerned with camping. 3.9/10 divines whether the king should camp at Gong, and 3.19/20 divines whether "we" should camp at Zhi. The duizhen pair 3.17/18 are also connected with the camping inscriptions by the coverb yu, which is used here in the sense of 'going to such and such a place (to
encamp'), and by Qi 諨, which is a place name, and thus parallels Gong 龙 and Zhi 雞.

The wang wang 王往 inscriptions (3.7/8, 13/14, 23/24) pose a problem, as although the subject wang 王 'king' would connect them with 3.9/10 (about the king going to encamp at Gong), the verb of motion used is different, for the encampment inscriptions use the coverb yu 子 in conjunction with the verb ru 入 (which does not always appear on the surface). Furthermore, the wang wang 王往 inscriptions also show a grammatical parallelism with 3.3-6. That is, they are couched in the hui 豬 / wu wei 勿唯 exposure construction. The wang wang inscriptions thus show a partial affinity with two other groups of inscriptions on this shell. As grammatical parallelism is a criterion that I wish to deal with separately, I shall postpone discussion of these inscriptions for the moment.

3.3-6 may be related to 3.21/22 by the fact that they both mention a hunting activity. 3.3 mentions 龟, and 3.21/22 mention 龟. Zhang Bingquan transcribes them respectively as jing 靈 and luan 畫 61. The bone graphs clearly depict a deer in a pit, and a hand holding a long-handled net over a pig. Whether these graphs actually mean 'to dig a pit to catch deer' and 'to capture pigs with a long-handled net' is debatable, as the Chinese script was probably already logographic by this stage 62. Thus although the characters that Zhang uses for his transcription are not descended from the bone graphs in question, they are probably an accurate reflection of their status as words. They are probably best translated simply as 'trap' and 'catch'.

Thus far, by means of examining shared graphs and graphs of similar meaning, I have been able to form most of the inscriptions on this shell into two groups: 3.9/10, 17/18, 19/20 about encamping, and 3.3-6, 21/22
about hunting. 3.1/2 and 11/12, about cursing and disaster, could form the background to any of these activities, although the character 我 connects them directly only to 3.19/20. The group 3.7/8, 13/14, 23/24, about 王往 'the king going (to do something)', could be related to either the encamping or the hunting inscriptions.

When reading over a plastron such as this, it is easy to imagine how the snaring and the trapping and the going to various places to encamp may all be part of a long range hunting expedition, with this shell being divined 'on the road' as it were, and this is all extremely plausible. However, plausibility, as I have already stated, is not a criterion, as it is subjective and cannot be tested. By exploring the relationships between inscriptions that share one or two graphs in common, or contain one or two graphs of similar meaning, it is possible to arrive at more objective criteria for relating inscriptions whose wording is otherwise quite different. As I have already mentioned, I justify this by the frequent occurrence of ellipsis in duizhen and chengtao buci, about whose interrelationship there is no doubt. In view of this ellipsis, one certainly would not expect the Shang to fill in, for the benefit of present day palaeographers, the background relationships between all the inscriptions on a particular bone. To them, the relationships were obvious and went without saying.

The only inscriptions I have not yet related to anything else are 3.15/16, which divine about the possibility of rain "this evening" (which probably refers to the evening of jiwei-day, the only date mentioned on the front of this plastron). Plausibility suggests that the Royal hunting party wished to know if it would rain in the evening because they had to camp out for the night. However, I cannot make this connection on the basis of my present criterion. I can only suggest it. Nevertheless, the connections that I have already built up between the other inscriptions on this shell,
help to strengthen the thesis that all the inscriptions on this shell are connected. Curses, camping, and capturing game are thus not three different topics, but all part of the same scenario. Ultimately of course the topics of all the inscriptions on a particular bone or shell are as connected with each other as the various affairs of everyday life are all connected, in a rich tapestry of ineluctable interconcatenation.

I shall now continue my examination of this plastron using the criterion of grammatical parallelism.

**GRAMMATICAL PARALLELISM**

Since Chen Mengjia's ground-breaking study of oracle bone grammar, which assumes it to be largely the same as that of the classical Chinese of the Zhou dynasty, only sporadic studies of a limited scope have been made, and a complete grammar of the oracle bone language yet remains to be written. For the time being then, the most useful source for determining the syntactic behaviour of individual oracle bone graphs is Shima's concordance. By examining the syntactic behaviour of the words *hui* 往 and *wang* 往, it is possible to shed further light on the nature of the *tongban* relationships on *Bingbian* 3 which I was unable to clear up under my last criterion of shared vocabulary. I shall first examine the behaviour of *hui* 往.

The interpretation of 3.3-6 depends on whether one treats the person after *hui* 往 as the subject or object of the main verb *hu* 乎 (= 呼) 'to call'. In OBI, the emphatic auxiliary verb *hui* 往 may emphasize both nouns and verbs. For example:

王 往 往.《

"The king should go (as opposed to staying)." (Yibian 4542)
"It should be the king who goes (as opposed to someone else)."  
(Bingbian 3.7)

When it emphasizes nouns, the noun may be the subject, the direct object, or the indirect object. The function of the noun can usually be ascertained from the context, but the elliptical nature of OBI often gives rise to ambiguity. In such cases, the semantic value of the nouns in question must be taken into consideration. For example:

"It should be the king (who does something)."  
(Bingbian 3.23)

"It should be an ox (that we sacrifice)."  
(Jiabian 6.28)

"It should be Xiao Yi (to whom we sacrifice)."  
(Cuibian 287)

In OBI the king, being at the top of the power hierarchy, is usually the performer of actions, and so he is most likely the subject in the first example. Animals, on the other hand, are always the victims of some sacrifice or other, so the ox in the second example is most likely the direct object. Ancestors are usually the beneficiaries of such sacrifices, and so Xiao Yi in the third example is almost certainly the indirect object. These examples show how important it is to be fully aware of the extremely elliptical nature of OBI.

In the construction 'hui N V', N is usually the performer of V, and certainly so if the verb is intransitive, as seems to be the case with wang 往 'to go'. For an example of this, please see Bingbian 3.7, cited above. In the construction 'N₁ hui N₂ V', N₁ is the subject and N₂ is
the object, e.g.

"Testing: It should be the Longfang that the king attacks."

(Bingbian 24.21)

In my English translation I have had to use a cleft sentence in order to bring out the emphasis on "Longfang", but this of course does not reflect the word order of the original Chinese. If $N_1$ is deleted, as often happens in OBI, then the construction becomes ambiguous, as it means that $N_2$ is no longer limited to the object. However, in the many examples of 'hui 由 $N$ hu 乎 ' given by Shima (S.426.4; see also 'hui 由 $N$ ling 令', S.426.1), the occasional occurrence of another verb after $hu$ 乎, sometimes followed by another object noun, marks the first noun as definitely the object of $hu$ 乎, e.g.

"Testing: It should be the Duo Chen that [we] call to follow Zhi Jia."

(Yicun 544)

There is also an example of a hunting inscription, which makes it rather apposite to the topic of Bingbian 3:

"It should be the Duo Ma that [we] call to shoot and net."

(Cuibian 943)

Zhang Bingquan regards jing 阱 in Bingbian 3.3 as the name of a person or tribe 69, so his understanding of this sentence would appear to be something like "It should be Zi Bu who calls Jing." However, according to my
syntactic analysis, Zi Bu should be the object of  
and the graph  
is best interpreted as a verb. According to Zhang,  
occurs both as a hunting verb and as a place name, but he only admits it 
as a verb when it is directly followed by an animal  . He thus regards 
it as a place name in the following inscription:

戊午卜，争真 由王自往几。二月  

(Bingbian 114.6, cited by Zhang as 
Yibian 5408 in his annotation to 
Bingbian 3)

His understanding of the charge here would be something like "It should be 
the king himself who goes to Jing." I would translate this sentence as "It 
should be the king himself who goes trapping." The force of the word  
'self' here particularly serves to bring out the contrast between the king 
doing something in person, and calling on somebody else to do it. Unfortun­
ately the top part of Bingbian 114 is missing, but one can see from the 
graph  'capture' in the top left corner that there were some more 
hunting inscriptions on this plastron. Apart from these considerations, 
the verb  'to go', like its English counterpart, is intransitive, 
and normally requires a preposition to link it to a following place word.

In view of the grammatical parallelism, I thus feel quite confident 
in linking the  inscriptions (3.7/8, 13/14, 23/24) with 
3.3-6. The point of this divination is to determine whether Zi Bu or Zi 
Shang should be called on to go trapping, or whether the king himself 
should go trapping. The  inscriptions are not completely parallel, 
but then  is clearly impossible, as the king is at the top of 
the power hierarchy — no one can call on the king to go deer trapping, or 
anything else for that matter.
As for the syntactic behaviour of the verb *wang* (see S.76.4-80.1), its use in OBI shows that it is rarely if ever followed directly by a place name. This makes it quite different from *yu*, which is often followed by a place name. In fact, *yu* often serves to link *wang* to a place name, e.g.

乙卯卜, 韓貳今日王往于鮮。 73

"Yimao-day cracking, Que testing: Today the king will go to Chun."

(Cuibian 1043)

Otherwise, *wang* is usually followed by another verb, so its basic meaning seems to be 'to go (in order to do something)'. Even when followed by *yu*, it still sometimes seems to have this meaning. Compare:

王 往田。

"The king will go hunting."

王 往于子田。

"The king will go a-hunting." 74

There are many examples of this at S.77.2-4, so I have not specified which bones they appear on. Incidentally, this use of *yu* looks very similar to its use in the Odes as an aspect marker (e.g. "Shu has gone hunting", ode 77.1), and is comparable to the development of the gerund in English, a historical stage of which I have used in my translation above to reflect the construction of the Chinese. It therefore seems most likely that 3.7/8 are elliptical for 王往阱 /勿往王往阱 : "It should/should not be the king who goes to trap deer."

Although I have only studied the two words *hui* and *wang* in this section, the enormous amount of light that this has been able to shed
on the tongban relationships on the plastron Bingbian 3 shows how invaluable a full grammatical analysis of the OBI language would be, and one hopes that such a grammar will be available in the near future. In particular, I have been able to avoid the misinterpretation of jing as a place name, when it is in fact a verb. There are many ill-understood graphs in OBI which are relegated to the category of proper noun (e.g. place name, personal name, etc.) which should perhaps be reconsidered in this light.

I would now like to regroup the inscriptions of Bingbian 3 under various sub-topics as follows:

1. 己未卜，争贞：王亥在王。一
2. 貞：王亥不我弟。一
11. 貞：我其有禍。一上吉二
12. 貞：我亡禍。一二

3. 田子不呼眾。一
4. 勿往子不呼。一
5. 田子商呼。一
6. 勿往子商呼。一
7. 田王往。一
8. 勿往王往。一
13. [田]王往。一 [二]
14. 勿往王。一二上吉
23. 田王。一
24. 勿往。一
21. □□卜，殷貞：□□□□□□□□□。一二三四
22. 貞：□□□□□□□。一二三四
This regrouping shows how the inscriptions on this plastron form a homogeneous context.
The Use of Context in Decipherment

In this chapter I have examined three different criteria for establishing contextual links between the various inscriptions on a plastron, to wit: cyclical dates, shared vocabulary, and grammatical parallelism. Cyclical dates themselves are of little use as an aid to decipherment. The cross-referencing of dates serves chiefly to tie inscriptions together so that the unfolding of historical events may be seen behind them. This is especially so with charges that carry detailed verifications. One may trace the event from the Shang's anticipation through to the actual outcome. An examination of the dating of display inscriptions in relation to other inscriptions reveals the interesting fact that the inscriptions were not carved onto the shell until some time after the act of divination. In some cases it appears that the outcome of each divination was awaited before making the inscriptions. This enabled the Shang to select whichever divinations came true in a particularly obvious or favourable way for 'display' treatment, which is the carving of the charge, prognostication and verification in large, thick graphs as one continuous text. Very often the graphs were also filled in with a red pigment, thus making them stand out from the other inscriptions on the shell. Not only the positive charge, but also the negative charge is given the same display treatment.

As an aid to decipherment, shared vocabulary and grammatical parallelism are more useful. To some extent they overlap, since the grammatical structures are formed by vocabulary items. As an example of how they may be used to fill out elliptical inscriptions, I shall now examine the pronoun \textit{zhi 之}, and see how these criteria may be used to determine its referent.
My first example is Bingbian 446/447, from which I quote only those inscriptions which are relevant.

446.1. "...... 卜甲月戈
...... 乎子凡観。
"...... If we call on Zi Fan, he will get better."

2. "...... 亡伊戈
...... 不其観。
"...... He will not perhaps get better."

447.3. 〇
観。
"Get better."

4. "...... 亡丘王乎戈
...... 敗。佳之乎戈, 身若。
"...... defeat. If it is this that we call to attack, the body will be favoured."

5. 皆丕戈
勿佳之, 不若。
"It should not be this, as it will not be favoured."

The rear inscription 447.3 is clearly related to the front inscriptions 446.1/2 by the graph chong 㱭, which denotes recovery from illness.

The duizhen 447.4/5 may be related to 446.1/2 by the common graph hu 乎 'to call on', which is generally used in the bones of calling on a warrior to go and attack an enemy tribe. Not only that, 447.4/5 are inscribed on
the rear of the shell directly behind 446.1/2, which greatly strengthens their hypothesis that they are related. This enables one to deduce that the referent of \textit{zhì} in 447.4/5 is the Zi Fan mentioned in 446.1. The construction in 447.4 is slightly unusual, as one would normally expect \textit{hùi} here rather than \textit{wèi}, especially in view of the fact that the \textit{duizhen} begins with \textit{wù wèi}, which is the usual negation of \textit{hùi}. The graphs on the rear of the plastron are very difficult to make out, so I have had to be guided largely by Zhang Bingquan's transcription, which is taken from the original bone, so I can only assume it is correct. What this group of inscriptions seems to be implying is that attacking an enemy of the Shang could be used as a form of expiation for driving away some bodily affliction which was caused by the ancestors. The significance of \textit{shén ruò} is that the (sick) body will be favoured by the ancestors, and hence will recover. The word \textit{shén} 'body' is nearly always used in the oracle bones in connection with illness (see S.6.4), so it is quite consistent to interpret it here as referring to Zi Fan's illness. At first sight, it may seem odd that a sick person is being sent out to fight a battle, so we must assume that the illness was not a debilitating one. In \textit{Bingbian} 29/31.2 and inscription no. 2 on the rear of Xucun 388 (which I have already examined as set no. 2 in my chapter on \textit{chengtao}), the possibility of the warrior Dian Feng taking the field is divined, but this possibility is affected by Dian Feng's illness. Illness was seen as a sign of heavenly displeasure, and was thus a bad omen when a military campaign was about to be undertaken. In the first set I examined (\textit{Bingbian} 12-21), we also find that the king is proposing to follow a certain warrior into battle against an enemy, but is plagued by toothache. In view of these connections, it may be possible to speculate that illness was not only seen as a sign of heavenly disfavour, but that carrying out some ancestrally
favoured activity, such as a military operation, would cause the illness to go away. This would then be a sign that the favour of the ancestors had been won back. Obviously I am not suggesting that the sole purpose of Shang military campaigns was to cure illness, as that would be absurd. What I am saying is that illness among the ruling class, and especially the king's illness, was seen as a sign of ancestral disfavour. This disfavour must have been caused by some sin or omission on the king's part, for example, not dealing with the Shang's enemies. When the sin had been rectified, then presumably the signs of ancestral disfavour, e.g. the king's illness, should disappear. Thus it is not unreasonable to see a relationship between such apparently divergent topics as warfare and illness. These topics may seem divergent to us, but it is important to try and look at these things with a 'Shang mentality', if that is possible. There is a coherent social context behind every plastron, and the palaeographer cannot ignore it if he is to have any touchstones for the accuracy of his interpretations.

Another example in which the referent of zhi is more obvious is Bingbian 191. The front of this plastron contains two pairs of duizhen, as follows:

1. 己丑卜方貞: 隹免人。
   "Jichou-day cracking, Bin testing: It is the people of Mian."76

2. 貞:不隹免人。
   "Testing: It is not the people of Mian."
It is only by appealing to the tongban hypothesis that inscriptions 3 and 4 can be made sense of. It is quite clear from the grammatical parallelism between 1/2 and 3/4 that "these people" refers to the people of Mian.

It is disappointing that there are many instances of the pronoun zhi in which its referent cannot be deduced from some other inscription on the same plastron. Although the oracle bones are to some extent a historical record, they are by no means a complete record.
How Many Topics Are There On A Plastron?

According to Akatsuka Kiyoshi, the various divination topics on an oracle bone are often thematically connected. In this chapter, I have tried to propose some objective criteria by which the forging of such links may be justified. However, the number of topics on an oracle bone, and whether or not they are related, also depends to a large extent on what one considers to constitute a divination 'topic'. Many authors have given lists of Shang divination topics. For convenience' sake, I here give Keightley's list, which is quite comprehensive:

1. Sacrifices
2. Military campaigns
3. Hunting expeditions
4. Excursions
5. The ten-day week
6. The night or the day
7. The weather
8. Agriculture
9. Sickness
10. Childbirth
11. Distress or trouble
12. Dreams
13. Settlement building
14. Orders
15. Tribute payments
16. Divine assistance or approval
17. Requests addressed to ancestral or nature powers
As Keightley himself says, this list is "by no means exhaustive". Nevertheless, it shows quite a detailed categorization. I propose to simplify this scheme by means of a reclassification into main topics and contingent topics:

**Main topics**

1. Military
2. Hunting
3. Agricultural
4. Childbirth
5. Settlement building (national expansion)
6. Ritual

**Contingent topics**

i. Weather

ii. Sickness

As you can see, there are quite a number of things that I have excluded altogether, and I shall now explain why.

My major omission is that of sacrifices, dreams, and divine assistance or approval, which I reclassify as the omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome. Any action that the Shang proposed was subject to the approval or disapproval of any ancestor or natural force, or even of Di himself. A good example of this syndrome is the inscription *Bingbian* 350.14:

大 史 般/行

王 聽 僖 禍。乙 玄 酉。

"The king's hearing voices means disaster. On yihai-day, you-sacrifice."
Curses and disasters are usually expressed by the terms *yi* 禿 and *huo* 禝. I have already discussed these to some extent, as they appear on Bingbian 3, which I examined earlier. On that particular plastron, *yi* 禝 and *huo* 禝 are divined separately, but as one can see from the inscriptions (S.209.4-210.3. under *you yi* 出矢, 矢矢), these two manifestations of heavenly displeasure often occur in the same inscription. This is a further argument for carefully distinguishing their respective meanings. Here is an example from the present corpus:

"The king read the cracks and said: When there is such-and-such a weather condition 81, perform *you*-sacrifice. It is that there is a curse, (but) 82 there will not be misfortune."  
(Bingbian 48.1 and 2 [wording identical])

These inscriptions occur on the back of the plastron. On the front of this plastron in the corresponding position, we find inscriptions which propose the performing of the *you*-sacrifice on the *gongfa* 宮伐 'palace victims':

"Testing: Next *yimao*-day, *you*-sacrifice our palace victims in the north-east corner 84.
On *yimao*-day, we did indeed perform *you*-sacrifice. At dawn it was overcast."
(Bingbian 47.1, opp.48.1)
In a number of other inscriptions (e.g. Bingbian 207/209.3, which I examined in chapter two), the you-sacrifice is used as a method of seeking rain. Hence the significance of the verification following 47.1. The overcast sky was probably seen as a harbinger of rain, and hence a sign that the you-sacrifice had been received favourably by the ancestors. It is possible that the particular form the yi 爰 curse took on this occasion was lack of rain. The graph which I transcribe as 穴 seems to indicate a weather condition that is incompatible with rain. This plastron is entirely devoted to ritual, and no other proposed activities which might be affected by the lack of rain are mentioned.

On plastron Bingbian 619/620 (front and back respectively), we find yi 言, huo 福, and a proposed activity all mentioned on the same shell:

619.1. ↓↓ + 搖石 
丁亥卜, 鬼貞: 旗亡福。古王事。

"Dinghai-day cracking, Que testing: Ran (?) will not have disaster. He will carry out (successfully) the king's business."

2. .... 搖石 ....

.... 葬貞: 旗 ....

"......Que testing: Ran....."
These are the only inscriptions on this plastron, of which only a fragment remains. Nevertheless, one can see quite clearly that the king was entrusting a person called Ran to carry out his (military) affairs. "Ran will not have disaster" is more of a wish than a divination. The back of the plastron reveals that there was a jinx abroad. However, as I have already demonstrated, such a jinx did not necessarily result in the occurrence of a specific misfortune.

Another example is Bingbian 631/632 (front and back), which is somewhat more complete. Here we find the following two inscriptions occupying a duizhen position to the left and right of the central suture, although their wording is not antithetical:

631.1. 

"Testing: The king will go hunting."

632.1. 

"Wuzi-day." (opp. 631.4)
2. 王狩。

"The king will hunt." (opp. 631.1)

Inscription 632.2 carries a duizhen, also on the right side, which reads:

632.3. 王勿卒狩。

"The king should not after all hunt."

Just above 632.2, there is an inscription which reads:

632.7. 女王。

"..... Ancestral Queens are cursing the king."

We can see from this that the Shang felt the king's proposed hunting activity was subject to an ancestral curse, emanating from the deceased Shang queens. Inscription 632.1 simply says "wuzi-day", i.e. the 25th in the cycle, and probably dates 631.4, which occurs on the other side of the plastron in the same position.

Inscriptions 631.11/12 and 16 mention huo 'misfortune'. The omen for this is that the king dreamt of guan 'libation'. These inscriptions do not appear to be directly related to the hunting inscriptions. They are general inscriptions divining about the possibility of misfortune, but they do not mention this misfortune with regard to a particular event or activity. However, presumably it had implications for something close at hand.
One can see from this how omens and curses formed the other-worldly background to the Shang's everyday affairs. They were living in a sort of twilight zone, full of sinister influences and baleful spirits. Therefore, for any proposed action, three things were necessary. Firstly, they had to determine whether there was a curse, and whether it would result in misfortune. Under this rubric come all the disaster graph divinations, such as yi 福 and huo 福. Secondly, any omens that had appeared had to be interpreted. The commonest type of omen is the dream, and the allied phenomenon ting 倾, which I interpret as 'hearing the voices of the ancestors'. It was necessary to determine which ancestor was causing the dream, and whether it was a sign of misfortune. Weather could also be an omen: a long period without rain could signify a curse from the other world, and there was also the natural phenomenon 天 ， which probably referred to thunder. Other natural phenomena, such as rainbows and eclipses of the sun and moon, were also probably looked upon as omens. The king's sicknesses were probably regarded as bad omens, indicating divine disapproval. Thirdly, once the omens had been interpreted and the possibility of misfortune ascertained, a propitiatory sacrifice had to be offered, in order to ward off the misfortune. Some bones appear to contain nothing but sacrifice divinations, in which case sacrifice must be regarded as the main topic, and I classify this as 'ritual', but usually it is part of the omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome, which is intimately connected with actions proposed on the same bone.

Also part of this syndrome are the ritual formulae that attempt to ward off disaster. This includes Keightley's topics 4, 5, and 6. The typical excursion formula is wang lai wang huo 往來亡福 'going and returning there will be no disaster', which Keightley describes as a "ritual incantation". The ten-day week divinations usually read xun wang huo 旬亡福 'in the
next ten days there will be no disaster', which Keightley also refers to as "routine incantations". The night and day divinations are usually similarly phrased. Clearly then, these cannot be regarded as divination topics. They contain no thematic material, and are simply spells.

I shall now discuss my two contingent topics, which I have separated from the omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome due to the more independent nature of their thematic content. Firstly, the weather. On the oracle bones, weather usually consists of rain. Some bones talk about nothing but rain, in which case rain must be recognised as the main topic. However, in most cases, rain is a contingent topic related to some other main topic. The main topic is either agriculture (receiving an abundant harvest), or else some outside activity, such as a hunting expedition or outdoor sacrifice. In the former case rain is often (though not necessarily) desired, and sometimes sought after through sacrifice. In the latter case rain is not desired. The Shang hoped that it would stay fine for their outdoor activities. As Keightley puts it: "The concern was to discover how the weather might affect agriculture, ritual activity, or the king's various expeditions." Thus rain divinations can, in most cases, be regarded as a contingent topic, whose only point of interest is how it affects some other activity.

As for sickness divinations, these rarely form the main topic on a bone. The king's sickness is usually divined in connection with some proposed activity in which the king was supposed to participate, such as a military expedition. The sickness here is probably also seen as an omen, a sign that the ancestors are not favouring the king in a particular activity. When the sickness divination is for a woman, it is usually in connection with childbirth. Apart from this, there are some plastrons whose main topic seems to be sickness or death.

Because sacrifices, weather (rain) and sickness sometimes appear to form
the main topic on a plastron, I have also put them in parentheses under my list of main topics. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the possibility that not all of the divinations for a particular plastron were necessarily inscribed on it. As one can see from Zhang Bingquan’s transcriptions, many shells bear crack numbers for which there is no associated inscription, and the number of such 'silent' cracks is by no means small.

Having discussed my analysis into main topics and contingent topics, I shall now clear up a few loose ends that are left over.

Firstly, Keightley’s topic no. 14, "orders". This is quite easily dealt with, as the order is always to perform a particular activity. Either a group of people, such as the Duo Chen臣, or an individual, such as a general or a member of the nobility, is 'called on' (hu 令) or 'ordered' (ling 令) to perform an activity, such as hunting, making war against a certain fangguo, or performing a certain ritual. The ordering is clearly incidental to these main topics, and does not constitute a topic in itself.

The only matter left to deal with now is "tribute payments", and the related activity shì示. These two things are not divinations at all, but records. The tribute is usually turtle shells, and is recorded on the back of the plastron, usually in a corner. The record gives the name of the contributor, and the amount contributed. The thing contributed is rarely mentioned, as it is in fact the shell itself, and so did not require stating. Sometimes the place of contribution is also mentioned, as in Bingbian 13/21.9:

"You Fei contributed 2. At X."
The verb of contribution is usually *ru* 入, but occasionally *lai* 来 is used. The meaning of *lai* 来 in this context is 'to cause to come', and so it is normally used of living things, such as oxen or Qiang tribesmen. This sort of tribute was probably for sacrificial purposes. The strange thing about *lai* 来 tribute is that it often appears in divinations, e.g.

甲辰卜，殹貞奚來白馬。王曰吉，其來。一二三四五
"Jiachen-day cracking. Que testing: Xi will cause-to-come the white horses. The king read the cracks and said: Auspicious. Perhaps he will cause-to-come."

甲辰卜，殹貞奚不其來白馬五。一[二]三[四]
"Jiachen-day cracking. Que testing: Xi will not perhaps cause-to-come the white horses (to the number of) five." (Bingbian 157.11/12)

Because of this phenomenon, I also list "*lai* tribute" as a main topic in brackets, although I suspect that it is related to sacrifice, as the tribute is usually the sort of thing that the Shang used in sacrifice, such as oxen and Qiang tribesmen.

As for *shi* 示, this is usually interpreted as meaning 'to prepare (plastrons for divination)', as it is often followed by the graph 䛽, which represents a prepared plastron and carapace tied together, and may probably be identified with the character 續 續 in the sense of 'a pair'.

A typical *shi* record reads:

Fu Qi prepared seven brace and one shell.

Bin." (Houbian xia.33.10, ap. S.151.4)
Bin is an official's signature. Records like these of course have no connection whatsoever with the divination topics on a plastron. They are simply bureaucratic records.

According to the above analysis, how many topics are there on a Period I plastron? Very often different topics seem to be scattered about in wild profusion, but in quite a number of cases one can discern a definite homogeneous context lying behind the inscriptions on a particular plastron. Among the plastrons that I have examined, we see that Bingbian 1 is devoted to a complex military operation, and Bingbian 3 concerns a hunting expedition. Apart from the central theme, a plastron will also often contain a contingent topic, such as rain, and an omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome, either in whole or in part. A thematic analysis of Bingbian 3, for example, would yield the following scheme: 103

```
MAIN TOPIC
hunting

CONTINGENT TOPICS
where to camp for the night;
rain.

CURSE/DISASTER
yi 祀 huo 福
"To Bi Ji exorcise."

PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE
4.3: 于妣乙即。
```

The main topic is hunting, and the contingent topics are where to encamp for the night, and rain. Actually, the rain is more directly contingent to the other contingent topic of where to camp for the night, but there can be little doubt that these divinations are all thematically interrelated.

The curse divination attempts to find out whether the ancestor Wang Hai 104 is cursing their hunting expedition, and the disaster divination tries to find out if this baleful influence will result in some specific misfortune, probably a hunting accident. We know that hunting accidents sometimes
occurred from the inscription Jinghua, which relates how people were thrown from the king's chariot because the charioteer drove recklessly.

On the back of the plastron, a propitiatory sacrifice to the Ancestral Mother Ji is proposed. The Shang may have regarded her as an intermediary who could mollify the august and somewhat remote ancestor Wang Hai. The main reason for her being chosen as the recipient of this sacrifice is probably because it was a ji day in the cycle.

Because of the links that I have already been able to make between the inscriptions on this plastron according to other criteria, it is thus now possible to tie the whole thing together into a coherent divinatory scheme. The fact that this can be done for some plastrons without too much difficulty, should hold out hope for the analysis of those plastra whose inscriptions taken individually are too obscure and elliptical to make much sense of. Such ellipsis was possible because the different inscriptions formed a context in real life that the diviners were fully familiar with.
CONCLUSION

Although plausibility plays a large part in determining the relationship between the sundry inscriptions on a bone or plastron, there are some hard criteria that we can appeal to in order to support such relationships. In this chapter, I have examined a few of the major ones.

I have also examined the credibility of Akatsuka's tongban hypothesis (that all the inscriptions on a shell are related), and arrived at the conclusion that even in Period I there are many examples of plastrons devoted to one main topic, such as war, hunting, agriculture, national expansion, or childbirth, which may be accompanied by a contingent topic, such as rain or sickness. It is also usually accompanied by at least a part of the omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome. Any proposed action of the Shang's was liable to be thwarted by any ancestor or spirit, so they always had to find out if any ancestor would stand in their way and, if such was the case, how to avert disaster. This was especially necessary when there was an omen, such as a dream by the king or some natural phenomenon. Sacrifices rarely form the main topic on a plastron, as the whole point of a sacrifice is to obtain some favour from the ancestors for a particular reason, or to ward off some calamity. An exception to this would be the standard wu si 五祀 'five sacrifices', a ritual cycle of sacrifices that was carried out according to a prescribed pattern without reference to contemporary events.

Rain is also rarely the main topic, as it is either desired for some purpose (e.g. harvest) or not desired for some other purpose (e.g. hunting or outdoor sacrifice). The king's illnesses are also often linked to other things, usually military activities. The illness prevented the king from taking part in the activity, and was probably also seen as an omen, a sign of disfavour from the ancestors.
Records of tribute and plastron preparation are completely extraneous to the topic of divination, as they are simply bureaucratic records which identify who contributed the shell and who prepared it for divination.

However, there are many notable exceptions to this general tendency. Examples of multi-topical plastrons are: military + hunting (Bingbian 76, 78, 120); childbirth + harvest (Bingbian 90, 96); agriculture + military + childbirth (Bingbian 243). Some of these topics may not be totally unconnected. For example, hunting may have been used not only to furnish the royal larder, but also as a military exercise or wargame', while childbirth and harvest are both aspects of fertility. However, some topics, such as military and agricultural (Bingbian 55) or hunting and agricultural (Bingbian 98), seem to be in complete conflict with each other. This may simply reflect the nature of life, that only one task is concentrated on at a time usually. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a definite tendency for a plastron to be devoted to one main topic and its various ramifications. This helps to explain the rationale that lies behind the storing of plastrons for renewed divination at a later date: the subsequent divinations concerned the development of that particular affair. The oracle bone record thus formed a sort of archive for the Shang. The history of their military campaigns, royal births, harvests, and lunar and solar eclipses, were all written therein.

Thus one can say that Akatsuka's hypothesis is justified to a certain extent, in so far as each bone or plastron usually has some focal topic or concern, but it is very difficult to work out the specific relationships between the events that lie behind the inscriptions, and such an attempt must necessarily be somewhat hypothetical. For example, because inscriptions which may be translated as "It is Di's ministers who order" and "Testing: The king goes out" are found on the same scapula, he assumes that Di's ministers ordered the king to go out. The term 'go out' means 'go out on a
military campaign', and the topic of this bone is clearly military. However, what Di's ministers ordered is not stated\textsuperscript{108}. One can go as far as saying that it was probably something of a military nature, but there is no evidence that it was the king's going out that they ordered. In another example, Akatsuka assumes that the purpose of going fishing is to catch fish for use in a harvest prayer\textsuperscript{109}. However, there are no examples of inscriptions that describe the use of fish in a sacrifice, let alone a harvest prayer\textsuperscript{110}. The sort of animals that the Shang used in sacrifice were usually domestic animals, such as sheep, oxen, pigs, dogs, and Qiang tribesmen. The purpose of hunting and fishing was simply to catch food. One can see that a great deal of caution is necessary in proposing such hypotheses, but, with that caveat in mind, \textit{tongban} relationships can definitely provide a lot of valuable information. The whole is always greater than the sum of its parts.
In this thesis I have investigated three major contextual layers in OBI, from duizhen to chengtao to tongban, from pairs of sentences to groups of sentences to whole plastrons. Each layer has something to tell us about the nature of OBI, and each layer can make its own contribution to the task of decipherment and interpretation. The comparison of duizhen and chengtao can reveal things about grammatical structure and use of graphs, while tongban relationships can also reveal to some extent the nature of Shang life itself. Although my line of approach in this paper has been mainly from the point of view of the language, the aspect of Shang life is also something that should not be overlooked. The sociological and linguistic aspects constantly reinforce each other in the task of understanding oracle bone inscriptions.

The complex interaction of these three layers of context not only helps in understanding the inscriptions, but also reflects the bureaucratic organisation of the Shang. The oracle bones were inscribed according to a certain format, with crack numbers in a certain order, tribute records in a certain place, prognostications and verifications in a certain place, all according to prescribed formulae. After their first use, the oracle bones were stored in archives, and taken out for further divination when the particular affair on each bone so required. All in all, the Shang oracle records, despite the unusualness of the material on which they are written, have every appearance of being genuine historical documents, meticulously kept and empirically tested.
Notes to Chapter One

1. By 'historical' I mean the time from which the earliest 'soft' texts have been transmitted. Up until the discovery of the oracle bones in 1899, the Shang dynasty was held by most to be mythical. The previous 'dynasty', Xia, is also beginning to acquire some historicity, through the medium of archaeology, but of course it cannot have been anything like the Golden Age that later writers looked back on with such fondness.

2. The insight into the significance of the particle qi 其 was done by Serruys (1974).

3. I am grateful to Professor Pulleyblank for pointing this out to me.


10. Ibid., p. 21. This is not to say, of course, that primitive societies are 'childish'. The fact is that, from a technological point of view, some societies are much less developed than certain other societies, and, rather as the human embryo exhibits various stages of mammalian evolution during its rapid growth and transformation, so less developed societies can tell us a lot about the stages that more developed societies may have gone through at some time in their past, but of which there are no records save the archaeological one. Archaeology and modern comparative studies must be used both to enrich and restrain each other. Nevertheless, I am grateful to Professor Overmeyer for pointing out to me that one should be wary of using words such as 'primitive'.
11. Ibid., pp. 21-22.


13. Ibid., p. 4. It has been suggested that the inability of Islamic people to recognise depictions of humans is that this is forbidden in their art. Not expecting to see a human form, they are thus unable to recognise it.

14. E.g. Shirakawa, who suggests that the bones were only inscribed when the king's predictions came true. Thus an inscriptionless bone represents an instance of the king being wrong, while inscribed bones, whether they bear prognostications and verifications or not, ipso facto mean that the desired result was obtained. This is an important point, as it would mean that the divination inscriptions are not simply divinations, but also records of what actually happened. See Shirakawa 1948, p. 27.


16. Ibid., p. 231.

17. The various legends about Fu Xi and the Yellow Emperor may be found gathered in chapters 78 and 79 of the Song dynasty compilation Taiping Yulan. Cang Jie is also referred to in the postface to the Shuowen Jiezi. According to the Morohashi dictionary, Cang Jie had four eyes, but no source is given for this legend, which does not appear in the postface to the Shuowen, where Cang Jie gets a very brief mention indeed. The Taiping Yulan, chapter 749, "Shu.xia: guwen " quotes the Shuduan (a Song dynasty work by Zhang Huaiguan on various writing styles) as saying: "古文者，黃帝史蒼頡所造也。顓首有四目。適於神明。仰觀奎星圖曲之勢，俯察龜文鳥跡之象，操乎最美合而為字。" (The so-called 'ancient script' was invented by the Yellow Emperor's scribe, Cang Jie. Jie had four eyes in his head. He could communicate with the spirits. Looking up he saw the circular formation of the Kui constellation,
and looking down he noticed the patterns of turtle shells and bird tracks. Selecting their several beauties, he combined them to make characters)."

However, Zhang seems to be confusing two different legends here, as it was Fu Xi who looked up at the heavens and down at the earth, and this inspired him to create the Eight Hexagrams (bagua 八卦) which form the basis of the Yijing 易經. This legend is much older, being found in the Xici 世紀 to the Yijing, which is one of the so-called Shiyi 十翼 attributed to Confucius. Furthermore, it was the Yellow Emperor who was reputed to have had four eyes or, in some sources, four faces. The Taiping Yulan quotes Huangfu Mi's 帝王世紀, which gives a rational explanation for the source of this legend: "分掌四方，各如己視，故號曰：黃帝四目。 ([The Yellow Emperor] divided [his officers] to superintend the four regions [of China], and each one was like [the Yellow Emperor's] own sight [i.e. their government was as effective as if the Yellow Emperor had been there in person]. Hence the saying: The Yellow Emperor had four eyes)."

This passage also goes on to say that the Yellow Emperor had si fei 四妃 'four consorts', so perhaps another reason for his having four eyes was so that he could keep an eye on all of them.

A similar story is related in the Shizi 戶子 (a lost work by Shi Jiao 戶佼 390-330 B.C., also quoted in the Taiping Yulan, chapter 79), where Zi Gong 子貢 asks Confucius if he believes the legend that the Yellow Emperor had four faces. Confucius replies quite calmly: "黃帝取合己者四人，使治四方，不計而耦，不約而成。此之謂四面。（Those that the Yellow Emperor took to cooperate with him were four men. He set them to governing the four quarters. They harmonized spontaneously, and succeeded together without previous agreement. This is what is meant by 'four faces')."
According to Guo Moruo (ap. Xiang Xia 1974, p. 18), "文字是語言的表象。任何民族的文字都和語言一樣, 是勞動人民在勞動生活中從無到有, 從少到多, 從多頭嘗試到約定俗成, 所逐步孕育, 選練, 發展出來的。"

(Writing is the expression of language. The writing of any people, just like their language, is something that slowly grows, is refined, and develops during the labouring lives of the labouring people, from nothing to something, from few to many, from individual trial to popular agreement.)"

19. In their ornamental writing, the Egyptians also strove for symmetry. See Watterson 1981, p. 57.
20. Tsien 1962, pp. 41-42. The last case refers to the so-called "□□鼎" vessel, which is reproduced in a rubbing in Rong Geng 1941, I.94, fig. 54. This really is a unique example.
23. Antithetical pairs of inscriptions are found on scapulae, but are not arranged in the mirror-like fashion that one finds on plastra. Rather they run up the scapula (e.g. Cuibian 1100). It might be asked if the duizhen practice was initially inspired by the use of the symmetrical plastrons. I would prefer to believe that the act of putting questions to the oracle in antithetical pairs was already an established ritual, and it was only the mirror-like arrangement of these on the plastron that was inspired by the plastron's symmetry.
25. Ibid., p. 244. The question of whether the Chinese honoured the left or the right is a complicated one, as it seems to have varied between dynasties. Morohashi gives the following table to demonstrate this fluctuation:

| 清代 | 明朝 | 元朝 | 宋朝 | 唐朝 | 六朝 | 两汉 | 秦朝 | 燕国 | 三代
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------
| 尚左 | 尚左 | 尚右 | 尚左 | 尚左 | 尚右 | 尚右 | 尚右 | 尚右 | 尚右 |

Sometimes the side which is honoured also depends on the context, e.g. in the army, at a feast, at a funeral, or the hierarchy of court officials. It appears that through most of Chinese history, an official 'of the left' was higher in rank than an official 'of the right'. Despite this convention, I doubt if the Chinese were able to overcome the universal human tendency to associate subconsciously bad meanings with the left. In the *Book of Rites*, it mentions that men should walk on the right side of the road, and women on the left (Legge 1967, vol. 1, p. 455, Neize 内则 I.12; Chinese edition *juan* 12, *zhang* 2, p. 6). The attitude towards the left in Zhou times at least may be deduced from the position that women held in that society.


27. Ibid., p. 4.
28. Corballis and Beale 1976, p. 112. I am grateful to Professor Pulleyblank for pointing out to me the literature on this subject.

29. The denigration of the left hand is taken to extremes in some cultures. For example, among Arabs, only the left hand is used for cleaning the anus or genitals. See Needham 1973, p. 62.

30. Ibid., p. 95.

31. As a verb this term is now written 佐 and, although now pronounced in shang sheng 上声 was originally qu sheng 去声, so it is in fact a derivative of the word for left and not simply the same word. The same situation applies to the word 右 作为 a noun it was shang sheng, but qu sheng as a verb. I am grateful to Professor Pulleyblank for pointing this fact out to me.


33. Chow also discusses these examples, ibid., p. 48. However, my translation of them was suggested to me by Professor Takashima, to whom I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for this.


35. Ibid., p. xxii.

36. Ibid., p. 134.

37. Li Daliang 1972, p. 87: "問正問反，則 決事之加 詳加 密而已．"


40. Ferguson 1928, p. 135.


43. Guan Xiechu (1981), mentions that Shang bones have actually been found bearing such sequences of numbers (pp. 142-143, and diagram on p. 149).
44. Translation from Biot 1969, vol.2, pp.69-71, paras.1-5. Chinese edition p.251. The Zuozhuan, "Ai 9", contains an example of the yarrow stalks and the turtle both being used to divine about the same event (see Guan Xiechu 1981, p.145). It was the yarrow stalks that were used to determine the hexagrams. According to the Book of Rites "The shell and the stalks should not be both used on the same subject (卜筮不相襲).") (Legge 1967, vol.1, p.94, para.26. Chinese edition juan 1, zhang 57, p.30). It seems that the human desire for certainty often led to this injunction being ignored.


46. The carving of inscriptions on the back is a very common phenomenon. I discuss the relationship between front and back inscriptions more fully in chapter 3, pp. 114-116, concerning Bingbian 197/198.

47. It was not that there was no room on the plastron as a whole, as many plastrons that have plenty of room on the front still have inscriptions on the back. It is rather because there was not enough room near the associated divination crack, as I argue in chapter 3, p.114.


49. Bingbian I.1, p. 72.

50. For this identification, see Takashima, "Nominalization and nominal Derivation with Particular Reference to the Language of Oracle-Bone Inscriptions", pp. 41-47 (manuscript pagination).

51. Keightley 1978, p. 51, n. 124. There is an interesting passage in the Book of Rites which may be of some relevance here:

問卜筮曰義與志。與義則可問，志則否。
"In asking about what had been referred to the tortoise-shell or the stalks, two things were to be considered, whether the thing asked about were right, and what was the diviner's own mind. On the matter of right he might be questioned, but not on what was in his own mind."

52. In this instance the mouth element looks more like a ding 丁, so it should normally be transcribed as cheng 成. However, it must refer to the same ancestor Xian as in inscriptions nos. 16 and 17.

53. This could also be interpreted as a conditional sentence: "If we offer human victims (starting) from Xian, we will get approval."


56. Ibid., pp. 242-243.

57. Yu ding 雳丁 could also mean something like 'Yu's soldiers'. Cf. the Huang Yin ding ren 黄尹丁人 referred to by Qiu Xigui (1983, pp. 23-24). Ding 丁 is used to mean 'person belonging to a particular employment' in later Chinese, cf. Zhuang Zi's paoding jieniu 蒲丁解牛.

58. The fact that wang bai 亡败 was uppermost in the Shang mind is clear because the preface is omitted from the lefthand inscription, so this one must have been divined second.

59. For the interpretation of you 有 as 'get', see Takashima (1983b:) "A Palaeographer's Note on Nominalization: An Emphatic Verb Phrase in OBI", pp. 7-10; p. 28. For example, you yu 有雨 means 'get rain', not *'there is rain'.


61. The 中 element in this graph is probably the original pictograph for dun 盾 'shield'. It cannot be zhong 中, as that is written 齐 in OBI.

62. In not a few inscriptions, the diviner's name is also reversed. This would seem to be more aesthetic than magical.

63. I am grateful to Professor Pulleyblank for point this out to me.

64. Although I translate you 之所 for the moment as 'to have', it has been proposed that in some cases it could function as an honorific prefix, like the Japanese o- 行. See Takashima 1980a (usage e.).
65. We can tell this refers to the king from inscription no. 5 on this plastron, which reads: 貞:王其疾圂.

66. For my phonetic rendering of the graph 離, see p. 197, n. 30. It is either a place name or a tribal name. The two are often difficult to distinguish in OBI.

67. The graph 多 has been identified by Wang Guowei as 敘 in the sense of 遏, or 謊 (see LXD 5.1852), as in Ode 300, "斿詵禽宮": "敘商之旅": "He disposed of the forces of Shang" (translation from Matthews under 敘, read as dui). Karlgren interprets the ode line as "He brought together the multitudes of Shang" (see gloss 1162), but says that Waley's interpretation of 敘 as a loan for 頓 in the sense of 'to ruin' is still worth considering.

68. The handwriting of 119.3/4 is noticeably different from that of 119.1/2, 5/6, especially in their forms of Que and Qiao 鰲, which in the latter are rounded, but in the former more angular. They may have been engraved by different people.


70. However, this criterion may not be as sound as it appears, as we do not know how strictly the inscriber had to adhere to the wording of the divinatory utterances. Did he in fact write exactly what was said? Or was he free to omit material from the second member of a duizhen which he felt was obvious from the first member? The preface, for example, is not part of the charge. It is simply a record of the date of the divination and who was in charge of it. Clearly it was not necessary to repeat it where it was obvious. Presumably a right-handed inscriber would tend to do the right-side inscriptions first, and therefore would be more likely to omit things from the left-side inscriptions if he felt they could be understood. There is no way one can tell from the cracks themselves which ones were scorched first.
74. Such as Bingbian 96.20/21 (see p.41). Another good example is Bingbian 106.18/19:
   Right: 姓: 王其疾目。 Left: 姓: 王弗疾目。
75. E.g. Bingbian 106.16/17:
   Right: 姓: 王夢佳福。 Left: 不佳福。
76. For these four types, see Li Daliang 1972, p.92, p.93, p.94 et seq., p.84 et seq. respectively. All of Li's examples are from Bingbian.
   For ease of reference, I here give an example of each kind. (Li's numbers refer to the plates, but I have changed them to refer to the plastrons in accordance with the practice followed throughout this thesis).

1. 辛未卜忠姓: 来年有足雨。
   "Xinwei-day cracking, Dun testing: The millet harvest will have enough rain."
   姓: 来年有足雨。
   "Testing: The millet harvest will have enough rain."  (280.1/2)

2. 王夢不吉福。
   "The king's dream is not an omen of disaster."
   不吉福。
   "It is not an omen of disaster."  (104.7/8)

3. 來甲午侑伏上甲十。
   "Coming jiawu-day, we will offer human victims to Shang Jia (to the number of) ten."
"Coming jiawu-day, we will offer human victims to Shang Jia (to the number of) eight." (330.5/6)

4. 戊子卜，争：己丑雨。

"Wuzi-day cracking, Zheng: On jichou-day it will rain." (84.1)

The last inscription comes from the back of a plastron, but there are no references to rain on the front either, so it really is quite isolated, though as I suggest in my topic analysis in chapter three, it probably bears some contingent relationship to the other divinations recorded on the plastron.

My understanding of the numerical complement in example no. 3 follows Takashima 1985.
Notes to Chapter Two

1. Zuozhuan: Huan 5: 先偏后伍伍承彊缝 "There was always a force of 25 chariots, supported by 5 files of 5 men each, to maintain a close and unbroken front." (Translation from Legge 1872, vol. V pt. 1, p. 46.)


5. Ibid.


7. My understanding of the graph as qiu 秋 'autumn' is taken from Yu Xingwu (ap. Li Xiaoding 1961-1966), who interprets the element as depicting twigs, and hence the original graph for tiao 條 cf. 木 = 条. The twig element later came to be identical with the tree 木, and you 攸 was added as a phonetic element, to maintain the distinction, although, as Professor Pulleyblank has pointed out to me,攸 seems to be a poor phonetic loan for 秋, for, although they belong to the same rhyme, the initials belong to different series. Yu argues that this word is used as a phonetic loan for qiu 'autumn'. This form appears in the earlier inscriptions, and is later replaced by the character 篠, which appears in Bingbian 611.16/17, 20, 22, 23. The omission of the 'turtle' phonetic element gives the modern graph 秋. Curiously enough, the graphs for 'summer' and 'winter' have not yet been identified in OBI. Yu suggests that in Shang times, the term chun 春 included summer, and qiu 秋 included winter. The name of the Chunqiu annals may have been inspired by this ancient practice.
8. According to Takashima 1983a, although the graph  Mao 毛 itself suggests a split into two, contextual evidence from the bones shows that an animal could be Mao-split into zuo 左, zhong 中, and you 右, i.e. three sections. Hence my translation 'split open' rather than 'bisect'.

Takashima also argues that it is the original graph of Liu 劉, and is cognate with Lu 爰 'to slaughter'.

9. According to Wang Hengyu (ap. Li Xiaoding 1.83), the word Zhu 祝 occurs in the bones as the name of a sacrifice to the ancestors, but he could not find any examples of it meaning Zhuguan 祝官 'priest'.

Li cites an inscription in which the phrase hu Zhu occurs, and it seems to mean 'call on the priest (to perform such-and-such a ceremony)'. However, the graph for Zhu here is simply 茗, without a Shi 示 element by the side. Strictly speaking this should be transcribed as Xiong 兄, which from the examples at S.44.1-4 seems to be a method of sacrificing animals. In the present example, the position of Zhu before Di 氏 (抵) 'to carry, bring', suggests that it is best interpreted as a human agent.

The Shuowen defines Zhu as "祭主贊詞者 (The one in charge of the sacrifice, who delivers the words of extollation)" , and I feel that this meaning can be carried back to the Shang usage.

10. My understanding of Ding 鼎 as 'definitely' is taken from Takashima 1981.

11. Zhang transcribes the graph  酸 as (a non-existant character) and regards it as a type of sacrifice. However, it always occurs in a meteorological context, as can be seen from the inscriptions at S.94.2-3. It clearly represents a hand beating a drum with a drumstick. Takashima has suggested (personal communication) that it could be thunder. Cf. the modern graph Lei 拢 'to beat a drum', which contains 'thunder' as the phonetic element. The modern graph Lei 雷 is a Xingsheng 形声 creation which replaced the original bone graph (cf. you 書 replaced by 有 ). There is an ancient legend recorded in the Shanhaijing 山海经, "Hainei
dongjing 海内東經 ", which runs: "雷澤中有雷神，
龍身而人頭，鼓其腹則雷。在吳西 (In
the Thunder Marshes there is the Thunder God. He has the body of a
dragon and the head of a man. When he drums on his stomach it thunders.
He is to the west of Wu.)" (ap. Yuan Ke 1979, p.50). This ancient legend
shows that thunder was associated with drumming. Lei Gong 雷公, the
God of Thunder (the Chinese Thor) was, according to legend, Fu Xi's
brother. It is interesting that the Thunder God is mentioned as living to
the west of Wu, as the oracle bones often state that 'there was thunder in
the west'. I suppose that many legends have some basis in fact.


13. Because of this apparent lack of connection, it was suggested to me by
Professor Takashima that there might be a connection between 雷 and
military campaigns. The graph 雷 occurs in the following inscriptions in
Bingbian: 17.9/10; 19.9; 200.6/7; 207.3; 208.2; 209.3; 210; 320.2; 382.2;
415.4; 504.1/2; 517.5/6. These inscriptions all show that 雷 was
regarded as an omen, but was not associated with any particular topic. It
could be a good or bad omen, depending on the day on which it occurred. When
rain was sought after, it was seen as a good omen — naturally, as thunder
is often a sign of rain. Bird song was sometimes also part of this omen,
though usually after the rain had occurred (cf. Bingbian 207/209.3, which
I examine later in this chapter). The use of thunder as an omen fits in
well with my topic analysis in chapter three. I therefore think it quite
probable that in the present instance, the thunder is seen as a favourable
omen for the campaign against the Xia Wei. The king's toothache would be
seen as a sign of disfavour from the ancestors, and the inscriptions on
the back of these plastraons represent an attempt to find out which ancestor
is causing it. The 7th inscription on the front of each plastron suggests
that it was finally decided that Fu Geng was responsible, and hence a propitiatory sacrifice was offered to him.


15. Especially in view of the fact that there are no other examples of you 出 being negated by fu 弗. It is always replaced by wang 死 in the negative. In modern Chinese, the word you 有 still has its own special negative form mei you 没有, and never takes bu 不, although, as Professor Pulleyblank has pointed out to me, there are cases of 不有 in Classical Chinese.

16. One might wonder in this case why the Shang bothered to divine this alternative at all. I believe that firstly, it was simply part of the ritual of duizhen, and secondly, the undesired alternative had to be warded off by the use of the particle qi 其, as I have already discussed in chapter one. If the Shang were not going to receive the assistance of the ancestors, then it would be foolhardy to attack the Xia Wei 'unaided' as it were. However, they DID want to attack the Xia Wei, and so they tried to influence the ancestors into helping them. Whether such help would come or not, seems to have hinged on the choice of general (Wang Cheng or Zhi Jia) who should lead the attack. Although the illocutionary force of the negative alternative is 'don't go and attack', it is quite clear that this was an eventuality that the Shang did not want to entertain seriously. For a full explication of the double negative problem, see Chow Kwok-ching 1982, pp.80-88.

17. This variation was probably quite natural and subconscious. It means that the 'character constancy' criterion proposed by Noel Barnard to distinguish genuine bronzes from spurious ones cannot be applied to the bones, and perhaps not even to the bronzes either. Before Qin Shihuang standardized the script, there was a great deal of such variation.
18. See chapter 1, p. 6, where I quote Gelb on this matter.

19. See Dong Zuobin 1964, p.106, where a table of the evolution of the ganzhi over the five periods of OBI is given. This table is reproduced at Kaizuka and Itō 1953, table 2, and Keightley 1978, p.200, table 10.


21. Chu 出 in OBI usually appears in a military context, and probably means 'to go out to battle' or 'to go out on a campaign', hence my translation 'sally forth'.

22. For this interpretation, please see Takashima 1980, where he interprets the OBI expression 出入 as hua fan 滑滑, which he glosses as nameraka ni ukabu 滑ありかに滑りかぶ 'smoothly float (away from illness)'.


24. Zhang Bingquan transcribes the graph 縱 as xian 霧 'sleet!', because he thinks it looks like sleet falling. However, this character is not graphically descended from the OBI form. On the other hand, it does have a graphic connection with dian 電 'lightning'. The two droplet-like elements probably represent heavy rain rather than sleet (cf. ling 雨 'drops of rain', probably the primary form of 雨). Li Xiaoding 11.3425 interprets it as lei 雷 'thunder', and also cites a variant form (Cuibian 1570). However, I feel that the two fields 雷 are a phonetic element that convert this 雨 into a different word, as they do in the modern character 雷 (from 雨). Apart from this, OBI already has a word for thunder in the graph 雷. A simplified form of dian, 雷, is used to represent the Earthly Branch shen 申. In his annotations to Cuibian, Guo Moruo transcribes the form 雷 as 雷, which he interprets as chou 十 'divisions between fields' certainly.
makes it a good candidate for a place name (although the word lei also has a similar meaning).

25. See S.171.2.

26. For example 李 (李) 'Big Pig' and 国师 (国师) 'Lord Tiger of Cang'.

27. An article on this controversy by Keightley, entitled "Reports from the Shang", is to appear in the next issue of Early China (no.8, 1982-83). Zhang Bingquan is a notable exception who transcribes it as shang 上吉.

28. Due to the problematic nature of the graph 夫/衣 (衣/卒), I have omitted it in my translation here, pending my discussion of it on pp.60-62

29. 羽 is used for yi 'the next day'.

30. These inscriptions (found at S.255.2-3) are interesting in that those that carry a post-inscriptional date are mostly dated in the seventh month. The other dated ones are dated in the sixth, eighth and ninth months. It would seem that the king only entered the holy city of Shang (天邑商, as it is sometimes called in OBI) at certain times of the year. Some scholars have suggested that Shang was not a residential city, but a cult centre. For example, Keightley 1973 (a review of Wheatley 1971). Wheatley notes that "Whenever, in any of the seven regions of primary urban generation [i.e. Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, North China Plain, Mesoamerica, central Andes, Yoruba territories of South Western Nigeria] we trace back the characteristic urban form to its beginnings we arrive not at a settlement that is dominated by commercial relations, a primordial market, or at one that is focused on a citadel, an archetypal fortress, but rather at a ceremonial complex." (Wheatley 1971, p.225). Miyazaki 1970 argues that Shang was a mortuary city, like the Egyptian Valley of the Kings. I am grateful to Professor Takashima for pointing out these references to me.

31. See Li Xiaoding, 4.1515.
32. Some examples are:

+ 甲午卜勿...利泰。

"Jiazi-day cracking: Should not... reap? millet." (Jianshou 44.7)

立利刺。

"Supervise the reaping? of millet." (Xucun 5.23.5)

平月可详来：辛亥卜贞或利来。

"Xinhai-day cracking, testing: Huo reap? wheat." (Tieyun 177.3)

33. Bingbian I.1, p.64.

34. See S.361.2. However, these final bu 不 (fou 否) could perhaps be rhetorical, as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me.

35. Bu ji 不吉 (不吉) 'not auspicious' occurs only in prognostications, and the graph 金 is different from the ji 吉 (吉) of the crack notations, which Chinese scholars usually interpret as gao 告 'report'. See n.27.

The suggestion that 吉 may have meant 'solid, sure, certain' rather than 'auspicious' was made by Takashima (personal communication) partly on the basis of its use in the expression jijin 吉金 to refer to bronzes.

36. This is also a common crack notation. The interpretation given here follows Takashima 1982.

37. Apart from the present example, Sôrui lists only two examples of the simple graph in the '勿卒 VERB' construction:

勿衣归。

"Should not yi return." (Yibian 3424)

翌乙未勿衣藏。

"Next yiwei-day should not yi liao-sacrifice." (Bingbian 128.10)
My transcriptions are taken from the original sources and, as you can see, the lower part of the first is not at all clear, while the second one does actually have a couple of lines inside it, thus making it more like zu.

38. There are also examples of xu and gui, though here it may be a phonetic borrowing of some kind. See Takashima "Nominalization and Nominal Derivation with Particular Reference to the Language of Oracle-Bone Inscriptions", to appear in a forthcoming issue of Papers in East Asian Languages, University of Hawaii.

39. According to Zhang Bingquan (1956, p.254), the occasional omission of shows that the Shang referred to this ceremony both as bin and yibin. This seems unlikely.

40. Another good example is Bingbian 149.15/16:

"Greatly retreat to Chun to camp."

"Should not retreat to Chun to camp."

From this one can see that and do not form a semantic unit.

Another example of an adverbial modifier used after wu is xiang(深). This graph stands for the later specifically (according to Takashima 1973, pp.389-392), and is used when discussing the sort of Type B verbs that should accompany a Type A verb (see Chow Kwok-ching 1982, p.226). E.g.

"We should not specifically perform a libation to Ancestor I in order to announce the king's misfortune." (Bingbian 98.13)
Gao was a ceremony for reporting to the ancestors on various topics, and could be accompanied by other sacrifices or not, as can be seen from the inscriptions (S.120.2).

41. Another example is Bingbian 275.5/6:

"Testing: When Zhi Jia opens the Ba, the king will follow."

"Testing: The king should not follow."

42. I have compiled a complete list of such examples in Bingbian, of which I here give a few. Although a positive verification usually follows a positive charge, this is not necessarily always the case. A positive verification following a positive charge often contains the word yun 'indeed, as expected'. Similarly a negative verification may sometimes follow a positive charge, rather than a negative one. As the original graphs are not germane to this analysis, I shall give a transliteration and translation only:

"Order Prince Bu to cross the river. He crossed." (160.8)

"As for the fifty Qiang, we will perhaps not enter them into the sacrifice. We entered them." (228.3)

"The king will catch zhai-deer. He did indeed catch." (86.4)

"Yichou-day cracking, the king: If we chase zhai-deer, we will catch. We did not go." (323.10)
"Yichou-day cracking, the king: We will not perhaps catch zhai-deer. We did not go." (323.11)

The duizhen pair 323.10/11 is of particular interest, as the so-called verification says that they did not even go hunting on that particular occasion, so there was no chance for the oracle to be either proved or disproved. Here we see the Shang's concern for keeping an accurate record. This is further proof that the intention behind the inscriptions is that of keeping a record for, as I have already mentioned in chapter one, the inscribing of the charges was not part of the divination. The fact that the prognostication stage is often 'by-passed', so to speak, in this manner, also gives a clue as to the reason for inscribing the charges: the charges in themselves carry a kind of prediction. The two charges in a non-controllable duizhen represent two antithetical predictions. One of these predictions was usually weighted against happening, like a loaded dice, by the use of the particle qi. As for controllable duizhen, one cannot really call these 'predictions', as it is not really a proper divination to predict that one is going to do something which is well within one's control, as it is all too easy to make sure that such a prediction comes true. I regard this sort of divination as an appeal for divine favour in a proposed activity.

43. For a discussion of the logographic nature of Chinese, see Boodberg 1979, pp.407-429. Qiu Xigui (1983) expresses an interesting idea about the nature of the Shang script. He suggests that, in the early stages of the script, certain graphs may have represented two words, e.g. = deng chang 長登 'offer millet wine', = xiao lao 小牢 'the lesser sacrifice (= sheep)' (pp.31-32).

44. The exact nature of the bin ceremony is not known, but presumably it was a kind of welcome for the returning sun. The foot element often found
underneath suggests movement. Sima Qian paraphrases the Documents, "Yaodian", sentence "寅寅出日 (respectfully to receive as guest the rising sun)" as "敬道 ( = 導 ) 出日 (respectfully lead (on) the rising sun)". The word dao also suggests movement. See Karlgren 1950, p.3, para.4, and 1970, p.54, gloss 1223. The same text also mentions a parallel ceremony: "寅餳入日 (respectfully to say farewell to the setting sun)". See Karlgren 1950, p.3, para.6, and the same gloss as cited above. The word jian implies the idea of a feast. In OBI, we also find the rising and setting sun being sacrificed to, e.g. Zhuihe 178 (ap. S.160.1):

Wuxu-day cracking, Nei: Summon Qiao to perform tying-up-sacrifice (?) to the rising sun, to the setting sun a penned sheep."

45. Palaeographers generally understand the graph 田 (also written 田, 甲) as referring to Shang Jia. This is to be distinguished from jia + (甲), which does not have an enclosure.

46. It might be pointed out that the edge of the shell where this graph would occur is missing on the other shells in this set. However, the shell Bingbian 37 is complete, and the graph 田 does not occur here either.

47. See S.274-277. See also Bingbian 392.1/2 and 393.3/4,7.

48. These examples may be easily dated by the form of certain of the graphs, such as gui (gui) and huo (huo). See Keightley 1978, table 26.

49. These inscriptions form an interesting symmetry on the shell, thus:
50. The object of this sacrifice is generally small animals, such as dogs, pigs and sheep. The bundle element \( \in \) suggests that it may have involved trussing them in some way, but this is not certain. See S.349.2-3.

51. The graph which I translate as 'mate' is identified by Zhang Zhenglang as the original graph for the characters chou 仇 and qiu 逑 which mean 'mate' or 'companion'. In OBI it is a title used for the wives of former kings and, as in the present case, top ministers. See Li Xiaoding 4.1183-1191.

52. Dong Zuobin 1977 (v.3, p.1161) also remarks that the many "雀入二百五十" inscriptions all refer to the same instance of contribution, but does not give any clear reasons for this understanding.

53. The graph \( \in \) depicts a hand holding something aloft. It is not certain what this object is, but it bears some resemblance to the graph \( \in \) (zhong 中), which may represent streamers fluttering in the wind. It occurs mostly in the expression \( \in \) (zhong ri 中日) 'midday'. Cf. also \( \in \) (S.420.4), which may be a variant of \( \in \). Perhaps \( \in \) represents a banner being carried aloft into battle.

54. I use the word 'beat' here in the sense of 'vanquish' in order to convey that cai 戰 is a non-controllable verb, as opposed to, for example, fa 伐 'attack', which is a controllable activity.

55. Although some Chinese scholars interpret the crack notation 𢜦 as er gao 二告 'two reports', this interpretation has not yet been widely accepted, so I still follow Zhang Bingquan in understanding it as shang ji 上吉 'highly auspicious'.

56. The graph \( \in \) occurs in the Kang Xi Zidian, and is given as the phonetic element in sun 選. It itself is given the fanqie reading shi zhuan 仕轉 by the Zi Hui 字彙, and I base my phonetic rendering on this. The composition of the bone graph is similar to that of cong 从 (从) 'to follow', and may perhaps be the original graph for xun 遊. In the Book of Documents, 選 is used as a loan for 遊 in the sense of 'yield' (see
Karlgren's gloss no.1242). In the *Yijing*, 选 is often equated with shun, which could be a paranomastic gloss. These three characters share the basic meaning of 'yielding' one's place or 'yielding' to another's domination.

57. Distinguish between 亁 and 𢡄, which I both translate as 'attack'. Both are 'success' verbs, but 亁 (攻) implies 'attack (with success contemplated or hoped for)', while 𢡄 (戦) implies 'give/inflict harm upon'. I am grateful to Professor Takashima for pointing out this distinction to me.

58. 'Big hunting' may have been a military exercise. Cf. *Book of Rites*. "Jiao te sheng" (Legge 1967, vol.I, p.426, para.22, Chinese edition juan 11, zhang 13, p.8), where a large scale hunting exercise is used for military training. Yin may have been a director or overseer of some kind.

59. For a study on the connotations of 德, see Nivison 1976.

60. This graph should probably be transcribed as 害. Although I should not really quote the Kang Xi dictionary, I would like to mention that it gives a guwen 古文 form 刑 for ge 割, which also consists mainly of wang 亡 plus dao 刀, but this form is not found in the Shuowen. Takashima makes the connection on the basis that 𠚅 is the primary form of *kad, which is here being used for 害 *gad. Karlgren cites an instance in Documents of hai 報 which in an older version read 𦗼 (Karlgren 1970, gloss 1407). All in all, the evidence for this identification is quite good. Both characters are used as an interrogative pronoun of similar meaning in classical Chinese.

61. Although S.76.3 has this graph (along with its variants 亾, 亿, 𢡄). 鳶 transcribed as wang 往, thus lumping it together with 亾, I feel that their different phonetic elements should be respected. The graph clearly consists of the foot element 亾 and the earth element 𠚅. I therefore transcribe it as tu 徒, which occurs in the Shuowen as 迹,
where it is defined as \textit{bu xing ye} 步行也 'to go by foot'.

62. Zhang Bingquan (1960, p.401) mentions this, and also cites \textit{Qianbian} 7.4.3 and \textit{Yicun} 22 (the first and fourth in a set) as another example of Que and Zheng swapping over in a chengtao set.

63. Zhang Bingquan (1960, p.401) mentions that he finally found the missing piece.

64. For an example of a swap in mid-topic, see \textit{Bingbian} 114.1/2 (divined by Que) and 3/4 (divined by Zheng).

65. The \textit{qi} 其 in Zhang's reconstruction should probably be omitted, as it already occurs in the positive sentence 78.11.

66. This interesting inscription, the interpretation of which is somewhat controversial, also crops up in a slightly different form on \textit{Bingbian} 562.2. Due to the fragmentary nature of this shell, the first part is missing, so we pick it up in media res:

\begin{verbatim}
...之(日)水, 太, 雨 (中), 佼[既]雨, 咸 [戈] 亦[雨]. 故[刘] (鸟) 星 (大) (改) 易[口].
"...you-sacrificed. At dawn it rained. When we began the decapitation sacrifice, it fully rained. When we finished the decapitation sacrifice, it continued to rain. We tuo- and liu-sacrificed. There was bird song. There was a great opening of the sun (i.e. it cleared up)."
\end{verbatim}

The last three graphs here are not found on 207.3. 562.1 mentions the dedication of two \textit{ding}-cauldrons to Xia Yi, who is also the recipient of the you-sacrifice in 207.3, and probably also in 562.2, but that part of the inscription is missing.

67. See note 8. This sentence might perhaps be more exactly translated as "We killed by beating and split open (the sacrificial victims)".

68. Most scholars have understood \textit{niao xing} 鳥星 'Bird Star', and assumed that the Shang sacrificed to it. However, the present inscriptions \textit{Bingbian} 207/209.3, are the only two inscriptions in the whole of
OBI (according to S.238.3) that mention this 'Bird Star'. I prefer to interpret it as 'birdsong', understanding  as a loan for  (S.314.4 sheng 声). These two graphs both contain sheng 上 (生) as their phonetic element. Professor Pulleyblank has pointed out to me that  seems a strange phonetic loan for 声. However, there is also another inscription which mentions birds singing after thunder, using the verb ming 明:

...月午...共之午有雷，有鳴鳥...破圍羌戦。

"Xmao-day offer...(so many days) completed, on gengshen-day also there was thunder, there were singing birds...we speared (?) the Qiang that Ji imprisoned." (Zhuihe 36, ap. S.224.4)

Singing birds is something that one might well expect after a bout of rain. The Shang probably regarded it as part of the thunder omen, which I have already discussed in note 13. As for the graph 明, I identify it as sui 售 in the sense of 'to complete'. It is used in OBI to refer to the number of days that are 'completed' between the day of divination and the realisation of some connected event (see S.224.4). My interpretation of the last part of this inscription is uncertain and ad hoc, but the important point is that it shows birds singing in association with the thunder omen.

69. 209.3 lacks the second you 原, and also the liu 劉, of 207.3.

70. I support my interpretation of ting 聽 (聽) as 'to hear the voices of the ancestors' with the following inscriptions:

° 丁卯卜，扶王聼父戍。

"Dingmao-day cracking, Fu: The king heard Fu Wu."

° 丁卯卜，王聼兄戍。

"Dingmao-day cracking: The king heard Xiong Wu." (Yibian 409, ap. S.114.2)
These inscriptions are just like the dream divinations which attempt to find out which ancestor it was that caused the king's dream (see S.450.4). There is also a Bingbian inscription in which 聽 and 梦 contrast with each other in a duizhen, so their meanings were clearly affiliated:

大非大非
王聼佳福乙亥卜。

"The king's hearing voices means disaster. On yihai-day, you-sacrifice."

大非......
王夢[佳福]。

"The king's dream means disaster." (Bingbian 350.14/15)

It has to be admitted that 孝 huo 佳福 has been filled in by Zhang in 350.15 by analogy with 350.14, as some shell is missing at this point. Nevertheless, their close juxtaposition on the shell shows that they are connected.

71. E.g. Bingbian 197, 302, 307, 317, 370. See my appendix to this chapter.
72. Zhang transcribes this graph as , but this ignores the person element inside. It is here used as a personal name anyway.
73. I use Wade-Giles here to avoid confusion with the English word 'he'. I am grateful to Professor Takashima for suggesting this method of differentiation.
74. Zhang was able to complete this bone with fragments already published in Jingjin 1266. He reproduces the whole thing in Bingbian I.1, p.49. The numbers apply to the Bingbian shell, and the letters to the Jingjin shell.
75. According to S.10.4, this is the only occurrence of the graph . I wonder if it is an ad hoc variant of , i.e. yi 院. This inscription would then be proposing that the king march against the Yi's city.
76. This shell, taken from Yibian 3797, is reproduced in Bingbian I.1, p.50.
77. For my understanding of 番 as 'together with', see Takashima 1983.
78. According to Zhang, some people regard 
\[ \text{和} \] and 
\[ \text{口} \] as two separate graphs, the first referring to the minister Wu Xian 项咸, and the latter to the king Cheng Tang 播湯, but it is probably not justified to distinguish between 
\[ \text{和} \] and 
\[ \text{口} \] as graph components (Bingbian I.1, p.69). One may compare the interchange of 
\[ \text{和} \] and 
\[ \text{口} \] in the graph for bin 简 (Bingbian 34-38.3/4), which are clearly separate graphs when free standing. Zhang argues that Xian is another title for Da Yi 大乙, who is identified as Cheng Tang (Bingbian I.1, p.75).

79. See Zhang Bingquan 1960, p.390. The Zhouli passage reads:

凡卜筮,既事,則繫幣以比其命,歲終,則計其占之中否。

"Lorsque l'on augure par la tortue ou par la plante Chi, quand la cérémonie est terminée, ils réunissent alors les objets précieux, pour examiner les oracles qui en résultent. À la fin de l'année, ils comptent celles des divinations qui se sont accomplies et celles qui ne se sont pas accomplies."


Biot's translation "ils réunissent alors les objets précieux" does not seem to have much relationship with the original Chinese, and is certainly not how Zhang understands it. My interpretation is that they tied a piece of material to the shell or the yarrow stalks, on which was written the prognostication. Zhang goes on to say that in Shang times they did not use silk, but wrote the divination directly onto the shell, but I argue in chapter 3 (under 'cyclical dating') that the Shang also may well have kept a separate record.


81. I.e. the positive charge is divined a certain number of times, and the negative charge a different number of times.


83. Zhang has also found some scapulae which he thinks might be sets. See Zhang Bingquan 1960, p.390, and Bingbian I.1, p.29.

85. Ibid., p.120.

86. Bingbian I.1, p.28.


88. There is also the matter of the feiwangchao buci 非王朝卜辞, but these were private divinations that had no political significance.

89. Keightley 1978, p.120.

90. See, for example, Shirakawa's views (1948, p.34): "卜句・トタといふ神事的儀禮を通じて,王の支配する時間は清められる。修祓によって王の時間的支配を可能ならしめるもの、それが卜句であるトタであった。

(Through the medium of the divine ritual of divining [that there would be no misfortune in the coming] ten-day week or night, the king purified his period of reign. These divinations were what made possible the king's exorcism-based temporal rule.)" I am grateful to Professor Takashima for pointing out this reference to me.
Notes to Chapter Three

1. Strictly speaking, bucifa means 'divinatory inscriptions', i.e. as opposed to zhanci占辞 'prognostications' and yanici騐辞 'verifications', but the term is also used to refer to oracle bone inscriptions in general.

2. They are useful also for determining the focus of a divination, and its grammatical structure (from the placing of the negative).

3. In Period I, diviners Que and Zheng often seem to alternate on a plastron, but their respective divinations usually take place on different days, which explains why a new topic often gets a change of diviner. Bingbian 76.1/2 and 78.1/2 show them sharing the same topic in a tao, and Bingbian 114.1-4 also show them swapping over in mid-topic, so there cannot have been any specific association between topic and diviner.

As for crack numbering, it usually starts from 'one' with each inscription, but sometimes it carries on from one inscription to the next, in chengt ao bucif. As these are obviously related by their largely similar wording, we do not need to appeal to the crack numbers in order to relate them.

Another criterion of somewhat more value is that of positioning on the plastron. This is particularly important for determining which prognostications and verifications go with which divinations, as they are usually inscribed directly behind them on the back of the plastron (although this trend, as with many others in OBI, is not always strictly observed).


8. Ibid., p.276.
9. Chow 1982, p.80. The determination of types of composite sentence is not actually germane to my thesis, but for reference sake one may look at Bingbian 12-20.2, a double negative construction, whose nature may be determined by reference to the elliptical form in 12-20.4. I discuss this in chapter 2, p. 49. Chow also discusses this example (op.cit., loc.cit.). These inscriptions are not in the same duizhen, but it is obvious that they are related from their extensive shared vocabulary and grammatical parallelism.


12. The verb cai is a success verb, implying 'vanquish' or 'conquer'.

13. As the expression shang ji is only a crack notation, and not part of the charge proper, I do not translate it. On the shell, these crack notations occur alongside the crack. In my transcription I put them after the inscription for convenience' sake. The crack notations indicate the likelihood of a charge being realised. For a more detailed discussion, please refer back to chapter 2, p. 54 and p. 59.

14. is an abbreviated form of fa .

15. I supply 'successfully' as gu is a 'success' verb, as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me. It means not simply to carry out, but to carry out with success. Although it is within the king's control to appoint someone to take charge of his affairs, it is not within his control to ensure that they will bring those affairs to a successful conclusion. Hence the divination.

16. Jin Xiangheng (ap. Li Xiaoding 9.2855) transcribes the graph as xu ( = 需 ). Li himself explains that it represents a man with a beard. The interpretation "We will not have beards" seems a trifle incongruous, so I understand this graph in its loan capacity as 'necessity'. It occurs behind the display inscription 1.13, and probably means something like: "During the battle against the Zhou, we will not be put into a needy situation."
17. Inscription 19 is undated, but I have tentatively assigned it this date due to its proximity to inscription no.10.

18. Unless one assumes that Zi Shang was one of the Duo Chen as Professor Takashima has suggested to me, or perhaps he was leading them. One might also speculate that the person called Xian whom Zi Shang might not capture was one of the Fou, perhaps their leader. It may have been a practice to mark out the most important man amongst the enemy and then go for him in order to scatter the enemy troops.

19. See Zhang Bingquan's annotations, Bingbian 1.1, p.1


21. If this is the case, one wonders why the Shang bothered to inscribe those charges that carry no predictions. It may be that they form a sort of historical record of Shang affairs, or even that some prediction is implied.

22. For a full discussion of Fu Hao, see Kwok 1984.

Ito (1967, p.115) also suggests that the diviners were not necessarily Shang people, but were sent to the Shang court by various tribes and states, and that the king, as the chief diviner, was thus able to exercise control over those tribes and states through the medium of divination.

23. See chapter 2, p. 85. There is a passage in the Zhouli which helps to support this claim, and I quote it on p.190, n.79. According to this passage, the charges were written on a piece of material which was tied to the shell directly after the divination.

The existence of brush written characters in a red pigment, along with traces of red pigment by the edges of carved graphs, strongly suggests that the characters were written onto the shell with a brush before being carved. These brush written characters served as a guideline to the inscriber, and enabled him to do his job more efficiently by carving all the strokes in a certain orientation first, and then rotating the shell to carve those in a
different orientation. It might be wondered whether the brush written characters were put onto the shell at the time of divination, thus obviating the need to keep a separate record. After all, the speculation that there was a separate record, although it finds some support in the Zhouli, has not yet been borne out by archaeology, so it still remains only a speculation. However, the carved graphs always follow the line of the written graphs, and so the calligraphy and placement of the written graphs must be the same as that of the carved graphs. As far as I know, there are no examples of carved graphs ignoring an under layer of written graphs, which one would expect to find if the charges were written onto the shell as a record at the time of divination, and then selected for carving in a display manner after verification, so my theory about displacement must apply to the written graphs too. A carved display inscription simply follows the lines of a written display inscription, and it cannot have been selected for display treatment until it had been verified. I thus feel it unlikely that the brush written characters were added to the shell at the time of divination, any more than the inscribing was. I hypothesize that the Shang approached the oracle with a list of written questions or matters on which the oracle was to be consulted, and this list was then kept together with the shell.

24. The difference between cai 伐 and fa 伐 is that cai is a success verb (according to Takashima's analysis) and is thus negated by fu 弗, whereas fa is a controllable verb, and is negated by wu 刎.

25. This expression, which occurs frequently in the bones, was first explained by Guo Moruo with reference to the Odes line wang shi mi gu 王事靡監 (ode 121). Karlgren translates this line as "The service to the king is not defective" (gloss 301), but the meaning 'defective' will not fit into the oracle bone context. For the explanation of Guo and others, see Li Xiaoding 1965, 3.701-710. Guo's explanation seems to have been generally
accepted, despite the fact that the ode character gu 蓼 has never been glossed as 'carry out, manage etc.' Yu Xingwu identifies the bone graph as the origin of the character zi 笋, which he argues is used for zai 載 in the sense of xing 行 'carry out' (3.702-705). This is certainly more satisfying from a semantic point of view, but his identification seems rather convoluted. The Er Ya glosses 古 as chi 治 'to govern' (HY 3/1B/29).

The bone graph 是 is the origin of the characters shi 史, shi 事, shi 使, and li 史, so it is sometimes difficult to decide whether it refers to 'envoys' or 'affairs'. However, the usage can usually be determined from context. See Takashima 1984, pp.33-34.

26. Some of these names may refer to individuals, i.e. the chieftains of the tribes of the same name. For example, the name Jifang Fou 基方岳 also occurs in OBI, and probably means 'Fou of the Ji tribe'. It is often difficult to decide in OBI whether a name refers to an individual or a group of people.

27. I use the word 'destined' as the modal negative wu 命 implies that the success or failure of the venture was controlled by the ancestors in some way, as opposed to wu 削, which is a direct prohibition, and refers to an activity which is under one's own control. See Takashima 1973.

28. E.g. Bingbian 3.3-8, where it is divined whether Zi Bu or Zi Shang should be called to go trapping, or whether the king himself should go. See pp.137-138 of this chapter.

29. This sort of omission may also be postulated for Bingbian 1, on which inscriptions 17 and 19, as I have just mentioned, are negatively phrased inscriptions occurring on the left but with no positive duizhen counterpart on the right. It seems unlikely that the Shang would only have asked these questions in the negative, as these negative divinations are clearly undesirable, indicating lack of success, so using only the negative divination would seem to be somewhat inauspicious.
30. According to the Kang Xi dictionary, the Yupian 玉篇 quotes the character 總 (i.e. wang 網 over da 大) as a guwen 古文 form of jun 軍. There is no evidence that this somewhat late recorded character, which does not occur in the Shuowen, has any connection with the oracle bone graph 總, but I avail myself of this identification purely for the sake of making it pronounceable. Kang Xi defines jun 軍 as 師所 駐日軍 'Where an army stays is called jun', and quotes the Zuozhuan, Huan 6: 軍於瑕 以待之 'Encamped at Xia and awaited him.' The graph 總 could perhaps represent putting up a tent. A graph corresponding to jun 軍 has not yet been discovered in the oracle bones. The seal form is 總, and the Shuowen defines it as (i.e. to surround). In the present inscription, Jun refers to an enemy tribe. We can see this from Bingbian 119.5/6, where an attack on the Jun is proposed.

31. My translation of 197.11/12 does not reflect the word order of the original, but was necessary in order to demonstrate how the emphasis is placed on the fa 伐. In the construction 唯伐 習, the normal VO word order is inverted. This could well be the forerunner of the pre-classical '唯0是之V' formula, which is seen in the Odes and the Documents. In the Documents, the resumptive pronoun is not always present, thus making the formula superficially just like the bone formula.

32. Inscriptions 197.11-14 seem to be connected. 197.11 reads "Exorcise (in the presence of) Fu Yi." The object of the exorcism is probably the fa-victims that Fu Yi is mentioned as cursing in 197.12/13. The significance of this is probably that the victims had to be 'clean' in order to be used in sacrifice. A curse from Fu Yi would make them unclean. 197.14 probably also refers to the fa-victims, and says that if they are used in sacrifice that evening, things will be right (zheng 正 'rectified'), so it seems that Fu Yi was not cursing the fa-victims after all. These are probably the same fa as are mentioned in 197.2/3/4. These fa may perhaps be the fu 孫 'captives' that were captured from the Jun 總 tribe on some military operation.
33. Xian Wu and Xue Wu are ancient worthies that the Shang sacrificed to.

34. This has been determined as a synodic year based on the appearance of the planet Jupiter. See Pankenier 1983.

35. For my understanding of り as 徒, see p.186, n.61. In the present inscription, I interpret it in a causative sense.

36. See Zhang Bingquan's annotations, Bingbian II.1, p.319. In Bingbian 1, we also find that crack numbers are erased to make way for the display inscription 1.3 (see Bingbian I.1, pp.2-3). The crack numbers were carved at the time of divination in order to identify the cracks, so that when the inscriptions came to be made, the inscriber would know which inscription to carve by which crack.

37. See p.190, n.79 for reference and translation.

38. Although the tiangan are missing, one can determine from the dizhi that the missing number here must be 5. There are 7 days inclusive between a shen-day and a yin-day, and the nearest multiple of this between 170 and 180 is 175 (=7 x 25). If one assumes that the date the illness broke out again was the nearest day before Kun's death, then one may fill in the relevant dates as bingshen and gengyin, but this is only a speculation. The second wei must of course be yiwei, as the term zhuo 'cuts into' is always used between consecutive dates. See also Takashima 1979, p.54, n.19.

39. My phonetic gloss to this character is based on the double insect element 蚊, which according to the Shuowen is read like kun 昆.

40. See Li Xiaoding 14.4061-4071.

41. Shuowen: 酒器也.

42. See Li Xiaoding 2.279-283. Li lists it as one of the graphs on which opinion is divided.

43. One can see from the seal form 家 how easy it would be for the elephant (if that is what it is) to become a pig.

44. This expression often occurs in prognostications in the formula ruo cheng
若稱，meaning that the situation will prove to be just as the king has evaluated. See Takashima 1984, pp.7 and 40.

45. Li Xiaoding 2.279.

46. Though by the time of Period V, the xun wang huo 'in the next ten days there will be no disaster' inscriptions were regularly divined every ten days. Cf. Keightley 1978, fig.10.

47. It might be argued that my examples represent two different things: ellipsis (in which the subject is understood) and omission (due to carelessness on the part of the scribe?) respectively. However, the graph for zhen is often omitted, even when the preface is otherwise intact, and I cannot help feeling that it was simply another word that was considered a prime candidate for ellipsis. The boundary line between ellipsis and omission is hard to draw indeed.

48. 3.21 was also dated, but the fragment of shell where the date appeared is missing.

49. Zi 子 may be translated as 'prince'. It is likely that it was used as an aristocratic title, regardless of whether the bearer of the title was really descended from a king (i.e. a conferred title), as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me.

50. The scope of the negative wu , as has been shown by Takashima (1973) and Chow (1982, pp.96-100 and 115-116), extends to the verb . Wu is unique among the OBI negatives in allowing the 'intrusion' of adverbial elements between it and the verb it negates, e.g. '勿詳 v', '勿卒 V' (Takashima 1973, pp.165-166, p.190).

The construction here, 勿子，is the same, yu 于 being a coverb. The coverb yu 于 implies 'motion towards'. It is extremely unlikely that it ever occurs as a full verb in OBI (see Chow 1982, pp.100-115). Considering the general tendency for coverbs in Chinese to be derived from verbs, it may well have been a verb once, but was no longer so by the time of the
oracle bones. I am placed in a quandary as to how best to translate inscriptions 3.9/10 and 18/19/20 into English, for if I translate yu 子 as 'at', that implies that it is purely locative, and if I translate it as 'go to', that implies that it is a full verb. I have chosen the former as doing less violence to the real nature of yu 子. Yu 子 also seems to imply futurity, i.e. the sense of 'going to do something', as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me.

51. I adopted this translation in order to avoid taking Luan 繙 as a proper name, which is what Zhang Bingquan does, thus overlooking the hunting scenario altogether.

52. A number of the inscriptions on the present plastron are also chengtao buci, but I hope to go beyond that and relate them to inscriptions outside the set.

53. Keightley 1978, p.89, attempts to give a rough idea of the number of man-hours that the Shang put into plastromancy, and the result is quite staggering. Attempts at saving time are quite understandable.

54. The reading yi for this character is taken from the Guangyun (ap. Kang Xi) which gives 羊至切.


56. Bingbian I.1, p.82. The Xu Kai 徐 錫 commentary to the Shuowen says: "禍者，人之所召神因而附之。禍者，神自出之以警人。" (ap. Kang Xi), i.e. huo is caused by man provoking the spirits, while suī is a warning sign from the spirits. So perhaps yi was a monitory omen of some kind. Another difference, pointed out to me by Professor Takashima, is that yi is transitive, while huo is intransitive. That yi and huo are quite different can be seen from the way they contrast in OBI: it was perfectly possible to have yi without huo, e.g. Bingbian 48.1/2:

王固曰：魚，酒唯坐罪亡因。

which Zhang Bingquan translates as "雖有鬼神在作祟，但不至於禍害到人世。" (Bingbian I.1, p.82).
57. Professor Takashima has pointed out to me that an assumption commonly shared by Japanese scholars is that 'to enter' a certain place meant 'to enter the area under the jurisdiction of a certain local spirit', and that this necessitated some sort of ritual to ward off the evil influences of the foreign earth-god.

58. For further evidence that omens and disasters, such as 耳 and 火, often form the background to the Shang's proposed activities, see my analysis of the omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome later in this chapter, pp. 148-152.

59. I have given this graph this reading, as the Guangyun (ap. Kang Xi) says it is the original graph for 堆. The exact pronunciation of oracle bone graphs is somewhat academic, but it is easier to talk about them if they are made pronounceable. Zhang Bingquan defines 堆 thus: "台，以 烏器， " and 時所止也，後世則用"次"字", i.e. an army encampment (Bingbian I.1, p.18). The Guangyun's claim is based on the Shuowen. If this is correct, then perhaps (K.543 *twar) is being used as a phonetic loan for (K.559 *si&r). Perhaps it is also phonetic in (K.570 *kiwar). The archaic Chinese rhymes are the same, but the initials and medials vary somewhat. In (K.196 *k'ian), which the Shuowen defines as a small clod of earth, it could be signific.

60. For the exact nature of 耳, see Pulleyblank 1983, in which he relates it etymologically to 王往.

61. This rather clever identification was made by Shang Chengzuo on the basis of the Erya.shiqi definition: 炎, 習謂之 炎. The oracle bone graph could be a variant of (bi 矢), cf. the variant with a bird: 矢.

62. As one can see from my discussion of the graphs (bin 賓) in chapter 2, p. 62.

63. As Professor Takashima has pointed out to me, it is curious that the particle 其 occurs in the negative sentence, as this suggests that the Shang
wanted rain on this occasion, though one would have thought that clear weather was desirable for outdoor camping. Looking back in retrospect from 3000 years later, it is difficult to imagine the circumstances which led to this choice of phrasing.

64. See p. 157 of this chapter for a schematic analysis of the topics on this plastron.

65. Chen Mengjia 1956, pp.85-134. One should also mention Guan Xiechu 1953.

66. Notably by such scholars as Serruys and Takashima.

67. As this analysis is purely grammatical, it is only necessary to give a transcription into modern characters here. The examples are taken from Bingbian and from Shima's concordance.

68. According to Takashima (personal communication), \textit{fa} 伐 means 'to attack' in the sense of 'to tear to pieces'. Hence it can be used figuratively of routing an army, and also as a method of sacrifice. It may be etymologically related to such words as \textit{ba} 斧, which implies division, and \textit{bie} 別, which implies separation.

69. He regards it as short for \textit{Zi Jing} 子阱 (see Bingbian I.2, p.166, concerning plastron 114, inscription 6), 'Prince Jing'.

70. Bingbian I.1, p.18.

71. A particularly good contrast is offered by \textit{Yibian} 7750:

\begin{quote}
\texttt{贞:由多子子子往。}
\end{quote}

"Testing: It should be the Duo Zi that (we) call to go...."

\begin{quote}
\texttt{贞:由王自往阱。}
\end{quote}

"Testing: It should be the king himself who goes (deer-) trapping."

72. But see Bingbian 261.11:

\begin{quote}
\texttt{贞:子王 (往) 巖。}
\end{quote}

"Testing: Call on the king to go....."

However, this inscription is incomplete, and 261.5-9 talk about calling on the \textit{wang zu} 王族 'king's clan members' to go, so 261.11 could be elliptical for the same thing.
73. The reading for this character is taken from the Guangyun (ap. Kang Xi):

74. The graph 天 can be a noun 'field/hunting ground' or a verb 'to hunt', now written 興. Sometimes it also seems to refer to an agricultural activity. Because the first sentence has 王 directly followed by 天, and 王 is rarely directly followed by a noun, I prefer to interpret it here as a verb 'to hunt', but the second example could well be interpreted as "The king will go to the field/hunting ground", as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me.

75. See Pulleyblank 1983, p.6. I would translate the ode line as "Shu is a-hunting."

76. The place name 阿 should be distinguished from the verb 生 'to give birth' (see S.281.3-4). The first graph has been identified as 明, and the latter as either 明 or 阿 (see Li Xiaoding 7.2237 and 14.4317).


78. My reason for putting topics 7-10 in brackets is discussed on pp.154-155.

79. Distress/trouble and requests to ancestral or nature powers may also be included under the rubric of this syndrome.

80. This inscription has already been cited at chapter 2, p.189, n.70.

81. The precise meaning of the verb 塞 is unknown, but from the inscriptions (s.240.1-2) it seems to refer, as Professor Takashima has pointed out to me, to a weather condition, sometimes contrasted with rain. In the present case, it is contrasted with 阴 'overcast' in inscription 46.1 on the front of the plastron. It consists of ba 八 signific and 魚 phonetic element, and may have something to do with opening up/scattering (e.g. clouds?).

82. Because of the contrast between 帝 and 火, I feel that an adversative meaning has to be read in here, though it should be pointed out that the adversative significance appears but rarely in OBI.

83. This graph is probably the original form of 梦 in the sense of
'darkened sky, cloudiness' (see Karlgren's gloss no. 385 concerning the line 零雨其蒙 from ode 156).

84. The Shuowen says 室之東北隅，食所居，從心，(Huan means 'to nourish'. The north-east corner of the room is where the food is kept). As Zhang Bingquan points out in his annotations (Bingbian I.1, p. 81), this is a Han dynasty definition, and does not necessarily go back to the Shang dynasty. Zhang says that one cannot state categorically that in the Shang dynasty it referred to the north-east corner, as it probably acquired this meaning due to a practice of eating in that corner (i.e. where people nourish themselves), which may have existed in the Han dynasty, but not necessarily as far back as the Shang dynasty. However, Zhang does assert that it probably referred to some corner of a building, and could be connected with inscriptions 27/28 on the same plastron, which refer to 'performing the shu-sacrifice in the south-west'.

85. Cf. 壬寅卜，貳不雨，不亦下乎?
庚寅卜，貳不雨。數(?)，不雨。八月。
"Gengyin-day cracking, testing: Next xinmao-day, if the king, when there is 雨 weather condition, does instruction(?) it will not rain. 8th month." (Jiabian 3510, ap. S.240.1)

The absence of qi 其 suggests that rain was not desired, and there are also other inscriptions that talk about not meeting with rain when performing 數 (数), of which I take 数 to be a variant. This must have been an outside activity for which fine weather was required, perhaps some form of military training?

86. E.g. Bingbian 203.22/23:
壬寅卜，貳不雨，作，無言有作福。
"Renyn-day cracking, Que testing: Not raining means this Shang has provoked misfortune."
"Testing: Not raining does not mean this Shang has provoked misfortune."

An example of precipitation being an omen may be found at Bingbian 61.3/4, which I examine in chapter 1, p. 23.

87. Keightley 1978, p. 34.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. But cf. Bingbian 239/240, where sickness appears to be the main topic, and even carries its own omen/curse/sacrifice syndrome.
91. E.g. Bingbian 12-21, which I examine as the first set in my chapter on chengtao gui jia.
92. E.g. Bingbian 51.8/9.
93. E.g. Bingbian 257/258.
94. E.g. Bingbian 205.
95. It is not mentioned in any of the examples at S.256.1-257.1, but there is an example at Bingbian 168:
   "Qiao contributed turtles (to the number of) 500."
96. Gui 色 sometimes occurs after lai 来. I suspect that these may have been live turtles, as lai is normally used of animate tribute. Lai appears to be used causatively here ('cause to come'), and it seems that only things that could come by themselves (i.e. animate things) could be caused
to come. Plastrons were unable to come by themselves. Lai is now written 'to bestow', which is a *qusheng* word.

97. See S.200.2-3 and 201.2.

98. E.g. *Bingbian* 227.3/4 divines about the possibility of Dashi 'causing-to-come' 50 Qiang tribesmen. On the back of this plastron, it is divined whether to enter the 50 into a *si* sacrifice. *Bingbian* 41.6-7 also divines about 'using' (*yong* 用 ) in sacrifice some Qiang that have been *lai*-contributed.

99. E.g. *Bingbian* 81.5/7/8 divine about whether *Hua* *lai* *niu* 畫來牛 'Hua will cause-to-come oxen'.

100. Although the carapace was seldom used in divination. It was nearly always the plastron. *Bingbian* contains one example (66).

101. The *Kang Xi* dictionary gives a *guwen* 古文 form 二 - which has er 二 'two' signific - (not found in the *Shuowen*), and quotes a passage from the *Book of Rites*, "Tou Hu 投壺 (The Game of Pitch-pot)", in which a pair of bamboo 算 tallies (used for keeping the score) is referred to as a *chun* 純. The basic meaning of the bone graph is probably 'a pair'.

102. The preparation of plastrons was nearly always conducted by a woman (if the graph *fu* 只 only applies to women, although there is some dispute over this).

103. As Professor Takashima has pointed out to me, this sort of scheme might also be regarded as ritual itself.

104. There may have been an omen which indicated that such a curse was likely, though it is not recorded on the shell. There must have been some way in which they knew it was Wang Hai who was cursing them.

105. This inscription may be found at S.465.2, and my interpretation of it follows Takashima. Such detailed verifications are very interesting, but lamentably rare.
106. This is only a tentative suggestion.

Wang Hai was the last of the 'remote ancestors', directly before Shang Jia. Some sort of watershed in Shang history is suggested at this juncture by the fact that hai 亥 is the last of the dizhi 㝬支, while jia 甲 is the first of the tiangan 天干.


110 See S.239.4, where yu 魚 (漁) in most cases refers to the activity of fishing. It is also used as a personal/place name.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is not a general bibliography, but consists only of works either cited or consulted. Oracle bone collections are omitted, as a complete list is readily available in Keightley 1978, pp.229-231. I follow his abbreviations, except that I have transcribed them into pinyin.

Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠
1977 Chūgoku kodai no shūkyō to bunka—In ōchō no saishī 中国古代的宗教と文化—一般王朝の祭祀.
Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.

Biot, Edouard, tr.

Boodberg, Peter A.

Chen Mengjia 陈夢家
1956 Yinxu buci zongshu 貌虚卜辞総述.
Peking: Scientific Press.

Chow Kwok-ching 周國政

Corballis, Michael C., and Beale, Ivan L.

Davies, Nina M.

Ding Fubao 丁福保
1960 Shuowen jiezi gulin 説文解字詮林.
Taipei: Commercial Press.

Diringer, David

Dong Zuobin (Tung Tso-pin) 董作賓
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition/Translation Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Guan Xiechu</td>
<td>Yinxu jiagu keci de yufa yanjia 古文字甲骨刻辞的语法研究</td>
<td>Peking: Chinese Academy of Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Huangfu Mi</td>
<td>&quot;Shang Zhou jiagu he qingtongqi shang de guayao,bianshi 商周甲骨和青铜器上的卦文辨識.&quot; Guwenzi yanjiu 古文字研究 6, pp.141-149.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kodai In ôchô no nazo 古代殷王朝のなどを</td>
<td>Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kaizuka Shigeka 貝塚茂樹 and Itô Michiharu 伊藤道治

1953 "Kökotsubun dandai kenkyū-hō no saikento—Dōshi no Bumbutei jidai bokujū o chushin to shite 甲骨文断代研究法の再検討—王朝の文武丁時代卜辞を中心として" In Indai seido bunka no kenkyū 殷代青銅文化の研究 (Originally published in Tōhō gakuhō 東方学報 23 (March 1953), pp.1-78.)

Karlgren, Bernhard


Keightley, David N.


1978 Sources of Shang History--The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China. Berkeley: University of California Press.

1982 "Akatsuka Kiyoshi and the Culture of Early China--A Study in Historical Method." HJAS 42.1. (Review of Akatsuka 1977, q.v.) Also reprinted as Faculty Reprint Series no.6, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley (June 1982).


Kwok Kian-chow


Labat, René

Legge, James, tr.  

Li Daliang 李達良  
1972  Guiban wenli yanjiu 鬱版文例研究. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Li Xiaoding 李孝定  

Lin Yin 林尹  

Mercer, Samuel A.B.  

Mickel, Stanley L.  

Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定  

Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋鉉次  

Nan Huaijin 南懷瑾 and Xu Qinting 徐芹庭, eds.  

Needham, Rodney, comp.  
1973  Right and Left—Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Nivison, David S.  
1976a. "Will 'These Bones' Survive?--Author's Comment." (Written June 27, 1976; revised July 24, 1976.)


Taiping Yulan 太平御覽 (Song) 1960 Li Fang 李昉 et al. ed. Peking: Zhonghua Shuju.

Takashima Kenichi 太橋健一 1973 "Negatives in the King Wu-ting Bone Inscriptions." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Washington. (Published on demand by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich.; no.74-841.)


Thern, Kenneth L., tr.


Tsien Tsuen-hsuin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wang Fuzhi 王夫之</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>禮記章句 Liji zhangju</td>
<td>Taipei: Guangwen Shuju.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiang Xia 甘夏</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>說文解字敘講疏 Shuowen jiezi xu jiangshu</td>
<td>Hong Kong: Zhonghua Press.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Hongxiang 周鴻翔</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>卜辞對貞述例 Buci duizhen shuli 卜辞對貞述例</td>
<td>Hong Kong: Wanyou Tushu Gongsi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>