

THE SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS OF QUESTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS
OF UNCERTAIN OUTCOME IN OLD CHINESE:
A CASE STUDY OF ORACLE-BONE INSCRIPTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with two fundamental issues in the study of the Shāng Oracle-Bone Inscriptions (c. 1300 -1050 BC) and the study of Chinese historical syntax. The first is the linguistic form of the divinatory charges in the Shāng Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. The second is the grammatical and semantic functions of the particle *qi* 其 involving expressions of uncertain outcome in the earlier stages of Chinese language.

A general agreement in the literature is that a Shāng turtle-shell or bone divination involved a verbal activity in which the diviner addressed the matter being divined to the bone or shell, and the sentences recorded in the charge component are what were spoken by the diviner. However, the linguistic form of those divinatory charges is quite debatable. Was the diviner asking a question or making a statement when he proposed a divinatory charge? Are charges interrogatives or declaratives? This study tackles these issues by integrating the insights of semantics of questions with those of speech act analysis, proposing that Shāng divinatory charges are neither questions nor statements, but sets of alternative propositions that provide possible answers (which are contextually determined) to the questions being divined. In terms of their syntactic form, charges have the properties of declarative sentences. In terms of their pragmatic and semantic functions, they have question-like properties, because they offer choices between alternative propositions.

The grammatical status of the particle *qi* is also an unresolved issue in the study of the Oracle Bone language and early Classical Chinese. This thesis makes an effort to investigate the use of *qi* in the oracle bone language from a historical perspective. It suggests that *qi* in Oracle-Bone Inscriptions, as in early Classical Chinese texts, has been used in three different functions: as a genitive marker, as a nominalizing marker, and as an epistemic modality marker to encode uncertain outcome. It proposes that the three functions of *qi* are historically related, arguing that the genitive marker *qi* developed into a modality marker through a process of “de-subordination.”

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List of Classical Chinese Particles

(i) Final particles

éryǐ 而已	final phrasal particle, meaning “only” (lit., “then stop”)
hū 乎	final question particle <i>hu</i>
yān 焉	final particle, equivalent to <i>yu zhi</i> 於之, “in it; to it; on it; at it”
yé 耶	final question particle <i>ye</i> , equivalent to <i>ye hu</i> 也乎
yě 也	mark of noun predication; mark of topic; mark of continuing state
yú 歟 (與)	final question particle, equivalent to <i>ye hu</i> 也乎
xī 兮	particle of pause used in poetry, approximately “oh”
yǐ 矣	final particle of perfect aspect
zāi 哉	final particle of exclamation
zhū 諸	final particle, contraction of <i>zhi hu</i> 之乎 where <i>zhi</i> is a demonstrative pronoun used as an object, and <i>hu</i> is either the final question marker or a variant of <i>yu</i> 於, “in, at, to, from.”

(ii) Preverbal particles

jì 既	mark of completed action
qí 其	genitive marker; mark of nominalization; mark of uncertain outcome
qǐ 豈	rhetorical question marker
yán 言	preverbal aspect particle
yú 于	preverbal aspect particle
yuē 曰	preverbal aspect particle
yún 云	preverbal aspect particle

(iii) Structural particles

ér 而	conjunction, “and; but”
shí 實	demonstrative pronoun, used to recapitulate the preceding subject
suǒ 所	relative pronoun
yú 於	preposition, “in, at, to, from; than”
yú 于	preposition, “to, at, in”
zhě 者	pronominal substitute for the head of a noun phrase “that which, one who”
zhī 之	genitive marker; mark of nominalization; demonstrative pronoun “that,” when used in object position, approximately “it, him, her, them”

Preface

This study deals with two fundamental issues in the study of the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions (henceforth OBI) and the study of Chinese historical syntax. One is the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges. The other is the grammatical and semantic functions of the particle *qi* 其 in the earlier stages of Chinese language. In particular, with respect to the first issue, the major concern of this study is the question of the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges, i.e., whether they are questions or statements. With respect to the issues about the particle *qi*, the major concern of this study is its modal function in pre-Classical and early Classical Chinese. It also contains an in-depth investigation of the connection between the modal function of *qi* and the genitive function of *qi*. The questions to be explored are: Why is *qi* associated with numerous divinatory charges and omitted in other charges that are similar or virtually identical in lexical content? How does *qi*'s function in divinatory contexts bear on the linguistic property of the charges? Although the examples in which *qi* is used are rich in quantity, the semantic context is not rich enough for us to identify its modal functions and meanings in the language. In order to find an answer, we move outside of the OBI data and look at its use in the later classical texts. Even though one cannot assume that *qi* in the earlier language of OBI was the same as the *qi* in the later periods of the language, the assumption that there is continuity between the Oracle-Bone language and later forms of Chinese is basic to the study of early Chinese language. Thus, this study pays much attention to the historical connection between the use of *qi* in later texts and its use in the earlier texts in OBI.

The motivation for us to combine these two subjects in this study is as follows. On the one hand, whether the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges are questions or statements is a long-standing issue in the literature, and how we understand it crucially affects our understanding of the OBI texts, the divination system, and the language reflected in these texts. On the other hand, the grammatical status of the particle *qi* in OBI is also a puzzle that must be solved in order to fully understand the Shang divinatory contexts and the divination system implied in them. It has become increasingly clear that we cannot understand the nature of the Shang

divinatory charges and the Shang divinatory system if we do not understand how the particle *qi* functions in the Shang language.

Another issue that motivates this study is a theoretical one. Divination is a special discourse context of communication. To know how language is used in such a context will undoubtedly enrich empirical linguistic data and will further our understanding of the structural and semantic aspects of the language. Specifically speaking, divinations are good contexts in which to look at the relation between a statement and a question, as well as the syntax and semantics of question-answer sequences. It has been proposed in model-theoretic semantics that the semantic value (i.e., the meaning) of a question is the set of its possible answers. An answer to a question is a statement selected from the set of its possible answers whose truth values are not certain for the questioner. However, to pin down the meaning of questions exactly is not so obvious in normal discourse contexts. This study will show that the relation between a question a statement as defined in model-theoretic semantics can be clearly seen in the Shang divinatory charges.

This study includes two parts. Most of Part I is devoted to investigating the linguistic form of the divinatory charges in the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the phenomena to be discussed, reviewing some important theories proposed in previous studies. Chapter 2 introduces the conventions used in making the divinatory records in Shang divination, presenting the basic structure of the recorded divinatory contexts. Chapter 3 and 4 in this part contain an in-depth investigation of this issue from the approach of semantics of questions, as proposed in generative semantics. The main task of these chapters is to demonstrate that the Shang divinatory charges are neither questions nor statements; rather, they are sets of alternative propositions containing the possible, and contextually determined, answers to the questions being divined about.

With Part II, we begin a new facet of the discussion, turning our attention to the issues surrounding the linguistic functions of the particle *qi*. We start our investigation in the later texts, and work backwards all the way up to the earliest known corpus of Chinese, the OBI texts.

In Chapter 5, we start with an introduction to the issues regarding *qi*. We provide a general

account for the grammatical functions of *qi* in the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and the *Guoyu* 國語, and in the earliest classics, such as the *Shangshu* 尚書 and the *Shijing* 詩經. Traditionally, *qi* is identified as having two basic functions: it can be used as a modal particle and as a possessive pronoun. These functions are generally considered a case of homonymy or *jiajie* 假借 (i.e., two unrelated words are written with the same graph because they are identical or nearly identical in sound). In this study, the different functions of *qi* are not considered a case of homonymy but a case of polysemy in which the different functions of *qi* are historically derived. This study intends to show that the distinction made between the grammatical functions of *qi* as pronominal and modal cannot fully characterize the nature of the particle *qi*. Instead, we hold that the basic grammatical functions of *qi* in Pre-Classical and early Classical Chinese are as follows: (i) *qi* is a genitive marker used to specify a genitive/possessive relation; (ii) *qi* is a nominalizing marker in dependent clauses, and (iii) *qi* is a modality marker in main clauses.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the modal functions of *qi* in the early classical texts. We begin with a review of the previous studies of the modal functions and meanings of *qi* in early Classical Chinese. After this, an in-depth investigation of the modal functions and meanings of *qi* is pursued. Through a detailed examination of its use in naturally occurring discourse, we propose that *qi* is an “uncertain outcome” (or Irrealis) marker in early Classical Chinese. We intend to show that the use of *qi* in main clauses in early classical texts is associated with the kind of expressions or information whose truth condition or factual status is not yet certain for the speaker at the moment of speaking.

On the basis of the understanding of the grammatical and semantic functions of *qi* in the later texts as provided in the prior chapters, Chapter 8 explores the grammatical functions of *qi* in the OBI texts. We start by examining the genitive and nominalizing functions of *qi* in the OBI data. A discussion of the modal use of *qi* in main clauses in the charge context is also included in this chapter, demonstrating that *qi*’s uncertain-epistemic modal function as an “uncertain outcome” marker already existed in OBI.

The works of Nivison (1992a-c) and Takashima (1996) were major sources of inspiration during the development of this study’s analysis of the OBI *qi*. Nivison (1968, 1992a-c) holds

that the so-called modal *qi* and the pronoun *qi* are different uses of the same word (see Chapter 8). Takashima (1996) agrees with this view, providing empirical examples to demonstrate that the genitive-pronominal use of *qi* already existed in Shang Chinese. Based on the synchronic data of OBI, Takashima (1996) identifies the following different functions of *qi* in OBI: (i) *qi* is used as an anaphoric pronoun; (ii) *qi* is used as a subordinate sentence marker of embedment type; and (iii) *qi* is used as a function word representing what amounts to the subjunctive mood. As for the relationship between the different uses of *qi*, Nivison (1992b) assumes that *qi* started as a verb, and then derived to a “demonstrative adjective” or a “possessive pronoun;” the so-called modal *qi* could be explained as a special use of the pronoun *qi* (e.g., *qi* is used to effect a “sentence-fragment” modality). Different from Nivison (1992b), Takashima (1996) suggests that *qi* started as a pronoun (see Chapter 8).

The above works lay the foundation for our identification of the different grammatical functions of *qi* in OBI. However, the pronominal hypothesis of *qi* in OBI is not the main idea of this study. Instead, based on our investigation of the historical development of *qi* in early Classical Chinese and in the earliest known form of Chinese, the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions, we conclude that *qi* in the earlier stages of Chinese, including the Shang language, is a genitive marker, rather than a pronoun with genitive/possessive function. That is, in our analysis, *qi* is a pure genitive marker used between a covert (or overt in earlier texts, see Chapter 5) nominal possessor and a possessed noun, similar to the genitive marker *de* 的 in modern Mandarin. In addition, we shall demonstrate that the genitive marker *qi*, which usually occurs in front of a noun, can also be used in front of a verb of a dependent clause, in which it functions as a nominalizer (see Chapters 5 and 8). Lastly, we suggest that *qi* has acquired the status of a mark of “uncertain outcome” (or Irrealis) in the environment of a main clause. We hypothesize that the genitive marker *qi* developed into a modality marker through the following stages: Stage 1, the genitive marker *qi* is extended to be used as a nominalizing marker in front of the non-main verb of a dependent clause; this use provides the possibility for *qi* to be used in front of a verb. Stage 2, *qi*’s nominalizing use in front of the verb in a dependent clause is extended to the environment of main clauses through a process of “de-subordination.” Stage 3, the erstwhile nominalizing marker *qi* is reanalyzed with a new grammatical function—an “uncertain outcome”

marker (see discussion in Chapter 8).

Interestingly, the investigation of the grammatical and semantic functions of *qi* in the later texts brings us to a discussion of the nature of the Shang divinatory charges from a different perspective. That is, the conclusion that the use of *qi* in main clauses is to mark what is expressed as an “uncertain outcome” is compatible with our claim that Shang divinatory charges are “alternative propositions” containing the set of “possible answers” to the question that the diviner had in his mind. In other words, divinatory charges are also a case of “uncertain outcomes.”

The data in this study come from several early Chinese texts which include:

- (i) The Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions found in the site of the last capital of the Shang 商 dynasty, near the present Anyang 安陽. They are the earliest known examples of written Chinese and date from the late Shang dynasty (c. 1300 -1050 BC). In this study, we refer to the OBI texts as pre-Classical texts, and the language recorded in these texts as pre-Classical Chinese.
- (ii) The early classical Chinese texts, including the following ones: (a) the earliest transmitted Chinese texts such as the *Shangshu* 尚書 and the *Shijing* 詩經 which date from the early centuries of the Zhou dynasty (1050 -770 BC); and (b) the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and the *Guoyu* 國語 which date from the period from the Spring to Autumn-Warring States (c. 475 - 221 BC). We refer to the texts in (a) and (b) as early classical texts, and to the language recorded in these texts as early Classical Chinese.

OBI are the graphic records of divinations inscribed in the earliest known Ancient Chinese script—the Oracle-Bone Script. In order to use OBI as linguistic data to study the Shang language, it is essential that we understand the palaeographic interpretation of the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences. And we believe that, as pointed out by Takashima (1996 a: 113), “without first understanding as clearly and accurately as possible the meaning of the examples which have been used, one cannot tackle anything substantive at all, in any field.” However, because the major concern of this study is not the palaeographic interpretation of the Oracle-Bone Script, but rather the linguistic features of the divinatory records, we will not focus here on explaining why we have followed particular interpretations of the examples. Instead, we base our linguistic analysis and description on the outstanding work of previous scholars.

Specifically, many of our examples are cited from the *Bingbian* collection, and the modern transcription of the original texts is mostly based on Zhang Bingquan 張秉權 (1959-1972), *Bingbian kaoshi* 丙編考釋. The English translation of the examples cited is mostly based on the following works: Takashima (2004 a, Manuscripts), *Bingbian general notes*; Takashima (2004 b, Manuscripts), *Bingbian commentary*; and Serruys' translation of the *Bingbian* collection (as quoted in Takashima 2004 a). The final rendering represents my own understanding of the examples. Each example from the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions is given in the following format: The first line is the modern interpretation of the original Oracle-Bone scripts; the second line is the modern pronunciation of the original text; the third line is the word-by-word translation; and the fourth line is the general translation of the sentence meaning.

As for the early classics, each example is given in the following format. The first line is the quotation of the original text; the second line is the modern pronunciation; the third line is the word-by-word translation; and the fourth line is the general translation of the sentence meaning. The source of each example from the early classics is cited as follows: First, the source of the original text is given, then the references to the commentaries or the interpretations of the original text are listed. For the *Shijing* 詩經 (abbreviated as SJ) and *Shangshu* 尚書 (abbreviated as SS), the following two references are given:

- (i) Karlgren (1950a): *The Book of Odes*.
- (ii) Karlgren (1950b): *The Book of Documents*.

The English translation provided by Karlgren is given in quotation marks. In cases in which I give a more literal or different translation, quotation markers are not used.

For the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (abbreviated as ZZ) and *Guoyu* 國語 (abbreviated as GY), the following two references are given:

- (i) Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1981): *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注
- (ii) Shanghai Shida 上海師大 (1978): *Guoyu* 國語.

The volume number and page number cited refer to these two works.

The interpretation of the *Zuozhuan* examples is done by comparing commentaries given in Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1981) *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注, the modern Chinese translation given in Shen Yucheng 沈玉成 (1981) *Zuozhuan yiwen* 左傳譯文, and the English translation given in

Legge (1872), *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 5. The final rendering represents my own understanding of the examples. The interpretation of the *Guoyu* is done by making reference to the commentaries provided in Shanghai Shida 上海師大 (1978) *Guoyu* 國語, Xu Yuangao 徐元誥 (2002) *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解, and Zhang Yiren 張以仁 (1968) 國語虛詞集釋. The final rendering reflects my understanding of the texts.

For the most part, the interpretation of the grammatical particles and the word-by-word translations are given based on the following works: Karlgren (1950a-b) *The Book of Odes* and *The Book of Documents*; Qu Wanli 屈萬里 (1973) *Shangshu Jinzhu Jinyi* 尚書今注今譯; Jin Qihua 金啟華 (1984) *Shijing Quanyi* 詩經全譯; He Leshi 何樂士 et al. (1985) *Gudai Hanyu Xuci Tongshi* 古代漢語虛詞通釋; Schuessler (1987) *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese*; Yu Min 俞敏 and Xie Jifeng 謝紀鋒 (1992) *Xuci Gulin* 虛詞詁林; and Pulleyblank (1995) *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*. In the discussion, the grammatical particles are not glossed in the word-by-word translation, but rather are shown as pronounced in the language. Some commonly used Classical Chinese particles are listed in the *List of Classical Chinese Particles*.

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Part I: The Linguistic Form of Divinatory Charges in Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions

Seeing is the desire to believe what you see.

—Paul Virilio (2000), *A Landscape of Events*

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. A brief introduction to the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions

The aim of Part I in this study is to analyze the linguistic form of the divinatory charges in the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. The Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions refer to the texts excavated at Anyang 安陽 in the last years of the 19th century. They are so called because they record divinations from the later Shang 商 dynasty (ca. 1300 -1050 BC) and were inscribed on bones and shells.

1.1.1. The five historical periods of Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions

The Shang inscriptions cover a historical period from the Kings Pan Geng 盤庚 and Wu Ding 武丁 to the Kings Di Yi 帝乙 and Di Xin 帝辛, which can be further divided into the five periods: Period I (the reign from Pan Geng 盤庚 to Wu Ding 武丁), Period II (the reign from Zu Geng 祖庚 to Zu Jia 祖甲), Period III (the reign from Lin Xin 廩辛 to Kang Ding 康丁), Period IV (the reign from Wu Yi 武乙 to Wen Yi 文乙), and Period V (the reign from Di Yi 帝乙 to Di Xin 帝辛).¹ Although this periodization theory is generally accepted in the literature, there remains debate over identifying the particular period in which certain groups of inscriptions belong. However, there is no dispute as to the periodization of the inscriptions from the *Bingbian* 丙編 collection: they are all from Period I. Therefore, in this study, we mainly focus on the data from Period I, especially the rubbings of the *Bingbian* collection. The *Bingbian* collection is particularly useful because it contains rather full texts, providing sufficient context from which to interpret the texts.

¹ See Dong Zuobin (1933).

1.1.2. The structure of Shang divinatory contexts

The Shang Oracle-Bone inscriptions are formulaic. A full divination context consists of four components: the *xuci* 序辭, “preface,” the *mingci* 命辭, “charge,” the *zhanci* 占辭, “prognostication,” and the *yanci* 驗辭, “verification.”² The preface refers to the part which records the cyclical day on which the divination was performed, the name of the diviner, and sometimes (rarely), the place of divination. A standard prefatory formula starts with the divining day expressed in *ganzhi* 干支, followed by the verb *bu* 卜, “to divine by making a crack,” followed by the name of the diviner and the graph *zhen* 貞, “to test” as in (1 Preface).³ The charge refers to the part which records the matter being divined, as in (1 Charge). The prognostication refers to the part that come after the charge, by which the king prognosticates whether the outcome of the divination is auspicious or not, introduced by the formula *wang zhan yue* 王固曰, “the king, having prognosticated, said: ...,” as in (1 Prognostication). And the verification is the part that records what really happened, as exemplified in (1 Verification):

(1) a.

Preface: 己卯卜, 般貞:

jǐmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn:

jimao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/

Divining on the *jimao* day, Nan tested:

Charge: 雨.

yǔ

rain

It will rain.

b.

Preface: 己卯卜, 般貞:

jǐmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn:

jimao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/

Divining on the *jimao* day, Nan tested.

Charge: 不其雨.

bù qí yǔ.

not/ qí/ rain/

It will perhaps not rain.⁴

² These terms are first given by Tang Lan (1936): “Buci shidai de wenxue he buci wenxue 卜辭時代的文學和卜辭文學,” in *Qinghua Xuebao* 清華學報, Vol. 11, No. 3: 657-702, July 1936. The term *mingci* 命辭, “charges,” is so called not because the term *ming* 命, “to charge” occurs in the inscriptions, but because a similar divination practise was also followed in the Zhou time (ca. 11th BC - 256 BC) and was reflected in the Zhou texts such as *Shangshu* 尚書, *Zuozhuan* 左傳, *Zhouli* 周禮, and *Liji* 禮記. In the Zhou texts, the verbal activity during a turtle divination was called *linggui* 令龜 or *minggui* 命龜. The Zhou term was extended by modern scholar to apply to Shang divinatory sequences.

³ In modern Mandarin, the character 貞 is pronounced as *zhen*. However, its Middle Chinese pronunciation recorded in the early Song rhyme dictionary *Guangyun* 廣韻 (1011 AD by Chen Pengnian), a later edition of the Sui rhyme dictionary *Qieyun* 切韻 (601 AD) by Lu Fayan, suggests the regular pronunciation of 貞 should be *zheng* 貞 and *zhen* is an irregular development.

⁴ The meaning and function of the particle *qi* is the subject of Part II in this study. For reasons that will become apparent later, I will refer to the basic modal function of *qi* in main clauses as a mark of uncertain outcome, which

Prognostication: 王固曰：其雨佳壬。

wáng zhàn yuē: qí yǔ wéi rén

king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ rain/ be/ *ren* day/

The king prognosticated: If it rains, it will perhaps be on a *ren* day.

(Lit. Its raining will perhaps be on a *ren* day)

Verification: 壬午允雨。

rén wǔ yǔn yǔ .

renwu day/ indeed/ rain.

On the *renwu* day, it indeed rained. (*Bingbian* 235: 1-2)

This example represents the *duizhen* 對貞, “positive-negative paired divinations.” Namely, the charge sentences are composed in positive-negative format, and are opposite in meaning, as in (1a) and (1b). Charges with this pattern are called “paired charges” in this study. The positive charge in (1a) is accompanied with a preface, a prognostication, and a verification, but the negative counterpart in (1b) only contains the preface and the charge components. A commonly seen paired divination usually consists of only the preface and the charge components as below:

(2) a. 壬寅卜，敵貞：河巷王。

rényín bǔ, Nán zhēn: Hé tuò wáng.

renyin day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, the River God/ impede/ king.

Divining on the *renyin* day, Nan tested: The River God is impeding/will impede the king.

b. 壬寅卜，敵貞：河弗巷王。

rényín bǔ, Nán zhēn: Hé fú tuò wáng.

renyin day/ divine/ test/, the River God/ not/ impede/ king.

Divining on the *renyin* day, Nan tested: The River God is not impeding/will not impede the king. (*Bingbian* 203: 20-21)

The divinatory context in (2) is a positive-negative pair which consists of two inscriptions, each of which contains only a preface and a charge. The prefaces in (2a) and (2b) are the same. Both are written as: *renyin bu*, *Nan zhen* 壬寅卜，敵貞, “Divining on the *renyin* day, Nan test.”

However, the charge sentences in (2a) and (2b) are opposite in meaning: (2a) is positive, *He tuo* is used to signal uncertainty on the part of the speaker about the factual status of the proposition being said. For convenience, I will simply translate *qi* by using the English words that express an uncertain-epistemic meaning such as “perhaps, may, maybe, etc.”

wang 河巷王, “The River God is impeding/will impede the king,” and (2b) is negative, He fu tuo wang 河弗巷王, “The River God is not impeding/will not impede the king.”

Inscriptions with paired charges as in the above two examples are the most commonly seen divinatory contexts. The less commonly seen divinatory contexts are those that contain a set of charges parallel in sentence structure, but contrary in one of the constituents, as below:

(3) a. 羌甲希王

Qiāng Jiǎ sǐ wáng.

Qiang Jia/ to be hostile/ king⁵

Ancestor Qiang Jia is/will be hostile to the king.

b. 南庚希王

Nán Gēng sǐ wáng.


Nan Geng/ to be hostile/ king

Ancestor Nan Geng is/will be hostile to the king. (*Bingbian* 149:18-19)

In this divination context, only the charges were engraved. These two charges are not in a positive and negative pair as those in (1) and (2), rather, they both are affirmative sentences. They share the same sentence structure, and are different with respect to only one corresponding constituent, the subject phrase. It seems that the two ancestors by the names appearing in the subject position were considered by the Shang diviner as the possible spirits who were afflicting the king. In this study, we refer the charges of this pattern as “alternative charges” or “parallel charges” and the divinatory contexts with such charge pattern as “alternative-type” or “choice-type” divinations.

1.2. The debate: Are divinatory charges questions or statements?

There is general agreement that a Shang turtle-shell or bone divination involved a verbal performance in which the diviner addressed the matter being divined to the bone or shell, and the sentences

⁵ The main verb of the two charges is represented by the graph , which was transcribed as the character 希 in Sun Yirang (1917). However, the modern reading of this graph is not clear. Guo Moruo (1933: Fig 426) agrees the graphical transcription proposed by Sun and considers that 希 should be read as *sui* 祟, suggesting that 希 is a loan character for the word *sui* 祟, which can be used as a noun meaning “disaster or evil influence from gods or spirits,” or as a verb meaning “to cause disaster.” In Guo’s interpretation, the meaning of *yi* 希 is similar to *tuo* 巷, “to impede, to harm.” In Ito and Takashima (1996 vol. 1:451-452; vol. 2: 115), this word is interpreted as “to be hostile to (some specific person).” And both Takashima (2004a: PP 149) and Serruys (as cited in Takashima 2004a) interpret this word as “afflict.”

recorded in the charge component as mentioned in the above section are what were spoken by the diviner. Although what were said by the diviners (i.e., the charges) were recorded by the Shang engravers into the bones or shells and come to us as one component of oracle-bone inscriptions, the linguistic form of those divinatory charges is quite debatable. The English translations provided above for the examples in (1)-(3) are based on the assumption that the charges are statements; however, whether this is in fact the case will be discussed in this study. Was the diviner asking a question or making a statement when he proposed a divinatory charge? In terms of linguistic form, are the sentences in the divinatory charges interrogatives or declaratives?⁶

For years, scholars in the field have taken the view that charges are questions, for two assumptions: (i) the purpose of divination is to divine is to resolve doubts; since charges are utterances intended to resolve doubts, they must be interrogative in nature; and (ii) a charge is usually introduced by the word *zhen* 貞, which, according to the definition given in the dictionary of *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (121 AD, henceforth *Shuowen*), the most influential dictionary in Chinese palaeography by the Latter Han scholar Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 30-124 AD),⁷ means *buwen* 卜問, “to ask by divining.”

However, this traditional view of charges as questions has been challenged since the early 1970s by some Western scholars (e.g., Keightley 1972; Serruys 1974), who propose that charges are statements for two major reasons: (i) the understanding of the word *zhen* as “to ask by divining,” is a later interpretation, which is not supported by the classical texts in the Zhou period and should not be applied to the Shang divinatory inscriptions (Keightley 1972: 4-8); and (ii) the grammatical structure of the charge sentences is not different from that of the sentences in the prognostication and verification, and “there are no other indications, particles, or grammatical

⁶ According to Lyons (1977: 745), there are three basic sentence types to be found in languages: ‘declaratives,’ ‘interrogatives,’ and ‘imperatives.’ It is important to make a distinction between the terms of interrogatives and questions, as well as that between declaratives and statements. Interrogatives are syntactic categories: they are particular types of sentences. Questions are semantic categories: they are the semantic values of interrogatives, i.e., their meanings. Accordingly, declaratives are syntactic categories: they are particular types of sentences. The term of statements is used for the semantic functions: By uttering a declarative sentence, a speaker is usually making a statement that has truth value. However, we have to notice the fact that not all declarative sentences are statements—they may equally be questions or even commands. For example, a declarative sentence like “*John shut the door*” in English may also be used to express a question or a command: “*Did John shut the door?*” Or “*Shut the door, John!*”

⁷ Another saying is that Xu Shen was born in 58 AD and died in 147 AD (see Qian Zengyi 錢曾怡 and Liu Yuxin 劉聿鑫 (eds.) 1991: 214). According to Postface of the *Shuowen*, Xu Shen probably finished the dictionary in 100 AD, but it was not until 121 that Xu’s son presented it to the emperor An Di 安帝 of the Latter Han Dynasty, while Xu was ill.

constructions in the divinations which would make them interrogative” (Keightley 1972: 28).

Since Keightley’s seminal work of 1972, the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges has been placed in the forefront in the study of the OBI. Even though it was intensively debated in 1980s, there is still no general agreement on this issue. Scholars are still uncertain about what kind of speech act was involved in the Shang divination event. Today, scholars are still basically divided into two schools: those who hold that the charges are questions, and those who hold that the charges are statements.⁸ However, neither view provides an adequate description of the nature of the divinatory charges in OBI. The dilemma is this: the “question” view does not account for the apparently similar grammatical structure of the charge sentences, the prognostication sentences, and the verification sentences, while the “statements” view goes against intuition about the very definition of divination by suggesting that it is possible to divine by making statements.

Therefore, the issue of whether or not charges are questions is fundamental to the study of OBI, because how we answer it will directly affect our general understanding of the Shang divinatory inscriptions, the nature of Shang divination, and the Shang language, as pointed out in Li Xueqin (1985[1986:71]): “the issue of whether or not the charges are questions touches on all aspects of Oracle-Bone Interpretation.”(卜辭是否問句的問題, 涉及到對所有卜辭的理解。) The task of the remaining chapters in Part I is to provide an appropriate answer to this issue.

1.2.1. Divinatory charges as questions: the early studies (e.g., Liu Tieyun 劉鐵雲1903; Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 1904; Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 1910; Guo Moruo 郭沫若1933)⁹

In early studies of OBI, most scholars hold the view that all the sentences in the divinatory charges are questions that bear the linguistic form of interrogative sentences. We have briefly mentioned that there are two major assumptions that lead to this conclusion. They are discussed below in more detail.


Traditional scholars took it for granted that divination is an act or an art of trying to foretell


⁸ There is also another view—like that of Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 (1988) who considers that some charges are questions, and some charges are statements. Namely, if the words *zhi* 執 or *yi* 抑 is used in a charge, then it is a question; if not then it is a declarative. See discussion below.


⁹ A thorough evaluation of different theories proposed in the literature concerning the nature of the Shang Oracle-Bone inscriptions is provided in Takashima (1989). Below is a summary of the basic points of the previous studies which will be essential to the understanding of the following analysis.

the future or to seek information about the unknown by particular methods from which the oracular outcomes can be obtained. In the case of the Shang divination, the means of obtaining sacred oracles was to make cracks on the turtle-shells (e.g., plastrons) or animal bones (e.g., scapulas) by applying intense heat to the hollows made on the back side of the shell or bone. An act of seeking information is commonly associated with the speech act of asking questions, because asking a question is the ordinary linguistic strategy to obtain information. Therefore, it is quite natural to take divination as an act involving addressing questions to spirits, because seeking information from God or spirits is the motivation of divination. Such a view of divination would naturally lead to the conclusion that the sentences proposed by the Shang diviners as charges in the turtle-shell or bone divination are interrogative sentences.

This view of divination also has its deep-rooted support in classical Chinese texts. For instance, in *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the eleventh year of Duke Huan 桓公, we see sentences such as: *bu yi jue yi, bu yi he bu* 卜以決疑, 不疑何卜? “To divine is to resolve doubts, and if one does not have any doubt, why divine?” Thus, all Chinese scholars of oracle-bone inscriptions believe that divination in Shang is an act in which the Shang people were asking for information from their ancestors in order to resolve doubts in their minds (e.g., Liu Tieyun 劉鐵雲 1903; Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 1904; Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 1910; Dong Zuobin 董作賓 1931; Guo Moruo 郭沫若 1933 [1983], 1937[1965]; Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 1956; and Zhang Bingquan 張秉權 1956, 1960, 1965, among others).

In addition to the intuition that the purpose of divination is to resolve doubts, the influential philological work done by the early Chinese scholars on the graph  also provides a good basis from which to derive the long-lasting theory of the Shang divinatory charges as question sentences. In OBI, this graph is often used immediately in front of a charge, which was first interpreted as *wen* 問, “to ask” by Liu Tieyun 劉鐵雲 (1903) in the preface of *Tieyun canggui* 鐵雲藏龜, the first publication of the OBI source material. Obviously, the interpretation of the character as *wen*, “to ask” implies that the sentences introduced by the character are questions. But Liu’s identification of this graph with the character *wen*, “to ask” was disputed by the late Qing scholar Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1904). In his *Qiwén Jùlì* 契文舉例, Sun considers that the character in question should not be interpreted as *wen* 問, “to ask,” rather it should be interpreted as *bei*

貝, “cowrie” graphically, which in the OBI is the simplified form of the character *zhen* 貞 (Sun 1904: 6). He further proposed that the meaning of the character *bei* 貝 (= *zhen* 貞) should be the one as defined in the *Shuowen* 說文 (121 AD). In the *Shuowen* 說文, *zhen* 貞 is defined as: *zhen, bu wen ye* 貞, 卜問也, “*zhen* is to ask by divining.” The basis from which Xu Shen derived such an interpretation is the graphical structure of the character. Namely, in Xu’s view, *zhen* 貞 is a *huiyi* 會意 character (i.e., a semantograph formed by the combination of different graphical elements from which the meaning of the forming character is derived). According to Xu Shen, graphically, *zhen* 貞 is *cong bei bu*, 從貝卜, “to be composed of two characters: the character *bu* 卜, “to divine,” and character *bei* 貝, “cowrie.” The graphical structure of *zhen* 貞 as such suggests that its meaning has to do with the combination of these two characters, for which Xu’s interpretation is *bei yiwei zhi* 貝以為贅, “(when one goes to divine, he should bring) cowries as presents.” That is why the meaning of *zhen* is “to ask by divining”¹⁰ Obviously, Sun’s interpretation of this OBI graph is fully inspired by the *Shuowen*. To support the *Shuowen* definition, Sun also quotes the explanation of *zhen* 貞 given by the Han scholar Zheng Sinong 鄭司農 (ca. AD 89 - 114) in his commentary to *Zhouli* 周禮, *chunguan* 春官, *tianfu* 天府.¹¹ Sun’s interpretation of the graph  as *zhen* 貞 meaning “to ask by divining” was followed by many scholars dealing with the oracle-bone inscriptions. This understanding naturally led to the conclusion that the charge sentences following *zhen* are questions.

Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, an influential late Qing scholar, was the next to strengthen the “question” theory of the Shang divinatory charges. In his *Yinshang zhengbu wenzikao* 殷商貞卜文字考 (Luo 1910) and his *Yinxu shuqi kaoshi* 殷虛書契考釋 (Luo 1914 [1927]), Luo suggests that the OBI graph  should be directly transcribed as *zhen* 貞, which is different from the

¹⁰ See *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字註 (ch3b: 127) by Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1815[1981]).






¹¹ The passage in which Zheng Sinong gives his interpretation of the word *zhen* 貞 is below:

季冬陳玉, 以貞來歲之嫩惡。

At the end of the season, we exhibit jades as gifts (to god/spirits) to inquire about what is good and what is bad in the coming year. (*Zhouli* 周禮 · *chunguan* 春官 · *tianfu* 天府)

For this passage, Zheng comments: “貞問也, 易曰師貞丈人吉. 問於丈人. 國語曰貞於陽卜.” which can be roughly translated as:

“*Zhen* is *wen*, ‘to ask.’ In *Yijing*, there is the sentence ‘*Shi zhen zhang ren ji*,’ which means ‘to ask an elder man.’ And in the *Guoyu*, there is the sentence ‘*Zhen yu Yang Bu*,’ which means ‘to ask Yang Bu.’” Here we see that Zheng Sinong explicitly said that the meaning of *zhen* 貞 is “to ask,” although we cannot fully understand Zheng Sinong’s explanation about the sentences from the *Yijing* and the *Guoyu*. I do not intend to pursue a discussion on them here. See Keightley (1972: 4-6) for variant interpretations.

graph  for *bei* 貝, “cowrie,” though they are very close in shape. That is, Luo disagrees with Sun’s (1904) to interpretation of the graph  as *bei* 貝 graphically, and he does not consider that *bei* 貝 is used to stand for the character *zhen* 貞 because of the similarity in graphical form. Rather, Luo suggests that the OBI graph  was itself *zhen* 貞. As far as its meaning is concerned, Luo and Sun share the same view that *zhen* 貞 means “to ask by divining” as defined in the *Shuowen*. Luo states that the *Shuowen* definition of *zhen* can be supported by the expression *zhenbu* 貞卜 in *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the seventeenth year of Duke Ai 哀公, as in the sentence 衛侯貞卜, “The Marquis of Wei enquired by the turtle-shell divination.” Moreover, he points out  is actually an alternate form of , which resembles the shape of a round cauldron and should be transcribed as *ding* 鼎, “cauldron” graphically. The character *ding* 鼎, “ding-cauldron” was used to write the word *zhen* 貞 in bone inscriptions due to the similarity in pronunciation between these two words, as has already been pointed out in *Shuowen*.

The alternation between *zhen* 貞 and *ding* 鼎 is further demonstrated by the earlier scholar of Oracle-Bone Inscription Wu Qichang 吳其昌 (1934-1937: 2-3) from the point of view of their phonological relation. According to Wu, both *zhen* and *ding* are pronounced the same in Classical Chinese, although they have different initials in the later stages of Chinese. In the rhyme dictionary *Guangyun* 廣韻, which is thought to represent Middle Chinese, the initial of *zhen* belongs to the sound of *sheshang* 舌上 (retroflex) [tr], labelled as initial *zhi* 知 in the rhyme-table tradition, while that of *ding* belongs to *shetou* 舌頭 (dental) [t], labelled as initial *duan* 端 in the rhyme-table tradition. However, based on the accepted opinion of the Qing phonologist Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1727 - 1786), the so-called Middle Chinese *sheshang* initials are all derived from the Old Chinese *shetou* initials, that is to say both *zhen* and *ding* had the same initial in Old Chinese. Moreover, both *zhen* and *ding* belong to the same Old Chinese Rhyme Group, *geng* 耕. Therefore, Wu concluded: 乃知貞字，實為一為肖之鼎影，遞次演變而來，貞鼎所以為一字之故，已可了然大明，“Therefore we know that character *zhen* is actually a pictograph, which depicts exactly the real shape of a *ding*-cauldron. The reason why the words *zhen* and *ding* are represented by the same character is very obvious now (because they were similar in sound in Old Chinese).” In a word, the pictograph *ding* 鼎, “cauldron” is used to express the word *zhen* 貞, “to ask by divining” because they are similar in pronunciation.

It is through these philological works of the early Chinese scholars to decipher and interpret the word *zhen* 貞 that the question theory developed. The question theory is further strengthened in influential works in the field such as Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1933, 1937), Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1956), and Zhang Bingquan 張秉權 (1956, 1957, and 1965). For example, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1956: 87) considers both charges and prognostications to be questions. More recently, Chen Weizhan 陳煒湛 (1994[2003]) and Zhang Yujin 張玉金 (2002) strongly argues for the view that charges are to be considered as questions.¹²

1.2.2. Divinatory charges as utterances that were charged to a turtle to make inquiry: Dong Zuobin 董作賓 (1931)

The early question view of the nature of the Shang divinatory charges is taken a step further in Dong Zuobin's (1931), "*Dagui si ban kaoshi* 大龜四版考釋," a landmark work that makes the first attempt to explore the custom of the Shang divinations.¹³ In this work, Dong makes two important discoveries. One is that the character occurring between the word *bu* 卜 and the word *zhen* 貞 in the preface formula is the diviner's name—this is called the *zhen ren shuo* 貞人說, "theory of diviner's name." This discovery makes possible the periodization of the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. Another discovery by Dong, which is more important in terms of understanding the nature of the Shang divinatory charges, is that the charge sentences in the Shang divinatory contexts are inscribed in certain formulaic patterns. Specifically, the following divinatory charge patterns are seen in the four large turtle plastrons:

(i) The *liang zhen* 兩貞, "two divinations," a divinatory context that is composed of two charge sentences which includes the following two subtypes:

¹² As mentioned in Takashima (1988-89: 20-22), the only Chinese scholar to doubt the "question" theory is Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤. In his book *Yindai zhenbu renwu kao* 殷代貞卜人物考 (1959), Rao points out that the type of *xunbu buci*, "the weekly divination inscriptions" become incomprehensible when a question mark is attached (p. 70-71). This gives a sense of doubt to the widely accepted "question" view of charges. However, this view was strongly refuted by Zhang Bingquan, who says: "Suppose the interpretation of charges as interrogatives to be permissible, then there will be no such thing as 'incomprehensible,' suppose it not to be permissible, and the chargers will not be interrogative, and in that case, whence comes the divination?" (1965, Vol. 2:445).

¹³ The *dagui siban* 大龜四版, "four large turtle plastrons," was unearthed in December 1929 from the pit called Dalian 大連 in the north part of the Xiaotun 小屯 Village during the third excavation by the archaeological working group of the previous Academia Sinica (see Dong 1931 and *Anyang fajue baogao* vol. 2: 236; vol. 3: 424 for more details). They are dated to Period I and collected in the *Jiabian* 甲編 collection, nos. 2121-2124. Compared to the small fragments of shells and bones discovered previously, these four large turtle plastrons are in much better condition and they contain more extensive contexts from which sufficient contextual information can be obtained, though they are not completely unbroken.

- (a) The *zuoyou duizhen* 左右對貞, “left-right paired divination.” This refers to the divinatory context that is composed of two charges opposite in polarity (that is, one positive and one negative), one of which is put on the left of the turtle shell, and the other is put on the right.
- (b) The *zuoyou jie zheng* 左右皆正, “positive-positive divination.” This refers to the divinatory context that is composed of two positive charges, one of which is put on the left of the turtle shell, and the other is put on the right.
- (iii) The *san zhen* 三貞, “three divinations,” a divinatory context that is composed of three charge sentences.
- (iv) The *si zhen* 四貞, “four divinations,” a divinatory context that is composed of four charge sentences.
- (v) The *yi zhen* 一貞, “single divination,” a divinatory context that is composed of only one charge sentence.

Among these divination patterns, the left-right paired pattern is the fundamental one. According to Dong, the charges given to a turtle in the Shang divination were generally inscribed in pairs to the left and right of the lateral seam (called *qian li lu* 千里路, “thousand-li road” in Chinese) in a turtle shell, with the positive charges to the right and the negative counterparts to the left. Dong refers to this *zuoyou duizhen* 左右對貞, “left-right paired divination” method as *yi shi liang jue* 一事兩決, “to decide a thing from two aspects.” It is by means of these left-right paired divinations, with their two possible outcomes (positive and negative) for a single affair that the turtle would respond. Moreover, Dong points out that to give charges to a turtle with both a positive sentence and a negative sentence at the same time is a custom which can also be seen in the later turtle divinations such as the Zhou divination recorded in the *Chunguan* 春官 chapter of the *Zhouli* 周禮 and the Han divination recorded in the *guice liezhuan* chapter 龜策列傳 in the *Shiji* 史記.¹⁴

Unfortunately, Dong does not explicitly indicate whether the charge sentences are questions or statements. However, from his definitions of *liang zhen fa* 兩貞法, “the method of two *zhen*” as *yi shi liang wen* 一事兩問 “one matter two inquiries,” one may conclude that Dong (1931) views charges as questions. Moreover, his general comment about the Shang divinatory inscriptions

¹⁴ The *guice liezhuan* was recorded by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (ca. 48 - 8 BC).

in the following passage also seems to suggest that he also subscribes to the question theory.

今由大龜版所啟示，可知吾人所稱卜辭者，實為卜時命龜之辭，亦即貞辭。貞訓“卜問”。卜以決疑，因有疑而問之於龜，所以貞辭也就是問事命龜之辭。

Now from what is indicated in these large turtle plastrons, we know that what we call “divinatory inscriptions” are really “utterances that were charged to a turtle in divination,” i.e., the *zhenci*. *Zhen* means “to ask by divination.” To divine is to resolve doubts. One goes to inquire to a turtle because he has doubts. Therefore, *zhenci* are the utterances that are charged to a turtle for inquiring about things. (1931 [1977: 602])

Here Dong also maintains the view that “to divine is to question,” suggesting that charges were *wen shi ming gui zhi ci* 問事命龜之辭, “utterances directed/charged to a turtle for inquiring about things in divination.” Dong’s view of charges was named the “turtle’s charge” theory by the Japanese scholar Shirakawa in his 1948 essay.¹⁵ However, there is a difference between the question theory and Dong’s turtle’s charge theory. That is, the latter draws particular attention to the formats of the charge sentences—in particular, to the pattern of *duizhen*, “paired divination,” in the Shang divinatory inscriptions—while the former does not.




1.2.3. Divinatory charges as not questions but statements: Keightley (1972) and Serruys (1974)

1.2.3.1. Keightley (1972)

Since the grammatical structure of the charge sentences does not differ from that of the sentences in the prognostication and verification components, some scholars started to doubt the question theory in the 70s. Keightley (1972) was the first to advance the view that charges are not questions but statements. His main points are as follows:

(i) Charges are “predictive proclamations” (which Takashima 1989 refer to as the “predictive proclamation” theory). According to Keightley, “the oracle inscriptions of Shang were not questions but predictions. What they recorded were not queries, but tentative statements of intent proclaimed to the spirits for their approval or disapproval.” (1972: 1). Keightley supports this theory on the following grounds: First, he argues against the traditional interpretation of the

¹⁵ According to Takashima (1989), Dong did not name his theory as “turtle’s charge” theory; this name was given by Japanese scholar Shirakawa in his 1948 essay. See Takashima (1989: section 2) for more discussion.

character *zhen* 貞 in the introduction of a charge sentence, given in *Shuowen* as *buwenye* 卜問也, “to ask by divining.” Like Luo Zhenyu (1910), Keightley also considers the character  as an alternate, simpler form of the graph  or  that stands for the word *ding* 鼎, “cauldron.” Similarly, he holds that *ding* 鼎 can also be used to stand for the divinatory verb that was later written as *zhen* 貞, because of the graphic and phonological filiation between them (1972: 1-4).¹⁶ However, he has a different interpretation of the meaning of *zhen*. In his view, the semantic interpretation of this character as “to ask by divining,” as defined in the *Shuowen*, is a late interpretation that is not supported by other early dictionaries such as the *Shi ming* 釋名 (ca. 200 AD). Thus Keightley maintains that the *Shuowen* definition should not be applied to the oracle-bone inscriptions (1972: 4-8). He proposes instead that the meaning of *zhen* in OBI is “to regulate,” which belongs to a word-family containing no notion of interrogation (1972: 41-47, 69). Second, Keightley argues that the divination terms such as *zhen* 貞, *bu* 卜, and *ming* 命 in the Zhou texts are never used in the context of interrogatives (1972: 9-17). Third, Keightley argues that “there are no other indications, particles, or grammatical constructions in the divinations would make them interrogative” (1972: 28). He considers that “treating the oracle-bone inscriptions as statements simplifies the interpretation of the divination process” (1972: 18), and suggests that some difficulties of interpretation “are solved if we regarded the oracle-bone inscriptions as declarative charges of intent and forecast” (1972: 18-39, 68).

(ii) Charges are a form of “analogical magic” which attempts to influence and control the future (Takashima 1989 refers to this as the “analogical magic” theory). This theory further supports the view of charges as statements rather than questions, but from a different aspect. The fact that divinatory charges, prognostications, and verifications were not simply written on the bones or shells with a brush, but were incised with bronze knives led Keightley to believe that motivation to do this skilled and energy-consuming work was not only to keep historical records. He suggests that “the impulse to carve was that of magician,” and that “the divinations were not simply forecasting devices, but that they existed on the narrow borderland between prophecy and magic, between hypothesis, fore-knowledge, and knowledge” (1972: 50). In his view, “the act of divination not only forecast the future, it also helped, in some magical way, to induce it,

¹⁶ See discussion in Section 1.4.1 above.

and "incising the inscriptions gave magical power to divination forecasts" (1972: 51). Because the magical power associated with the incisions was meant to bring about the desired outcome, the incisions must be statements rather than questions, since only statements could report the Shang people's intentions to the gods. As Keightley notes, "Engraving a question gives no power to influence the future" (1972: 51).¹⁷

(iii) Charges are attempts of "dualistic magic" to balance the positive and negative forces of the universe (Takashima 1989 refers to this as the "dualistic magic" theory). Keightley notes that his "statement" theory as proposed above has obvious difficulty explaining the existence of the "negative forecasts" and the charges that express "undesirable situations." Namely, if charges are "predictive proclamations," why must the Shang diviners predict two opposite forecasts or proclaim two opposite intents at the same time? Moreover, if the purpose of engraving charges is to give magical power to divination forecasts so as to influence the future, why must the forecasts that express undesirable situations be inscribed? Keightley proposes a "dualistic magic" theory explain this. According to him, "the engraving of both alternatives documented the reality and fairness of the divination and thus validated the king's decision-making" Keightley (1972: 57).

Due to its contradiction of the widely accepted question theory, Keightley's theory has attracted much attention in the literature and greatly influenced many scholars in the field (e.g., Serruys, Nivison, Lefevre, Shaughnessy, and Takashima). However, Keightley's theory has not gained much support in China. The lack of support from Chinese scholars is mainly due to the fact that Keightley views divination as a kind of "magic" used to control the future, not necessarily a means of seeking information from spirits in order to resolve doubts. This view goes against the traditional understanding of the purpose of divination, causing Chinese scholars to doubt the validity of Keightley's claim.

My view with respect to Keightley's theories regarding Shang divination and the Shang divinatory charges is as follows: I also hold that divination is a process through which to obtain information that is (usually) unavailable by ordinary means, that is, which cannot be obtained

¹⁷ A similar theory is proposed in Shaughnessy (1983) which holds that, for the late Shang kings, the ritual of divination was no longer simply an attempt to resolve doubts about impending events but rather had become a means of controlling them. Takashima (1989) refers to this as the "Oracular magic" theory.

through the usual techniques of indigenous practical epistemology, such as seeing, hearing, or being told by another person—the common categories of the evidential coding system. I admit that, in the cultures that regard oracles obtained through divination as the most revered and authoritative sources of truth, divination has also a political or social function. That is, it is also a means of getting information to establish social facts which command a consensus and form the basis for legitimate, recognized social action. However, divination is usually done to seek information regarding future events and states as well as the outcome of a present crisis.¹⁸

Most of the divinatory contents recorded in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions refer to events or states in the future. Some examples of divinations include: whether a particular type of weather such as rain will be encountered during an outing, such as a hunting expedition, or sacrificial event; whether the weather will be favorable for the agricultural season; whether a crop harvest will be successful; whether game will be captured; whether a war will be won; whether a blessing, aid or approval will be given by God for conducting a particular action such as starting a war, or building a city; whether an event such as a sacrificial offering should be conducted by a particular means; whether a birth will be auspicious or blessed and so on. In addition to reference to the future, Shang divinations may also contain information about the present or the past. For example, there exist many divinations in which the causes that gave rise to an undesirable situations are identified, such as an illness that lingers inexplicably; a disaster that occurred; a dream whose meaning is uncertain; a harvest of crops that failed unaccountably, and so on. Each of these indicates a situation in which ordinary evidence is unavailable for prediction of the outcome.

What were the intentions of the Shang people as they conducted divinations about the above mentioned subject matter? Were they using magic to influence the future? Or were they seeking information to revolve the doubts or questions they had in mind? The answers to these questions are not certain, and they likely never will be, as it is not possible to directly ask the diviners. But from the existence of the divinatory contexts regarding the past events or states, it seems reasonable to assume that the basic purpose of the divinations was to seek information or answers regarding the doubts or questions on their minds, since it is unlikely that the Shang

¹⁸ See Du Bois (1992) for more discussion in this topic.

people assumed that they could use magic to influence the past, though they might have been able to influence the future or change the present. Nevertheless, Keightley's assumptions about the nature and the purpose of the Shang divinations are no doubt worth considering and exploring. When we consider the question of what they did with the information or answers obtained from divination, it seems reasonable to think that the ultimate aim of divinations was to be able to influence the future, in particular through the use of the information obtained from the divination.

Indeed, there are some controversial factors in the understanding of the purpose of divination that make it difficult to accept Keightley's theories as a whole. Nevertheless, I support Keightley's main proposal that the grammatical form of the Shang divinatory charges is not that of "questions," but rather of "statement." However, I remain in disagreement with him about the semantic nature of the Shang charges. In this study, I will show that to merely say charges are "statements" but not "questions" does not fully capture the linguistic nature of the charges in the Shang divination. I argue that even though Shang charges are "statements" in their grammatical form, they are not ordinary "statements" in the sense that statements are propositions with truth values; rather, semantically and pragmatically, the Shang charges are "questions."

1.2.3.2. Serruys (1974)

Serruys (1974) presents further linguistic evidence that Shang divinatory charges are not interrogatives, rendering all the OBI examples into English as declaratives.¹⁹ His main arguments are of a grammatical nature. First, he criticizes the treatment in Chang (1970) that takes grammatical particles such as *wei* 隹, *hui* 惠, *qi* 其, *hu* 乎, and *bu* 不 in bone inscriptions to be interrogative particles. According to Serruys, such treatment is the result of the generally accepted, wide-spread assumption that all charge sentences in bone inscriptions are questions, a fact that is "never positively proved" (1974: 21).

Second, like Keightley, Serruys also proposes that the meaning of the character *zhen* 貞 is incorrectly interpreted as "to ask by divining." Instead, he suggests that it should be interpreted as *zheng* 正, "to correct," stating that the definition of *zhen* given in the *Shuowen* is a later and rare usage; in classical texts *zhen* is more commonly used as an adjective meaning *zheng* 正

¹⁹ The manuscript of Serruys (1974) was finished in 1972, four months earlier than Keightley's, though it was published two years later.

“correct,” *ding* 定 “fix,” *shan* 善 “good, fine,” and *xin* 信 “reliable.” Thus, Serruys suggests that in the oracle-bone inscriptions, *zhen* used as a verb in the introductory formula (i.e., the preface) to introduce a charge, is to mean “‘to test, to try out; to make true, correct’ in the sense of ‘find out the right (course of action)’” (1974: 22). In this analysis, the preface formula “XX 卜, Y 貞” is rendered as: “In the bone divination of day X X, diviner Y tested the proposition, or proposed for test (i.e., rectification) the following course of action or alternative course of action...” (1974: 23)

In this study, we will follow Serruys’ interpretation of the meaning of *zhen* as *zheng* 正, “to test, to try out; to make true, correct.” We adopt this interpretation for two reasons: First, *zhen* meaning *zheng* 正 comes from evidence in classical texts, as has been pointed out in Rao Zongyi (1959). Second, *zhen* and *zheng* not only have the same etymology, but they also seem to have been related morphologically.²⁰



Note that the reason for Serruys to introduce this interpretation of *zhen* is to exclude the necessity that the charge introduced by *zhen* be a question. However, what we want to point out here is that the interpretation of *zhen* as *zheng*, “to test, to try out, to make sure and correct” does not fully exclude the possibility of interpreting a charge sentence introduced by *zhen* as a question. That is, if we cannot exclude the possibility that the sentence following *zhen* is the complement clause of the verb, then a verb meaning “to test, to try out, to make sure and correct” may select a question clause, e.g., a whether-question, as its complement. For example, in English, we may say “Let’s test whether/if this works,” or “Let’s try out whether/if this is a good solution.” The two complement clauses here are obviously indirect questions. Similarly in OBI texts, we may translate an inscription such as XX 貞 今夕雨 as: “XX tested whether it is true that it will rain tonight.”

In other words, the interpretation of *zhen* as *zheng*, “to test, to try out, to make sure and correct” is not sufficient to determine whether the sentence following it is a question or a statement. However, we shall show in this study that such an interpretation of *zhen* is congruous with the nature of the charges in the sense that charges are neither pure “questions” nor pure “statements,” but alternative propositions of possible answers.

²⁰ See Takashima (1989: Section 6.1) for more discussion.




1.2.4. Divinatory charges as questions or statements: Li Xueqin and Qiu Xigui

1.2.4.1. Li Xueqin (1980)

Li Xueqin 李學勤 (1980) is the first works by Chinese scholars to discuss whether or not charges are questions. Li (1980) observes that in the Dui-group inscriptions, there are some charges ended with the characters  and . Li proposes that these two characters should be transcribed as *fu* 𠄎 and *zhi* 執 and they are final interrogative particles. Li (1980: 39-41) points out that in the Dui-group inscriptions, some charges “combine positive and negative questions in a single sentence, with the positive question using the particle *fu* 𠄎 and the negative question using the particle *zhi* 執 (or sometimes just the opposite).” According to Li, this type of charge can be regarded as a type of choice question in which two clauses, one positive and one negative, are paired, and the two clauses use the final particles *fu* 𠄎 or *zhi* 執.

1.2.4.2. Qiu Xigui (1988)

Qiu Xigui (1988) is an important work devoted to exploring the issue of the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges. Qiu points out that most of the scholars who advocate the view that charges are not questions reject the *Shuowen*'s definition of the word *zhen* as “to ask by divining” and propose new definitions. However, like Nivison (1982[1989]), Qiu holds that simply determining the meaning of *zhen* does not provide sufficient information from which to determine the mood of the following charge. By examining different types of charges in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, Qiu concludes that not all of the charges are statements, and not all of the charges are questions. He indicates that, “among all of the charges of the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, we have now been able to determine only a small portion definitely to be either questions or statements” (1988: 17).

Qiu agrees with Li that the words represented by the characters  and  should be understood as final question particles. But different from Li's identification of the character  as *fu* 𠄎, Qiu transcribes it as *yi* 抑. According to Qiu, the OBI charges that we can determine to be questions include the type involving the use of the words *yi* 抑 and *zhi* 執, as first proposed in Li (1980, 1985). Qiu says: “if one did not interpret the *yi* and *zhi* as final interrogative particles, it would be quite impossible to make any sense of the great majority of

the examples” (1988: 4). In other words, the type of charge with the pattern as “Clause₁ *yi* 抑 + Neg- Clause₂ *zhi* 執 ” (or “Clause₁ *zhi* 執 + Neg-Clause₂ *yi* 抑”), as in the following example, must be understood as a question:

(4) 癸酉卜，王貞：自今癸酉至于乙酉，邑人其見方抑，不其見方執。

guǐyǒu bǔ, wáng zhēn: zì jīn guǐyǒu zhì yú yǐyǒu, yǐrén qí jiàn fāng yǐ, bù qí jiàn fāng zhí.

guiyou day/ crack/, king/ divine/, from/ today/ *guiyou*/ reach/ until/ *yiyou*/, cityfolk/ qí/ see/ borderlander/ yǐ/, not/ qí/ see/ borderlander/ zhí

Crack on *guiyou*, the king divining: From today *guiyou* reaching until *yiyou*, will the cityfolk see the borderlanders, or will (they) not see the borderlanders? (*Heji*: 799, example cited from Qiu 1988: 3)²¹

Although Qiu’s interpretation of the charges with *yi* or *zhi* has been followed by some scholars in the field (e.g., Nivison 1989; Shaughnessy 1989; Shen Pei 1992, Zhang Yujin 2002; among others), it still remains controversial (see discussion below).

On the other hand, Qiu excludes some charges from questions, proposing that charges with the negative particle *bu* 不 should not be understood as “A not A” questions, as they are commonly treated. Rather, he considers that the particle *bu* 不, “not,” should be separated as belonging to verification. Namely, a sentence such as *yu bu* 雨不, which is commonly treated as a “A not A” question, “Will it rain or not,” should be analyzed as two sentences: 雨.不. “It will rain/ Will it rain. It did not rain,” in which the first one is a charge; while the second one is a verification. In this analysis, sentences ending with *bu* are not necessary taken as questions, and Qiu argues that a twofold classification, as statements, as questions, is possible. This view that the final *bu* should be viewed as a verification instead of a final interrogative particle is generally accepted by scholars (e.g., Shaughnessy 1989; Fan Yuzhou 1989; Takashima 1989; among others). In addition, Qiu points out that some of the charge sentences must be understood as declaratives, which are of two types as shown in example (5a) and (5b).

²¹ The transcription of this example, including examples in (5), (6), and (7) below, is cited from Qiu (1988). The translation is cited from the English version of Qiu (1988) provided by Shaughnessy (1989). The word for word interpretation is also based on the English translation given by Shaughnessy (1989).

- (5) a. 辛酉卜, 設貞: 今者王勿比望乘伐下危, 弗其受有祐.

xīnyǒu bǔ, Què zhēn: jīn zhě wáng wù bǐ Wàng Chéng fá Xià Wēi, fú qí shòu yǒuyòu.

xinyou day/ crack/, Que/ divine/, this/ spring/ king/ not/ ally/ Wang Cheng/ attack/ Xia Wei/, not/ qí/ receive/ spiritual aid/

Crack on *xinyou*, Que divining: This spring, the king ought not ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, (for if he does he) will not receive spiritual aid.” (Heji 6482, cited in Qiu 1988: 15)

According to Qiu, the type of charge as in (5a) is usually the negative half of a positive-negative pair. Here (5a) is the negative counterpart of the inscription in (5b) below:

- (5) b. 辛酉卜, 設貞: 今者王比望乘伐下危, 受有祐.

xīnyǒu bǔ, Què zhēn: jīn zhě Wáng bǐ Wàng Chéng fá Xià Wēi, shòu yǒuyòu.

xinyou day/ crack/, Que/ divine/, this/ spring/ king/ ally/ Wang Cheng/ attack/ Xia Wei/, receive/ spiritual aid/

Crack on *xinyou*, Que divining: This spring, the king will ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, (for if he does he) will receive spiritual aid.” (Heji 6482, Qiu 1988: 15)

Generally, the type of charge as in (5a) contains two portions. The first portion is about not performing a certain action or not using a certain means to perform a specific action. The second portion is about not receiving aid from God, or encountering rain, or some other such inauspicious situation. In Qiu’s opinion, the type of charge like (5a) can not be interpreted as a question, because if it were to be interpreted as a question, then the charge in (5a) would be translated as:

- (6) a. “If this spring the king does not ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, will he not be able to receive spiritual aid?”

And the charge in (5b) would be translated as:

- (6) b. “If his spring the king allies with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, will he be able to receive spiritual aid?”

Qiu points out, in this “question” interpretation, the meanings of the two charges are not opposite (positive versus negative), instead, they share the same meaning. Moreover, logically, it does not make sense to interpret the charge in (5a) as a question, as in (6a), since if the Shang people had already decided not to attack Xia Wei, then what need would they have to ask

whether or not they would receive spiritual aid? If the negative charge in the pair should be understood as a statement, its positive counterpart should also be understood as a statement, even though on its own it would be possible to interpret the positive counterpart as a question.

The second type of declarative charge sentence, as proposed by Qiu, is shown in (7).

(7) a. 勿省噩田，其雨。

wǔ xǐng E tián, qí yǔ

not/ inspect/ E/ field, qí/ rain.

Do not inspect the E field, (for) it will rain.

This charge is the negative counterpart of the following positive charge:

(7) b. 惠噩田省，不雨。

huì E tián xǐng, bù yǔ.

be/ E/ field/ inspect/, not/ rain

Let it be the E fields that we inspect, (for) it will not rain. (*Heji*: 28993, example cited in Qiu 1988: 16)

According to Qiu (1988: 16), the difference between (5a) and (7a) is that (7a) does not imply a conditional clause whose meaning is opposite to the previous negative clause, but (5a) does, as shown in the translation. The type of negative charge in (7a) should also be treated as a statement, because if it were treated as a question, it would mean “Do not inspect the E field, will it rain?” which makes no sense. Accordingly, its positive counterpart should be also treat as a statement, even though on its own, it would be possible to interpret the positive counterpart as a question.

In summary, as far as the linguistic form of charges is concerned, Qiu agrees to a certain degree with Western scholars in their reading of charges as grammatical statements. He concludes that many charge sentences from as early as the Bin group until the latest period of the dynasty are definitely not questions. However, he points out that the charges marked with the final interrogative particles *yi* and *zhi* in the earliest inscriptions of the Dui group, and the slightly later inscriptions in the Bin and Wu Groups, are doubtless questions. Qiu insists that divination never lost its original interrogative function during the Shang dynasty, pointing out that “the nature of divination as a means of revolving doubts still had not changed by the end of the Shang dynasty” (Qiu 1988: 18).

1.2.5. Divinatory charges as non-questions: Takashima (1989)

Takashima (1989) conducts an in-depth evaluation of the following six theories concerning the nature of the language in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions:

- (i) The “question” theory held by early scholars such as Sun Yirang (1904), and Luo Zhenyu (1910), and modern traditionalists like Zhang Bingquan (1965). Others, such as Li Xueqin (1980, 1985), Nivison (1982), Shaughnessy (1983), and Qiu Xigui (1988), accept the validity of this interpretation only under certain conditions.
- (ii) The “turtle’s charge” theory proposed in Dong Zuobin (1931)
- (iii) The “purification-prayer” theory proposed in Shirakawa (1948)
- (iv) The “predictive proclamation” theory proposed in Keightley (1972), and developed in Serruys (1974).
- (v) The “magic” theory held by Shirakawa Shizuka (1948), Keightley (1972), and Shaughnessy (1983).
- (vi) The “dualistic magic” theory proposed in Keightley (1972).

Takashima (1989) concludes that divinatory charges cannot be interpreted as questions as suggested in the question theory and that the five theories listed in (ii)-(vi) fundamentally characterize the language of the oracle-bone inscriptions. Here we call this theory the “non-question” theory, since it rejects the question theory, and considers that the nature of the Shang divinatory charges can be captured by one of the other five theories. According to Takashima, some charges are “alternative selections” (Dong 1931 and modified in Takashima 1989); some are “prayers” (Shirakawa 1948); some are “predictions and proclamations” (Keightley 1972 and Serruys 1974); some are “analogical magic” (Keightley 1972); and some are dualistic magic (Keightley 1972).²² However, one point to notice is that Takashima (1989) does not simply accept what these five theories have proposed; rather, he amends aspects of each of the theories.

In what follows, we will focus our discussion on Takashima’s modification of the “turtle’s charge” theory in Dong (1931), and refrain from discussing the details of how he supports and

²² This view is restated in Takashima (1996a: 121, note 2) as follows: “The commonly held theory that the divinatory charges (命辭) are questions is not appropriate and they should be characterized as one of the following: 1) alternative selections put to the plastromantic and scaplimantic numina; 2) purificatory mantras and prayers; 3) predictions and proclamations; 4) analogic magic (attempt to influence and control the future); and 5) dualistic magic, an attempt to balance the positive and negative forces of the universe.

amends the theories listed in (iii-vi), which led him to the view that charges are not questions but statements expressing prayers, predictions, analogical magic, or dualistic magic. In our opinion, the major and direct concerns of the theories listed in (iii-vi) are the nature of the Shang divination and the Shang belief system, but not the linguistic form of the charges. The study of the purposes and functions of Shang divination is an important area of research, and it undoubtedly sheds some light on the linguistic status of the charges. However, this study is intended to approach this issue from a different perspective, analyzing the linguistic patterns and features of the charges.

What is relevant for our purposes in Takashima (1989) is the author's support and revision of Dong's "turtle's charge" theory. According to Takashima (1989: section 3), the "turtle's charge" theory was first evaluated and rejected in Shirakawa Shizuka (1948). In Shirakawa Shizuka's view, Dong's theory is untenable because it does not explain the significance of the existence of divination cracks lacking inscriptions. Takashima (1989: section 3.1) proposes a hypothesis in support of Dong's theory to account for these cracks: The uninscribed divination cracks were meaningless or neutral, having been judged as lacking in magical potency, and consequently had no charges inscribed by their sides.

After accepting Dong's "turtle's charge" theory, which regards Shang divinatory charges as "utterances charged to a turtle in a divination for inquiring about things," Takashima then modifies this theory by proposing that the charged utterances are alternative choices expressed in the form of narratives/statements (Takashima 1989: section 2). As mentioned in 1.2.2., Dong's "turtle's charge" theory is ambiguous in its interpretation of charges as questions or statements. Namely, Dong did not explicitly say that the sentences that were charged to the turtle or bone in a divination, are "questions" or "statements." We have mentioned that from his standpoint about the purpose of divination as *bu yi jue yi*, "to divine is to resolve doubts" and his understanding of the word *zhen* as "to ask by divining," it seems that Dong might also have considered that charges are questions. In particular, the positive and negative charges in *duizhen* pattern might have been considered as paired "questions" instead of paired "statements," as pointed out by Zhang Yujin (2002: 6). However, Takashima (1989) strongly suggests that the paired charges discovered in Dong (1931) should be understood as "alternative choices or selections" expressed

with both an affirmative and a negative statement. According to Takashima, when seen from the linguistic point of view, the paired charges discovered by Dong “must be considered an example of ‘alternative choice, selection’” (Takashima 1989: 11). In his opinion, to give a charge to a turtle is to charge a turtle with a “choice,” specifically, it is to tell a turtle a positive sentence and a negative sentence, and let it make a choice between them. He supports this view from the following aspects.

First, from the fact that Dong mentioned the analogy between the Shang and the Han turtle shell divinations in the *ming gui zhi fa* 命龜之法, “the method of charging a turtle,” it seems that Dong viewed the Shang charges as positive and negative “choices” in the form of statements. Dong cites the following example from the *guice liezhuan* chapter 龜策列傳 of the *Shiji* 史記 to show the similarity between the turtle’s charges in the Han divination and the paired charges in the Shang divination:

- (8) 今某病困，死，首上開，內外交駭，身節折；不死，首仰足脰。

Now there is a person who is suffering sickness. If he will die, the head of cracks will open up, the outside of the cracks will intersect with the inside of cracks and the body of the cracks will break; if he will not die, the head of the cracks will rise up and the feet of the cracks will contract. (*Guice liezhuan* 龜策列傳 of the *Shiji* 史記)

It is clear that what is charged to a turtle for getting a response in the Han turtle shell divinations as in this example are kinds of sentences that hypothesize two opposite outcomes. According to Dong, this *Shiji* example is very similar to the following example in the Shang divination:

- (9) a. 壬子卜，賓貞，高比不死。

rénzǐ bǔ, Bīn zhēn, Gāo Bǐ bù sǐ.

renzi day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, Gao Bei / not/ die.

Divining on renzi day, Bin tested: Gao Bei will not die.

- b. 貞，其死。

zhēn, qí sǐ

test/, qí/ die


Tested: (Gao Bei) will perhaps die. (*Dagui si ban* Plastron 1: 9-10)



The comparison made by Dong between the two examples above seems to suggest that he

considers the paired charges in the Shang divination to be the same type of sentences as those in the Han divination; that is, two opposite declarative sentences.

Takashima points out that even though Dong did not use the term “alternative choice,” he did say that the use of the right-left paired divinations in the case of the sick man, example (9) was “to find out whether he may die or not” (see Dong 1931[1977: 603]). Therefore, “alternative choices” (which are expressed in “positive and negative statements”) seems the best way to define the paired charges in the “turtle’s charge” theory.

Moreover, Takashima (1989) points out that the *duizhen* charges involve an interrogative concept, saying that “it may well be that an interrogative sense is lurking under the surface of the expression; but on the other hand, it is not interrogative, whether in a positive or a negative sense. In regard to this, we suggested that the crack omens responded in a manner commensurate with the request for positive or negative decisions,” and that “the ‘turtle’s charge’ theory fits not only the positive-negative *duizhen*, but also oracle inscriptions which constitute multiple choices” (1989: 136-138).

The biggest challenge for Takashima’s theory of charges as non-questions, rather than statements expressing “alternative choices” (or “prayers,” “predictions,” “analogical magic,” or “dualistic magic”), is the type of charge ending with the words *yi* or *zhi*, which Li Xueqin (1980, 1985) and Qiu Xigui (1988) consider must be treated as final interrogative particles. Takashima (1989) has a different interpretation of this type of charge. After re-examining all the examples containing the words *yi* and *zhi* cited in Qiu (1988), Takashima (1989, section 8) proposes that the graph  in question should be transcribed as *yin* 印 rather than *yi* 抑, as interpreted in Qiu (1988), and that *yin* 印 and *zhi* 執 should be understood as a noun and a verb respectively. Specifically, *yin* 印 is a noun meaning “a being (human or animal) that has been branded, and *zhi* 執 is a verb meaning “to manacle, to suppress.”²³ According to this interpretation, the following

²³ There are other scholars who also do not agree with Qiu’s interpretation of *yi* 抑 and *zhi* 執 as final interrogative particles, e.g., Fan Yuzhou 范毓周 and Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 (See “Comments” in *Early China Forum*, *Early China* 14 [1989]: 127-160). According to Fan (*Early China* 14: 127-128), the character  or  occurring in the end of a sentence should be transcribed as *fu* 𠂔 as Li Xueqin (1980, 1985) proposed, rather than *yi* 抑 as Qiu (1988) proposed; and both *fu* 𠂔 and *zhi* 執 can be used as verbs or nouns, i.e., *fu* 𠂔 can be used as a verb meaning “to seize/capture a prisoner” or a noun meaning “prisoner of war,” while *zhi* 執 can be used as a verb meaning “to seize/capture a criminal” or a noun meaning “criminal.” Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 (1989, *Early China* 14:133-134) also doubts that *fu* 𠂔 (or *yi* 抑 as Qiu transcribed) and *zhi* 執 can be interpreted as interrogative particles, arguing that the usage of *yi* 抑 as a particle in classical texts is only limited to the place at the beginning of a sentence, where it

example is not an interrogative sentence at all:

(10) 癸酉卜，方其圍今二月印，不執。余曰不其圍。允不。

guǐyǒu bǔ (P), Fāng qí wéi jīn èr yuè yīn, bù zhí (C). yú yuē bù qí wéi (Pg). yǔn bù (V).
guiyou day/ divine/, Fang/ qí/ surround/ present/ second/ month/ yin/, not/ zhi/, I/ say/ not/
qí/ surround/, indeed/ not.

Interpretation A: Divining on the *guiyou* day, Fang might surround the *yin* of the present second month, (but they) will not be caught. I say: Fang might not be surrounding.

Indeed, (they) did not. (*Heji* 20411; Takashima 1989: 107)

Interpretation B: Crack on *guiyou*, divining: Will the borderlanders campaign in this the second month, or not? I say, “(They) will not campaign.” (They) really did not.

(Qiu 1988: 3; Shaughnessy 1989: 82)

This inscription is a full divinatory context containing the four components: a preface (P), a charge (C), a prognostication (Pg), and a verification (V). According to Qiu, the character immediately following the word *yue* 月, “month,” and the one immediately following the negative adverb *bu* 不, “not,” are *yi* 抑 and *zhi* 執, respectively. They function as final interrogative particles here; and the charge here is an “A not A question,” as translated in interpretation B above.

However, Takashima (1989: 107) disagrees with Qiu’s interpretation. He notes that the character interpreted as final interrogative particle *yi* 抑 by Qiu should be taken as *yin* 印, which is used in the expression 今二月印, “the present second month *yin*,” and must presumably be taken as a noun. In (10), *yin* 印 is preceded by the verb *wei* 圍, which means “to surround.”²⁴ So *yin* 印 may be its grammatical object. The charge may be interpreted as referring to an event, meaning that “although Fang attempts to surround the *yin* of the present second month, *bu zhi* 不執.” Here the last two words *bu zhi* 不執 have either the passive meaning of “shall not be taken” or the active (but eventive) one of “shall not contrive to take captive.” The prognostication says: “I declare that (Fang) shall not contrive to surround,” while the verification concludes that

served as a copular particle between two choices, similar to *yizhe* 意者 or *huozhe* 或者. In Rao’s view, the fact that *yi* is never seen to occur at the end of a sentence in later texts suggests that Qiu’s interpretation of this word as final interrogative is problematic.

²⁴ Note in Qiu’s article, the verb *wei* 圍 (圍) is translated as *zheng* 征 (which is broadly represented as *zheng* 正 in the citation), meaning “to campaign.”

“indeed they did not contrive to surround” (which is why the “*yin* of the present second month” was not taken captive, or did not contrive to take captive).

It is through this proposal that *yi* be interpreted as the noun/verb *yin* 印 and *zhi* 執 as the noun/verb *zhi* 執 that Takashima (1989) eliminates the possibility of interpreting charges as questions.

However, there is still one important point regarding charges with *yi* (or *fu* or *yin*) and *zhi* that must be mentioned. That is, even though the interpretation of *yi* (or *fu*) and *zhi* as final interrogative particles (Li 1980, 1985; Qiu 1988) is not necessarily correct, we must still pursue the question of whether or not the sentences of the form “Clause₁ + *yi/fu*, Neg-Clause₂ + *zhi*” are “A not A” questions. Even if we accept Takashima’s interpretation of the so-called final question particles *yi* (or *fu*) and *zhi* as nouns or verbs, the sentence structures in which they occur as combinations of a positive and a negative clause still allow the possibility of being considered as questions.²⁵

1.2.6. Summary of previous studies

As discussed above, the issue as to whether or not charges are questions has been explored from different angles by many scholars in the last several decades. With respect to the linguistic form of the Shang charges, the theories of scholars in the field can be divided into the following three categories:

- (i) All charges are questions (e.g., Sun Yirang 1904; Luo Zhenyu 1910; Chen Mengjia 1956; Zhang Bingquan 1965);
- (ii) Some of the charges are questions and some of the charges are statements (e.g., Li Xueqin 1980 and 1985; Qiu Xigui 1988); and
- (iii) All charges are statements (e.g., Keightley 1972; Serruys 1974; Takashima 1989).

Although the two main theories are against each other, they both adopt the the same philological methods, focusing only on the formal feature of each individual charge, and they both based their analyses on different assumptions about the purpose of the Shang divinations. As a result, they

²⁵ Keightley (1989: 139-142) proposes that a sentence consisting of a positive and a negative clause is not necessarily to be considered as a question, suggesting that *yi* and *zhi* mean “or,” and that the charges with *yi* and *zhi* can be interpreted as indicative sentences expressing choice.

cannot convince each other in the following aspects. First, although the question theory and the statement theory vary greatly in their treatment of charges, they have one commonality: that is, they both approach the problem through the philological interpretation of the word *zhen* 貞. Namely, defining *zhen* as meaning “to ask by divining” gives rise to the interpretation that the charge is a question; while defining *zhen* as meaning “to regulate” or “to test, to try out; to make sure, correct” leads to the conclusion that the charge is a statement. As we see, there is no consensus between the two sides, because both can find evidence in the later classics to support their definition of *zhen*. So it is not a matter of who is right or who is wrong. Second, the philological interpretation of the relevant data remains controversial. For example, Qiu Xigui (1988) has tried to pursue this issue by not re-examining the problem of *zhen* 貞, and instead has based his argument on the philological study of the OBI texts. However, his treatment of some particular examples is still disputed by other scholars: What are considered undoubtedly to be questions in Qiu’s analysis, that is, the charges ending with *yi* or *zhi*, are still not accepted by Takashima (1989) and others. Third, the statement school doubts the question theory, because it does not account for the apparently grammatical similarity between the charges, the prognostication, and the verification. However, the question school does not consider that this is a difficulty to take charges as questions, because in Chinese although final particles are means to form questions, they do not need to be used all the time. For example, a yes-no question can be simply expressed intonationally. Thus, it is not surprising to see that there is no formal distinction between a yes-no question and its declarative counterpart in written form. Fourth, the understanding of the purpose and function of divination remains controversial. The question theorists believe that divination is a means of resolving doubts, while the statement theorists believe that divination is a means of controlling the future.

While all the proposed theories contribute to our understanding of the Shang divinatory charges and lay the groundwork for further analysis, Dong’s (1931) “turtle’s charge” theory and Takashima’s (1989) modified version provide the best starting point from which to further pursue this issue. We choose this as our starting point because in these two theories, the view that the basic purpose of divination is to resolve doubts or questions is maintained; this is compatible with the

common intuition about divination in most other cultures.²⁶ As well, the understanding of charges as “alternative choices” is plausible in terms of the information-seeking purpose of divination—charging a turtle with choices for the spirits to respond to can serve as an effective linguistic means of getting information to resolve doubts, as shown in the Han divination.

1.3. The proposal: Divinatory charges as sets of alternative propositions that provide possible answers to the questions being divined

This study aims to account for the formulaic nature of the Shang charges that were found in Dong (1931). That is, charges in the Shang divinatory contexts generally appear in either the positive-negative format or the parallel alternative format, and both types of charges are commonly seen in the inscriptions of all periods. The major task for anyone attempting to tackle issues concerning the linguistic nature of Shang divinatory charges is to provide a consistent account of the linguistic mechanism underlying the two formats.

We maintain that any account of Shang divinatory charges as questions or statements cannot adequately account for their linguistic properties. Instead, we propose that Shang divinatory charges are neither questions nor statements; rather, they are sets of alternative propositions that constitute the possible answers to the questions being divined. In terms of pragmatic and semantic functions, charges have question-like properties, because as possible answers, instead of describing the actual world, they describe possible worlds, expressing what is considered to be likely, thus they have no truth values. Conversely, in terms of syntactic form, charges have the property of statement sentences.

The analysis proposed here is built on two notions. The first is that the meaning of a question is the set of its possible answers (Hamblin 1973; Karttunen 1977; Higginbotham 1996; Hagstrom 1998: 123-126; and others). In this understanding of questions, questions and statements

²⁶ Cross-culturally, divination manifests a common feature; that is, it is a process in which people try to foretell future events or discovery of what is hidden or obscure by some supernatural means. There is a rich anthropological literature describing divination practices in the world. For a general discussion of divinations in different cultures, see Loewe and Black (1981, eds.) There are also many detailed discussions on a particular divination (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1937 on the Azande Poison Oracle, Bascom 1969 on the Ifa divination in West Africa, and Bascom 1980 on the Sixteen Cowrie divination of the Yoruba of Nigeria). Reports about the divination practices in Modern China can be seen in Lin Sheng (1963) and Wang Ningsheng (1989a-b), which record the Sheep-Bone divination practiced by the Yi, Qiang, and Naxi ethnic groups in Yunnan 雲南 and Sichuan 四川.

are semantically and syntactically related. That is, to ask a question is to set up a specification for the type of answer (which is normally in the form of a statement) being sought after. And to understand a question (i.e., to know what is being asked) is to be able to segregate statements into “possible answers” and “impossible answers.” A question, then, serves to specify the set of “possible answers.”²⁷ The second notion adopted in this study is that intention is a necessary criterion of meaningful language use as proposed in Speech Act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Levelt 1989; and others), and that divination is an information-seeking speech act.²⁸

1.4. The outline of Part I

The following chapter is devoted to introducing the recording conventions of the Shang divination, with focus on the structure of divinatory contexts, presenting the concept of “set.” This property of Shang divinatory charges provides a significant clue for us to diagnose the linguistic forms of charges. In Chapter 3, we discuss theories on semantics of questions which provide a linguistic approach for us to determine whether or not the Shang divinatory charges are questions. In Chapter 4, we investigate the formal properties of divinatory charges in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, proposing and defending the claim that Shang divinatory charges are alternative propositions which provide a set of possible answers to the questions being divined.

²⁷ See Chapter 3 for further exposition of Hamblin’s semantic interpretation of questions.

²⁸ See more discussion in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

The recording conventions and the general linguistic properties of the Shang divinatory charges

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two aims. The first is to introduce the conventions used in making the divinatory records in Shang divination, and to present the basic structure of the recorded divinatory contexts, with the purpose of identifying the formulaic nature and the set mechanism of the Shang divinatory contexts. The second aim is to provide a formal analysis of the structure of the recorded formulas underlying the recorded divinatory contexts, in an attempt to shed some light on the important properties of Shang divinatory charges. We propose that as the abbreviated records of the actual divinations, all the recorded divinatory contexts are to be understood as being derived from two basic formulas in which the charge members are necessarily composed as either two opposite propositions or a group of parallel propositions. These general properties of charges provide important linguistic clues for us to diagnose the linguistic form of the charges.

2.2. The Shang divinatory procedures

To understand whether or not charges in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions are questions, it is necessary to first understand the conventions used in producing them. A brief glance in this direction will help us in the later discussion.

The conventions of Shang divination were first studied in a series of works by Dong Zuobin (1929, 1931, 1933), and were further explored in Zhang Bingquan (1967), and Keightley (1978). According to these works, Shang divinations followed this procedure:

(i) Preparation of the divination

(a) The divination materials such as turtle shells, bovine and other animal bones were gathered and brought from different parts of the Shang kingdom to the royal court.

(b) The bones and shells were prepared for divination by cutting, scraping and polishing them into certain shapes and qualities. Hollows were then chiselled into the back (in the case of bones, the hollows sometimes were made on the front side), making it easy to produce a *bu* 卜-shaped crack on the bone or shell when scorched by the diviner's brand.

(ii) Operation of divination

(a) The diviner proposed/directed charges to the bone or shell regarding the matter at issue.

(b) The diviner applied heat to scorch a hollow in the back of the bone or shell in order to form a crack on its front.

(c) The king (or sometimes the diviner) interpreted the crack and made predictions about the matter under divination.

(iii) Recording and keeping of the divination

(a) After the divination, an engraver inscribed the divination content into the scapula or plastron as a record of the divination.

(b) A court-appointed historian later verified the divination outcome and inscribed a record of what actually happened beside the divination record.

(c) The divination document was filed and stored.

In this study we are interested in step (iii-a), in which a diviner proposed charges regarding the matter at issue to a turtle shell or animal bone. The charges are the core of the turtle shell or animal bone divination, because it is through them that the outcome of the matter at issue would be obtained. In the case of Shang divination, a divinatory outcome is determined by the omen shown in the scorched crack of the turtle shell or animal bone. Our major concern here is to identify what kind of speech act was involved in a divination event and what linguistic forms were used by a diviner to make charges in a divination.²⁹

2.3 The recording conventions in Shang divination

2.3.1 The placement of the inscriptions

The four parts of a divination context—the preface, the charge, the prognostication, and the

²⁹ Usually, in an ordinary communicative context, one asks questions if he seeks information, and makes statements if he provides information. However, as will be shown later, this does not seem to be the case in the Shang divinatory contexts (see Chapter 3).

verification— are not often placed all on the same side of a shell or a bone. For example, the prefatory formula may be written on the back of the shell, while the charges are written on the front. Or sometimes the prefatory formula and the charges are written on the front but the prognostication and the verification are written on the back. It is also not unusual to see the prognostication and the verification written on the front side with the prefatory formula and the charges written on the back (see Hu Guangwei 1928; Dong Zuobin 1931, 1936; and Li Daliang 1972 for more discussion). The inscriptions may be recorded in a variety of ways. However, one principle must always be obeyed: the divination inscriptions belonging to the same group have to be written beside or close to the cracks (on either the front or the back) that were made for the divination.

2.3.2. Sequential crack numbers

The central goal of a divination was to obtain an oracular response, which would be indicated by the crack in the shell or bone. In a turtle plastron, we would see that there are some numbers inscribed beside a crack. These are called “sequential crack numbers,” or simply “crack numbers.” Usually, after a crack was formed on the front of a piece of bone or shell, the diviner inscribed a sequential number beside the crack to indicate its relative order in a divination.³⁰ According to Zhang Bingquan (1956), who conducted the first study of sequential crack numbers in oracle-bone inscriptions, the numbers were inscribed because the Shang diviners usually had to repeat the same divination several times to reach a reliable outcome. Thus, the numbers indicate the order in which each crack was made during the divination. The crack numbers, usually inscribed immediately after the crack was formed, are the most important part of a divination, since cracks were oracles from the gods. Because of the great importance of the cracks, most do have sequential numbers, although they do not necessarily have corresponding inscriptions.³¹ The crack number was

³⁰ In some cases the cracks were not numbered; see Zhang Bingquan (1956) for more discussion. In some cases, the crack number would have been erased. For example, when the grooves of an engraved graph actually straddled a crack (a phenomenon called *fanzhao* 犯兆), the crack numbers were often removed and placed elsewhere (see Zhang Bingquan 1956: 230-31; Keightley 1978: 37).

³¹ According to Takashima (1989: Section 3), the fact that there are cracks without words inscribed contributed to Shirakawa Shizuka's (1948) rejecting of Dong Zuobin's (1931) “turtle's charge” theory; in Shirakawa Shizuka's view, Dong's theory is untenable because it does not explain the significance of the divination cracks lacking inscriptions. Takashima (1989: section 3.1) supports the “turtle's charge” theory, arguing that the uninscribed divination cracks were meaningless or neutral, having been judged lacking in magical potency and consequently having no charging inscriptions inscribed.

usually inscribed at the upper end of the vertical crack on either the right or left side, on the front of the scapula or plastron. Under the lower end of the crack, a notation expressing the auspiciousness of the crack was inscribed using terms such as *shangji* 上吉, “highly auspicious”, *xiaoji* 小吉, “slightly auspicious”, *daji* 大吉, “greatly auspicious,” or *hongji* 弘吉, “extremely auspicious.”

2.3.3. Divination sets and set inscriptions

Given the use of the crack number described above, we turn our attention now to an important aspect of Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, namely the “divination set.” The inscriptions in (1) are a typical example of a “divination set,” which is a series of divinations done on the same day, by the same diviner, on the same topic:

- (1) a₁. 庚子卜, 爭貞: 西史召亡囧, 古⁻

*gēngzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: xī shǐ Zhāo wáng huò, gǔ.*¹

*gengzi day/ divine/, Zheng/test/, western/ envoy/ Zhao/ not have/ misfortune/,
manage*

Divining on the *gengzi* day, Zheng test: Western Envoy Zhao will not have any misfortune and manage the affairs successfully.

- b₁. 庚子卜, 爭貞: 西史召其出囧. ⁻

*gēngzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: xī shǐ Zhāo qí yǒu huò.*¹

gengzi day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, western / envoy/ Zhao/ qí/ have/ misfortune/

Divining on the *gengzi* day, Zheng test: Western Envoy Zhao will perhaps have misfortune.

- a₂. 貞: 西史召亡囧, 古⁼

*zhēn: xī shǐ Zhāo wáng huò, gǔ.*²

test/ western/ envoy/ Zhao/ not have/ misfortune/ manage

Test: Western Envoy Zhao will not have any misfortune (and manage the affairs successfully).

- b₂. 西史召其出囧⁼

*xī shǐ Zhāo qí yǒu huò.*²

western/ envoy/ Zhao/ qí/ have/ misfortune

Western Envoy Zhao will perhaps have misfortune.

a₃. 貞: 召 亡 囧. 三上吉

zhēn: Zhāo wáng huò. ³ shàngjī

Test/ Zhao/ not have/ misfortune/, {crack notation} [highly auspicious]³²

Test: (Western Envoy) Zhao will not have misfortune. {crack notation} [Highly auspicious]

b₃. 召 其 出 囧

Zhāo qí yǒu huò. ³

Zhao/ qí/ have/ misfortune

(Western Envoy) Zhao will perhaps have misfortune.

a₄. 召 亡 囧

Zhāo wáng huò. ⁴

Zhao/ not have/ misfortune

(Western Envoy) Zhao will not have any misfortune.

b₄. 召 其 出 囧

Zhāo qí yǒu huò. ⁴ bu wu

Zhao/ qí/ have/ misfortune/, {crack notation} [not go against numen]

(Western Envoy) Zhao will perhaps have misfortune. {Crack notation} [The crack does not go against the numen of this turtle.]

a₅. 召 亡 囧

Zhāo wáng huò. ⁵ bu wu

Zhao/ not have/ misfortune/, {crack notation} [not go against numen]

(Western Envoy) Zhao will not have any misfortune. {Crack notation} [The crack does not go against the numen of this turtle]

b₅. 召 其 出 囧

Zhāo qí yǒu huò. ⁵

Zhao/ qí/ have/ misfortune

(Western Envoy) Zhao will perhaps have misfortune. (*Bingbian* 5: 1-10)

This set records a series of divinations done on the same day *gengzi* 庚子, by the same diviner

³² The negative member of this divinatory context is marked with a crack notation which Zhang Bingquan transcribed as *shangji* 上吉, "highly auspicious." But some scholars (e.g., Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 and Li Xueqin 李學勤) consider that this notation should be interpreted as *er gao* 二告, "second announcement" (see more discussion in Keightley 1983).

Zheng 爭, with reference to the same topic, whether Xishi Zhao 西史召, “Western Envoy Zhao” would have misfortune and whether he would manage the (king’s) business well.³³ It contains five positive-negative pairs with ten inscriptions in all. The crack number of each charge was incised into the right or left of the upper end of each vertical crack (see Fig. 5 of *Bingbian*), and these are indicated in (1) by the superscript number at the end of each charge (as per Zhang Bingquan 1957-1972). The cracks in Groups 3, 4 and 5 were inscribed with crack notations such as *shang ji* 上吉, “highly auspicious,” and *buwu* 不𠄎, “does not go against the numen of this turtle.”

We assume that divination sets such as (1) developed through the following process. At the beginning of the divination, the diviner proposed a positive charge relevant to the topic under divination to the shell or bone. Once the charge was pronounced, the diviner applied heat to a hollow to make a crack; after the crack formed, he numbered it. Then, the diviner proposed the negative charge to the shell or bone and repeated the same procedure. After both were done, a crack would be given a crack notation which would be read by the king. He would make a judgment or prediction for the outcome of the divination, as shown by the crack. This completed the operation of the divination. This whole process is called a single divination. Usually a divination result could not be reached by just one divination, and the diviner would have to repeat the same divination several times, making a series of cracks associated with the corresponding charges until a satisfactory result was obtained. During this process, each crack was numbered, which served as an individual response to the charge addressed by the diviner. The record of this divination would be done by an engraver who would inscribe the positive and negative charges proposed beside the corresponding cracks, with or without the presence of a preface, a prognostication, and a verification (i.e., the presence of these might be full or partial; see discussion below).

Zhang Bingquan (1960) was the first work to note this type of divinatory context. He refers to the inscriptions in such divination sets as *chengtao buci* 成套卜辭, “set inscriptions” or

³³ The transcription of this divinatory context is based on Ito and Takashima (1996: 413). In *Bingbian Kaoshi* (Zhang Bingquan 1957-1972 vol. 1: 20-22), the character transcribed as *zhao* 召 here is transcribed as *zhi* 旨. Takashima’s interpretation of *gu* 古 as a verb meaning “to manage king’s business” is also different from what is given by Zhang. According to Zhang, both *Zhi* 旨 and *Gu* 古 are statelets located in the west of Shang 商; *Zhi* became Shang’s enemy in the later time of the Shang dynasty and often made harm to Shang and its neighbors, such as *Gu*.

"inscriptions in a divination set," and defines them as inscriptions that consist of a number of positive or negative inscriptions beside several cracks, recording a series of divinations done on the same day, with reference to the same topic, with the same meaning in content, and with a ordered sequence of crack numbers. According to Zhang, the inscriptions in a divination set could be engraved into one plastron, as in example (1), or different shells (this case is called multiple-plastron sets) such as the divination set in the *Bingbian* 12-21.

2.3.4. The correspondence between cracks, crack numbers, and inscriptions in a divination set

Based on the description above, we would expect each crack to be associated with a sequence number, and each numbered crack to be associated with a charge, possibly accompanied by a preface, a prognostication, and/or a verification. Namely, if the record of a divination is a complete reproduction of the divinatory process, there should be a one-to-one correspondence between a crack, a crack number, and an inscription. However, this is not always the case. What we see instead is a very complicated situation in which the cracks, the crack sequence numbers, and the inscription numbers in a divination set do not fully correspond. For example, in a set like (1), where the same pair of inscriptions referring to the same topic was repeated five times in a series of paired divinations, we might expect there to be ten cracks numbered from 1 to 5 in sequence for the positive and the negative charges respectively. We expect the following correspondence between the subsets, the charges, and the crack sequential numbers.

(2)	divination:	charge	cracks made	crack sequence number.
	subset (a)	positive	1	1
		negative	1	1
	subset (b)	positive	1	2
		negative	1	2
	subset (c)	positive	1	3
		negative	1	3
	subset (d)	positive	1	4
		negative	1	4
	subset (e)	positive	1	5
		negative	1	5

However, in fact, we see 24 hollows in the back of this plastron, six of which are not scorched, and eighteen of which are scorched. That is, there are 18 actual cracks formed on the front of the shell, instead of the ten we expected. Why are there eight additional cracks? Examining the plastron carefully, we find that there are four cracks numbered as *er* 二, “two,” six cracks number as *san* 三, “three,” and four cracks numbered as *si* 四, “four.” That is to say, instead of making two cracks for each pair of charges, in the actual divination, more cracks were made in the second, third, and fourth subdivisions. For the second subdivisions, four cracks have been made; for the third, six cracks were made, and for the fourth, four cracks were made, as shown below:

(3)	divination:	charge	cracks made	crack sequence number.
	subset (a)	positive	1	1
		negative	1	1
	subset (b)	positive	2	2
		negative	2	2
	subset (c)	positive	3	3
		negative	3	3
	subset (d)	positive	2	4
		negative	2	4
	subset (e)	positive	1	5
		negative	1	5

The reason for making these extra cracks in each divination is not clear. Perhaps some of these extra cracks were not made following the appropriate methods by the diviner, so they would not provided a reliable outcome and were discarded. Given our current understanding of the inscriptions, we cannot judge whether a given crack is useful. But we can determine that cracks, crack sequence numbers and inscriptions in a set are not in one-to-one correspondence. This suggests that the record of a divination is not the reproduction of every detail in the actual divination (see discussion below).

2.4. Oracle-bone inscriptions as abbreviated records of the Shang divinations

So far we have introduced the concept of set of Shang oracle-bone inscriptions. Now we turn our attention to another important aspect of Shang divinatory records: the recorded divinatory context

in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions is not a reproduction of every detail of an actual divination, but an abbreviated record of the important information of an actual divinatory context.

Scholars have taken for granted the idea that the divinatory contexts are abbreviated records. However, little attention has been paid to the relevance of this fact with respect to the linguistic status of the Shang divinatory charges. Here we will first discuss the abbreviation of the oracle-bone inscriptions, then we will further explore its linguistic implications.

According to Zhang (1956: 238), because some cracks appear without numbers or inscriptions, and others have only numbers but no inscriptions, this indicates that the Shang people did not record every detail of the divination. In the *Bingbian kaoshi* (Zhang Bingquan 1957-72: V. 2, No. 1: 460-461), Zhang further emphasizes the view that the oracle-bone inscriptions are simplified records of Shang divinations, suggesting that the record of a divination is not a reduplication of the actual divination. Indeed, the more we look at the patterns of the Shang divinatory inscriptions, the more we understand the role of engraving played in a divination, and the more accurate Zhang's idea seems. Similar ideas are presented in Zhou Hongxiang (1969), Li Daliang (1972: 134-169), Keightley (1978:76-79).

2.4.1. The general principles of abbreviation in Shang Divinatory contexts

The abbreviation of recorded divinatory contexts in oracle-bone inscriptions is reflected in the following points:

(i) In principle, the engravers only attempted to record the core message of each divination; they did not repeat every detail of the divination. Because charges constitute the heart of a divination, they were always recorded.³⁴ This contrasts with the secondary components of a divination—the

³⁴ We find a few divinatory records that do not have the charge component. For example, [i] and [ii] have only a preface:

- [i] 癸丑卜, 賓.
guǐchǒu bǔ, Bīn.
guichou day/, divine/, Bīn
Divining on the guichou day, Bīn. (*Bingbian* 213: 1)
- [ii] 丙戌卜
bǐng xū bǔ
bingxu day/ divine
Divining on the bingxu day. (*Bingbian* 266: 1)

Example [iii] below has only a preface and a prognostication:

- [iii] 癸亥卜, 王, 吉.
guǐhài bǔ, wáng, jí
guihai day/ divine/, auspicious

preface that recorded the divining day, and the name of the diviner; the prognostication that recorded the king's interpretation of the crack; and the verification that recorded what actually happened after the divination—which could be, but need not be inscribed (see below for the examples of such abbreviations).

(ii) In the case of the paired divination set, sometimes the paired inscriptions were repeatedly inscribed for each (or most) of the cracks as in example (1), but in many cases, all the cracks made in the same divination were inscribed with one pair of inscriptions as in (4).

(4) a. 丙辰卜，𠄎貞：我受黍年。一二三四五

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn: wǒ shòu shǔ nián. 1,2,3,4,5

bǐngchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, we/ receive/ millet/ harvest

Divining on the *bǐngchen* day, Nan tested: We will receive a harvest of millet crops.

b. 丙辰卜，𠄎貞：我弗其受黍年。四月。一二三四上吉五

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn: wǒ fú qí shòu shǔ nián. sì yuè. 1,2,3,4. shàngjī 5

bǐngchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, we/ not / qí/ receive/ millet/ harvest/, fourth/ month /,
{crack notation} [highly auspicious]

Divining on the *bǐngchen* day, Nan tested: We may perhaps not receive a harvest of millet crops. Fourth month. {crack notation} [Highly auspicious]. (*Bingbian* 8: 1-2)

In this divination, which is about whether or not a harvest of millet crops would be received, the diviner divined five times. On the plastron, we see that there are five cracks on the right side of the shell, and five on the left side. Each crack is marked with a sequential number to indicate the order of the cracks made in the divination. However, different from (1), in which each of the ten cracks had an inscription, (4) includes only one pair of inscriptions. Namely, the ones on the right side share one and the same piece of positive inscription, and the ones on the left side share the same piece of negative inscription. The recorded divinatory contexts such as those in (1) and (4) suggest that the Shang engravers had a desire to fully reproduce the whole divination process, but nevertheless they did not inscribe every detail of the divination.

Divining on the *guihai* day, the king (prognosticated, it is auspicious. (*Henan* 200)

I suggest that either these inscriptions are unfinished (the intended engraving was given up for some unknown reason), or they are not records of divinations, but rather administrative records like the marginal inscriptions (i.e., the inscriptions that record the matter such as the source, the number of the shells/bones sent in, and the person and the day-date associated with their handling). The fact that all the above examples were engraved on the back of the plastrons seems to support the second possibility (see Hu 1944 for more discussion on the marginal inscriptions).

(iii) In some cases, not all the charges proposed in a divination were written down. For example, in *Bingbian* Figure 369, Rubbing 394, we see the following inscriptions:

- (5) a. 庚申卜, 般貞: 昔祖丁不黍, 隹南庚巷.^{一二三四}
 b. 庚申卜, 般貞: 災祖丁不黍, 不隹南庚巷.^{一二三四五六} (*Bingbian* 394: 1-2)

According to Zhang, there are engraving errors in the paired charges. First, the name of Zu Ding 祖丁, instead of being in front of the negator *bu* 不, should occur immediately after *wei* 隹. Second, the character *xi* 昔 in (a) and *zai* 災 in (b) should be the same word, but in this record they are written slightly differently. According to Zhang, they can be interpreted as meaning “before, in the past” or “disaster.” Here, we take the first meaning. Based on this interpretation, the above inscriptions can be rewritten and translated as follows:

a. 庚申卜, 般貞: 昔不黍, 隹祖丁南庚巷.^{一二三四}

gēngshēn bǔ, *Nán zhēn*: *Xī* bù shǔ, *wéi* Zǔ Dīng Nán Gēng tuò. ^{1,2,3,4}

gengshen day/ divine/, Nan test/, before/ not/ millet/, be/ Zu Ding / Nan Geng/ bring mishap

Divining on the *gengshen* day, Nan tested: That we did not have the millet harvest in the previous time was due to Zu Ding and Nan Geng's having caused a mishap. ^{1,2,3, 4}

b. 庚申卜, 般貞: 昔不黍, 不隹祖丁南庚巷.^{一二三四五六}

gēngshēn bǔ, *Nán zhēn*: *Xī* bù shǔ, bù *wéi* Zǔ Dīng Nán Gēng tuò. ^{1,2,3,4}

gengshen day/ divine/, Nan test/ before/ not/ millet/, not/ be/ Zu Ding/ Nan Geng/ bring mishap

Divining on the *gengshen* day, Nan tested: That we did not have the millet harvest in the previous time was not due to Zu Ding and Nan Geng's having caused a mishap. ^{1,2,3, 4}

The purpose of this divination is to find out the cause of the undesirable situation of not having millet harvest in former times, which was assumed to be the curse of one of the ancestors. The names of two ancestors are given: Zu Ding 祖丁, and Nan Geng 南庚. However, on the reverse side of this plastron, the prognostication of this divination is inscribed, which says:

c. 王固曰：(隹) 南庚𠬪，祖丁𠬪，大示祖乙祖辛羌甲𠬪。

Wáng zhàn yuē: (wéi) Nán Gēng tuò, Zǔ Dīng tuò, dà shǐ Zǔ Yǐ Zǔ Xīn Qiāng Jiǎ tuò.
king/ prognosticate/ say/, be/ Nan Geng/ bring mishap/, Zu Ding/curse/, big/
altar/ Zu Yi/ Zu Xin/ Qiang Jia/ bring mishap.

The king, having prognosticated the cracks, said: It is Nan Geng who is causing the mishap; it is Zu Ding who is causing the mishap; it is the ancestors of the main lineage, Zu Yi, Zu Xin, and Qiang Jia who are causing the mishap. (*Bingbian* 395: 2)

Here we see that, apart from Nan Geng 南庚 and Zu Ding 祖丁, there are three more names of ancestors listed: Zu Yi 祖乙, Zu Xin 祖辛, and Qiang Jia 羌甲. In his *Bingbian kaoshi* (i.e., 1957-72), Zhang Bingquan points out that, in the actual divination, the names of ancestors Zu Yi 祖乙, Zu Xin 祖辛, and Qiang Jia 羌甲 were probably also mentioned in the charges, otherwise there would be no reason for them to appear in the prognostication. The fact that they were not recorded in the charge component suggests that the Shang divinatory charges are not the full records of the actual charges proposed by the diviner in a divination.

As mentioned above, divinatory contexts could also be abbreviated by omitting the secondary components—the preface, the prognostication, and the verification. And within each component, a sentence could be also written in an elliptical form. What is relevant to us here is the elliptical expressions in the charge component. Here we will discuss elliptical forms as they appear in the charge component. We will present OBI data illustrating this abbreviation, which will help uncover properties of the charge sentences and explain the structure of the recording of the divinatory contexts.

2.4.2. The recorded Shang divinatory contexts

If the Shang recorded divinatory contexts are abbreviated records of the real divination, then what is the full format on which the abbreviation was based? In other words, did the engraver follow a standard model when recording a divination?

2.4.2.1 Full divination contexts

The following provides more details on the Shang divinatory contexts as first introduced in

Chapter 1, section 1.2.

Divination contexts refer to the record made by the Shang engravers after divination.³⁵ The Shang oracle-bone inscriptions are short and formulaic. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a full divination context consists of a preface (P), a charge (C), a prognostication (Pg), and a *yanci* verification (V). Below is a case of a full divination context:

(6) a. *Preface*: 甲申卜, 𠄎貞.

jiǎshēn bǔ, Nán zhēn:

jiashen day/ divine/, Nan/ test

Divining on the *jiashen* day, Nan tested:

Charge: 𠄎好婉妤.

Fū Hǎo miǎn jiā.

Fu Hao/ give birth/ good

Fu Hao's giving birth will be blessed.

Prognostication: 王固曰:其佳丁婉妤.其佳庚婉弘吉.

wáng zhàn yuē: qí wéi dīng miǎn jiā. qí wéi gēng miǎn hóng jí.

king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ be/ *dīng* day/ give birth/ good/, qí/ be/ *gēng* day/ give birth/ greatly/ auspicious

The king, having prognosticated, said: If it is on the *dīng* day that she gives birth, it will be blessed; if it is on the *gēng* day that she gives birth, it will be greatly auspicious.

Verification: 三旬出一日甲寅婉.不妤.佳女.

sān xún yǒu yī rì jiǎ yín miǎn. bù jiā. wéi nǚ.

three ten-day week/ and/ one/ day/ *jiayin* day/ give birth/, not/ good/, be/ girl

After three ten-day weeks and one day, on the *jiayin* day, (Fu Hao) gave birth. It was not blessed, because it was a girl.

Below is the negative counterpart of the above inscription:

³⁵ Not all the Shang inscriptions cut on shells and bones are divinatory inscriptions. There are also some non-divinatory inscriptions such as the *gan zhi* chart, and the administrative record (also called marginal notations), which recorded such matters as the source and number of shells and bones sent in, the persons associated with their handlings, and the day-date. See Hu (1944), and Dong (1954) for more discussion.

(6) b. *Preface*: 甲申卜, 𠄎貞:

jiǎshēn bǔ, Nán zhēn:

jiashen day/ divine/, Nan/ test

Divining on the *jiashen* day, Nan tested:

Charge: 𠄎好婉不其𠄎.

Fù Hǎo miǎn bù qí jiā.

Fu Hao/ give birth/ not/ qí/ good

Fu Hao's giving birth perhaps will not be blessed

Prognostication: 王固曰: 其佳丁婉𠄎. 其庚弘吉. 其佳壬戌不吉.

wáng zhàn yuē: qí wéi dīng miǎn jiā. qí wéi gēng miǎn hóng jí. qí wéi rén xū bù jí

king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ be/ *dīng* day/ give birth/ good/, qí/ be/ *gēng* day/ give birth/ greatly/ auspicious/, qí/ be/ *renxu* day/ not/ auspicious

The king, having prognosticated, said: if it is on the *dīng* day that she gives birth, it will be blessed; if it is on the *gēng* day that she gives birth, it will be greatly auspicious; if it is on the *renxu* day that she gives birth, it will be not auspicious.

Verification: 三旬出一日甲寅婉身. 不𠄎. 佳女.

sān xún yǒu yī rì jiǎyín miǎn. bù jiā. wéi nǚ.

three ten-day week/ and/ one/ day/ *jiayin* day/ give birth/, not/ good/, be/ girl

After three ten-day weeks and one day, on the *jiayin* day, (Fu Hao) gave birth. It was not blessed, because it was a girl. (*Bingbian* 247:1-2; 248:7)

This is a valuable example in which we see both the positive and negative parts of the divination with all four components inscribed. Note the prognostication (Pg) in the negative counterpart (6b) was inscribed on the back of *Bingbian* 247, and was listed as the seventh inscription of *Bingbian* 248 in the *Bingbian kaoshi* by Zhang Bingquan (1957-72). Also, the contents of the two prognostications are not identical. Below is an example of the pattern of "alternative charges."

(7) a.

Preface: 辛亥卜, 內貞:

xīnhàibǔ, Nei zhēn:

xinhai day/ divine/ test/

Divining on the *xinhai* day, Nei tested:

Charge: 羽癸丑其雨.

yǔ guǐchǒu qí yǔ.

next/ *guichou* day/ qí/ rain

On next *guichou* day, it will perhaps rain.

Prognostication: 王固曰: 癸其雨.

wáng zhàn yuē: guǐ qí yǔ

king/ prognosticate/ say/, *gui* day/ qí/ rain

The king, having prognosticated, said:

On the *gui* day, it will perhaps rain.

Verification: 癸丑允雨.

guǐ chǒu yǔn yǔ.

guichou day/ indeed/ rain

On the *guichou* day, it indeed rained. (*Bingbian* 153: 13-14; 154: 2-3)

b.

Preface: Ø

Charge: 羽甲寅其雨.

yǔ jiǎyín qí yǔ.

test/, next/ *jiayin* day/ qí/ rain

On next *jiayin* day, it will perhaps rain.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø

This divinatory context contains two parts of inscriptions, (a) and (b). Part (a) consists of four components including a preface, a charge, a prognostication, and a verification; part (b) has only the charge component. Both of the charges in (7) are affirmative sentences which share the same sentence structure, and they differ with respect to just one constituent, the time phrase: In (a), the time phrase is *guichou*, while in (b) in the corresponding position, the time is *jiayin*. Note that the inscription of the preface in (a) was in fact placed in two different positions: the verb *zhen* was inscribed in the front of the shell together with the charge in (a-Charge), but the divining day *xinhai* 辛亥 and the diviner's name Nei 內 were inscribed on the back of the shell in the position corresponding to the charge in (a-Charge) on the front. The prognostication and the verification were also engraved on the back of the shell.³⁶

³⁶ See Li Daliang (1972: 78).

2.4.2.2. Partial divination contexts

Not every divination context includes the four parts as in the above examples. A divination context usually includes the divinatory charge, but the rest of the parts can be omitted.

(i) Abbreviation in positive-negative paired divinatory contexts:

Example (8) below is a case in which the verification is not inscribed.³⁷ As well, in the negative counterpart (8b), only the preface and the charge are given.

(8) a.

Preface: 丙辰卜，般貞：

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn:

bingchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Nan tested:

Charge: 我受黍年。

Wǒ shòu shǔ nián.

we/ receive/ *shu*-millet/ harvest

We will receive a *shu*-millet harvest.

Prognostication: 王固曰：吉。受出年。

wáng zhàn yuē: Jī, shòu yǒu nián.

king/ prognosticate/ say/ auspicious/ receive / aid/ harvest

The king prognosticated the crack and said: It is auspicious.

We will receive aid and have a good harvest.

Verification: Ø

b.

Preface: 丙辰卜，般貞：

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn:

bingchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Nan tested:

Charge: 我弗其受黍年。

Wǒ fú qí shòu shǔ nián.

we/ not / qí/ receive/ *shu*-millet/ harvest

We may not receive a *shu*-millet harvest.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø (*Bingbian* 8: 1-2, 9)

In the following divination context (9), the prognostication (Pg) does not appear:

(9) a.

Preface: 辛亥卜，爭貞：

xīnhài bǔ, Zhēng zhēn

xinhai day/ divine/, Zheng/ test

Divining on the *xinhai* day, Zheng tested:

b.

Preface: 貞：

zhēn

test

(Zheng) tested:

³⁷ The prognostication is cut on the back of the shell.

Charge: 羽乙卯雨.

yǔ yǐmǎo yǔ

next/ *yimao* day/ rain

It will rain on the next *yimao* day.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: 乙卯允雨.

yǐmǎo yǔn yǔ.

yimao day/ indeed/ rain

On the day of *yimao*, it indeed rained. (*Bingbian* 304: 1-2)

Charge: 羽乙卯不其雨.

yǔ yǐmǎo bù qí yǔ

next/ *yimao* day/ not/ qí/ rain

It may not rain on the next *yimao* day

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø

In this example, the positive half inscription (9a) contains a preface, a charge, and a verification, but no prognostication, and in the negative counterpart (9b), neither the prognostication nor the verification was recorded, and only an abbreviated preface and a negative charge appear.

In the following example, the prognostication and the verification are not given, leaving only the preface and the charge components:

(10) a.

Preface: 癸丑卜， 𠩺：

guǐchǒu bǔ , Nán:

guichou day/ divine/, Nan

Divining on the *guichou* day, Nan (tested):

Charge: 隹兄丁。 一上吉二

wéi Xiōng Dīng. ^{1,shangji} 2

be/ brother/Ding, [highly auspicious]

It is Brother Ding.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø

b.

Preface: 癸丑卜， 𠩺：

guǐchǒu bǔ , Nán:

guichou day/ divine/, Nan

Divining on the *guichou* day, Nan (tested):

Charge: 不隹兄丁。

bù wéi Xiōng Dīng.

not/ be/ brother/ Ding

It is not Brother Di

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø (*Bingbian* 86: 2-3)

The pattern seen above in (10) and the one in (11) below, where only a charge component is given, are the most commonly seen in the recorded divinatory contexts.

(11) a.

Preface: Ø

Charge: 大丁咎我.

Dà Dīng tuò wǒ.

Da Ding/ impede/ we

Da Ding will impede (or impedes) us.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø

b.

Preface: Ø

Charge: 大丁不我咎.

Dà Dīng bù wǒ tuò.

Da Ding/ not/ we/ impede

Da Ding will /does not impeded us.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø (*Bingbian* 245: 7-8)

The examples given above indicate that the charge component is the heart of a divination. This is made clear by its prevalence in the inscriptions with the frequent absence of the prognostication and/or verification, and the occasional absence of the preface. That a divinatory context has to have the charge is due to the fact that it is about the topics of the divination.³⁸

(ii) Abbreviation in alternative-type divinatory contexts:

The absence of the prognostication, the verification, and/or the preface is also involved in the alternative-type divinations. Example (12) shows the absence of the verification component

(12) a.

Preface: 戊辰卜, 爭貞:

wùchén bǔ, Zhēng zhēn:

wuchen day/ divine/, Zheng/ test

Divining on the wuchen day, Zheng tested:

Charge: 咎羌自妣庚. 一三

tuō Qiāng zì Bǐ Gēng.^{1,2,3}

disembowel/ Qiang/ from/ Bi Geng

As for the sacrifice of disemboweling Qiang (tribesmen) directed to ancestresses, we should start from Bi Geng.

b.

Preface: 貞:

zhēn:

test

(Zheng) tested:

Charge: 咎羌自高妣己. 一三

tuō Qiāng zì Gāo Bǐ Jǐ.^{1,2,3}

disembowel/ Qiang/ from/ Gao Bi Ji

As for the sacrifice of disemboweling Qiang (tribesmen) directed to ancestresses, we should start from Gao Bi Ji.

³⁸ Frequently seen divinatory topics include sacrifices, military events, hunting, excursions of the Shang king, weather, agriculture, sickness, childbirth, distress or trouble, dreams, and settlement building, etc., covering different aspects of Shang royal life.

Prognostication: 王固曰: 其自高妣己。

Prognostication: Ø

wáng zhàn yuē: qí zì gāo Bǐ Jǐ

king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ from/ Gao Bi Ji

The king, having prognosticated, said:

“We should perhaps start the sacrifice of
disemboweling Qiang (tribesmen) from Gao Bi Ji.

Verification: Ø

Verification: Ø (*Bingbian* 360: 1-2; 361: 1)

Below is the example of the absence of prognostication in the “alternative-type” divinations:

(13) a.

b.

Preface: Ø

Preface: 丁亥卜。

dīnghài bǔ

dīnghai day/ divine

Divining on the *dīnghai* day,

Charge: 我惠七鬲逐。

Charge: 我惠卅鬲逐。

wǒ huǐ qī zhī zhú

wǒ huǐ sà zhī zhú

we/ be/ seven/ *zhi*-animal/ chase

we/ be/ thirty/ *zhi*-animal/ chase

It should be the (herd of) seven

It should be the (herd of) thirty

zhi-animals that we chase.

zhi-animals that we chase.

Prognostication: Ø

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: 七鬲不臚。

Verification: 允逐隻十六。一月。

qī zhī bù (?)

yǔn zhú huò shí liù. yī yuè

seven/ *zhi*-animals/ not/ (?)³⁹

indeed/ chase/ catch/ sixteen/, first/ month

The (herd of) seven *zhi*-animals

Indeed (we) chased them, and caught

did not (...?).

sixteen. First month. (*Bingbian* 323: (3)-(4))

In the following example, only the preface and the charge components are given:

³⁹ The pronunciation and the meaning of this character are unknown.

(14) a.

Preface: 丙戌卜, 𠄎:

bǐngxū bǔ, Nán:

bingxu day/ divine/, Nan

Divining on the *bingxu* day, Nan (tested).⁴⁰

Charge: 來甲午出伐上甲十.

lái jiǎwǔ yǒu fá Sàng Jiǎ shí.

come/ *jiawu* day/ offer/ decapituri/

Shang Jia/ ten

On the coming *jiawu* day, (we should)

offer Shang Jia decapituri (numbering) ten.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø

In the example below, only the charges were recorded:

(15) a. 田从北西. 一二三上吉

tián cóng běixī. 1,2,3, shàng jí

hunt/ follow/ northwest/, { crack notation } [highly auspicious]

(When we) hunt, (we should) follow a northwesterly direction. { crack notation } [highly auspicious]

b. 田从北. 一二三

tián cóng běi. 1,2,3

hunt/ follow/ north/

(When we) hunt, (we should) follow a northerly direction.

c. 田从東. 一二三上吉

tián cóng dōng. 1,2,3, shàng jí

hunt/ follow/ east/ { crack notation } [highly auspicious]

(When we) hunt, (we should) follow a easterly direction. { crack notation } [Highly auspicious] (*Bingbian* 554: 5,6,7)

b.

Preface: Ø

Charge: 來甲午出伐上甲八.

lái jiǎwǔ yǒu fá Sàng Jiǎ bā

come/ *jiawu* day/ offer/ decapituri

Shang Jia/ eight

On the coming *jiawu* day, (we should)

offer Shang Jia decapituri (numbering) eight.

Prognostication: Ø

Verification: Ø (*Bingbian* 233: 7-8)

⁴⁰ This preface was inscribed on the back side of the shell in the position corresponding to the charges (see Li Daliang 1972: 76).

2.4.3. The abbreviation involved in the charge component

The fact that charges were necessarily inscribed does not mean that they always appear in complete form. In fact, below we will see that the charges were recorded variably in complete and abbreviated forms.

2.4.3.1. Abbreviated charges occurring in sets with several subsets of inscriptions

In a divination set in which the cracks were inscribed several times with inscriptions, there is a tendency for later charges to be abbreviated.⁴¹ Example (16) is one case to illustrate this fact.

(16) a.	b.
a ₁ 般其羣羌。一	b ₁ 龍其羣。一
Bān qí zhī Qiāng. ¹	Lóng qí zhī. ¹
Ban/ qí/ seize/ Qiang	Long/ qí/ seize/
Ban may happen to be seized by the Qiang.	Long may happen to be seized (by the Qiang).
a ₂ 其羣。二	b ₂ 其羣。二
qí zhī. ²	qí zhī. ²
qí/ seize	qí/ seize
(Ban) may happen to be seized (by the Qiang).	(Long) may happen to be seized (by the Qiang).
(Bingbian 132: 7-10)	

This divinatory set in (16) consists of two subsets of charges, and is a case of the alternative-type divination. Here we see that the charges engraved in each subset are not identical word-for-word, and those occurring in later subsets become more concise, although each subset of the charges refers to the same topic. Below is an example in which the divinatory set consists of two subsets of paired charges

(17) a.	b.
a ₁ 貞: 王不禱示左 ^{一上吉二}	b ₁ 貞: 示弗左王不禱 ^一
zhēn: wáng bù yǒu, shǐ zuǒ. ^{1, shàngjí. 2}	zhēn: shǐ fú zuǒ, wáng bù yǒu. ^{1, 2}
test/, king/ not/ libation/, ancestral altar/	test/, ancestral altar/ not/ oppose/
oppose/, {crack notation} [highly auspicious]	king/ not/ libation

⁴¹ Note that, although there is a tendency for the later charges in a set to be abbreviated (e.g., Li Daliang 1972:137, 162-163), this is not true for the multiple-plastron set. In the multiple-plastron set, sometimes the middle subsets are more detailed than those at the beginning (e.g., Keightley (1978:76-78).

As for the king's not conducting a libation, the ancestral altar will oppose it.

a₂ 示左王^三

shǐ zuò wáng.³

altar of ancestor/ oppose/ king

The ancestral altar will oppose the king's [not conducting a libation].

The ancestral altar will not oppose the king's not conducting a libation.

b₂ 示弗左^三

shǐ fú zuǒ.³

altar of ancestor/ not/ oppose

The ancestral altar will not oppose [the king's not conducting a libation]

(*Bingbian* 98: 16-19)

There are several points that need to be mentioned about the charges in this example. First, each of the charges in the first subset consists of two parts: *wang bu you* 王不禋, "the king does not conduct a libation," and *shi zuo* 示左, "the ancestral altar will oppose" (or its negative form). The charges in the second subset are just simple sentences in their surface structure. Second, the word order of the negative charge in (b₁) is different from that of its positive counterpart in (a₁). Third, in the positive charge of the second subset (a₂), there is an object phrase *wang* 王, "the king" after the verb *zuo* 左, "to oppose," but in its negative counterpart (b₂), there is no object. Apparently, the surface structures of the charges in this set make it difficult to interpret them as a set of regular paired charges. And if we follow the surface word order to understand this example, then the two charges in the first subset do not constitute a pair of opposed propositions; instead, they would have the following meaning:

(18) a₁. As for the king's not conducting a libation, the ancestral altar will oppose it.

b₁. The ancestral altar will not oppose the king's not conducting a libation.

Accordingly, if we understand the charges in the second subset by following the lexical content and word order as given there, the meaning of the two charges would be as follows:

(19) a₂. The ancestral altar will not oppose His Majesty.

b₂. The ancestral altar will not oppose.

However, we do not consider these interpretations satisfactory, because they make the function of these charges unclear. For what purpose were these charges made? In particular, was the diviner divining about whether the ancestral altar will oppose the king, or the ancestral altar will oppose the king's not conducting a libation? Thus, we suggest that the charges in the above

example should not be interpreted word-for-word; rather, they should be understood as the abbreviated form of regular paired charges. The repetition of the part *shi zuo* 示左, “the ancestral altar will oppose,” and its negative counterpart *shi fu zuo* 示弗左, “the ancestral altar will not oppose,” in all four charges suggests that the major concern of the divination is whether or not the ancestral altar will oppose the matter of the king’s not conducting a libation. That the part *wang bu you* 王不禘, “the king does not conduct a libation,” occurs in (a₁) as a topical clause indicates that this is just the background information of the divination, but not the matter to be determined. Its absence in the second subset also suggests that it was abbreviated by the engraver because it is not new information in the divination. The fact that the topical clause was inscribed after the main clause in (b₁) could be a result of the engraver having originally decided not to include it, but later added it to the negative charge. It is common to see that the non-main clause omitted from the negative charge (see discussion below). The word *wang* 王, “king” occurring after the verb *zuo* 左, “to oppose” in (a₂) might have been the abbreviation of the topical clause of *wang bu you* 王不禘, “the king does not conduct a libation.”

2.4.3.2. Abbreviated charges occurring in sets with only one subset of inscriptions.

For divination sets in which only a single pair of inscriptions was recorded, the abbreviation usually occurs in the negative charge (or the one that is grammatically positive but semantically expresses an undesirable situation). Such abbreviated negative charges were usually inscribed in the left side of the turtle plastron. An example is given in (20).

(20) a 貞: 今丙戌爻姪, 出从雨。一二三四五六七八九

zhēn: jīn bǐngxū jiāo Zài, yǒu cóng yǔ. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

test/, present/ *bingxu* day/ burn-at-the-stake/ Zai, there is/ ensuing/ rain.⁴²

Tested: This *bingxu* day, (if we) burn-at-the-stake a (woman of) Zai, there will be ensuing rain.

⁴² The word occurring after the time phrase *jin bingxu* 今丙戌, “the present *bingxu* day” is identified by Luo Zhenyu (1910) in his *Yinxu shuqi kaoshi* as *jia* 爻, also 𠄎, a verb that has to do with a sacrificial event. This interpretation is accepted by most scholars. However, there is some debate over the exact meaning of the word. Here, I follow Serruys’ and Takashima’s (2004 b) interpretation as given above. For more discussion, see Takashima’s (2004 b), Commentary of *Bingbian* 157, note 1. The object of this verb is written as 姪 in the inscription, which is transcribed as 姪 or 𠄎 by Zhang Bingquan (1957-72) in the *Bingbian kaoshi*, but he is not certain whether this character is the name of a person or place. According to Takashima’s Commentary of *Bingbian* 157, note 2, it can be understood as “woman of Zai,” “woman of the Zai clan,” or “woman from the country of Zai.”

b. 妣, 亡其从雨. 一二三四五六七八九

Zài, wáng qí cóng yǔ. ^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9}

a woman of Zai/, there is not/ qí/ ensuing/ rain

[Tested: This *bingxu* day, (if we) burn-at-the-stake a (woman) of] Zai, there will perhaps not be ensuing rain. (*Bingbian* 157: 1-2)

The sequential crack numbers in this example indicate that this pair of inscriptions is the record of a divination set in which at least nine pairs of cracks were made (i.e., the same divination was repeated nine times), but only one set of charges was inscribed. Clearly, the charge in (b) is an elliptical form of (a).

Sometimes the positive charge could be abbreviated:

(21) a. 庚午卜, 內貞: 王勿作邑在茲帝若. 一二三四

gēngwǔ bǔ, Nèi zhēn: wáng wù zuò yì zài zī, dī ruò. ^{1,2,3,4}

gengwu day/ divine/, Nei/ test/, king/ not/ make/ city/ at/ here/, god/ approve

Divining on the *gengwu* day, Nei tested: The king should not make a city here; God will approve (it).

b. 庚午卜, 內貞: 王作邑帝若. 一二上吉三四

gēngwǔ bǔ, Nèi zhēn: wáng zuò yì, dī ruò. ^{1,2,shàngjí 3,4}

gengwu day/ divine/, Nei/ test/, king/make/ city/, god/ approve/, {crack notation} [highly auspicious]

Divining on the *gengwu* day, Nei tested: The king should make a city [here]; God will approve (it). {crack notation} [Highly auspicious] (*Bingbian* 93: 4-5)

In this case (21), the negative charge was inscribed on the right side of the plastron and contains more words than its positive counterpart. Namely, the phrase *zai zi* 在茲, “at this, here,” appears in the first negative charge, but is absent from the positive charge. The right-placement of the negative charge and the abbreviation of the positive charge indicate that the intended result of this divination is “not making a city.”

An elliptical form is also seen in the alternative charges of choice-type divinations as below:

(22) a. 丁酉卜, 般貞: 酹于河五十牛。^{1,2}

dīngyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: yǒu yú Hé wǔ shí niú.^{1,2}

dingyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, *you-cutting* sacrifice/ to/ the River God/ fifty/ bovine

Divining on the *dingyou* day, Nan tested: We should offer *you-cutting* sacrifice to the River God with fifty bovines.

b. 丁酉卜, 般貞: 卅牛。

dīngyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: sā' niú.^{1,2}

dingyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, thirty/ bovine

Divining on the *dingyou* day, Nan tested: [We should offer *you-cutting* sacrifice to the River God] with thirty bovines. (*Bingbian* 425: 8-9)

2.5. A reconstruction of the recording formula underlying the recorded Shang divinatory contexts

The distinctive formulaic features of Shang recorded divinatory contexts can be summarized as follows:

(i) The structure of a divinatory context is formulaically organized into four components: the preface, the charge, the prognostication, and the verification.

(ii) A divinatory context usually consists of a series of sub-contexts which have the same topic. The sub-contexts belonging to the same divination could either be inscribed together in the same turtle shell, or, could be inscribed separately in different shells. In some cases, only one set of subcontexts was inscribed.

(iii) Charges form the core of the divination, and are strikingly formulaic. The overwhelming majority of charges come in the format of positive-negative pairs; less frequently they occur in the format of alternative charges.

(iv) The recorded divinatory contexts involve different kinds of abbreviation. Abbreviation usually involves the absence of the prognostication and verification, and less often the absence of the preface. The charge component, at the heart of divination, is obligatorily recorded. However, charges can be also abbreviated, either one member of a paired charges is expressed in elliptical form, or in the case of alternative-type divinations, the later members of a charge sequence are

usually expressed in elliptical form.

The above features imply that the Shang divinatory recording was based on some standard formulas. The recording formula underlying the Shang divinatory contexts may be reconstructed as follows: Let the preface be P, the prognostication be Pg, the verification be V, a positive charge be Charge_{Pos}, and its negative counterpart be Charge_{Neg}. Suppose that the divination can be repeated n times. A full record of such a paired divination set can be formulated as (I):

(I) Formula for paired divination set:

- a. $\{ (P) + \text{Charge}_{\text{Pos}} + (Pg) + (V) \}$
- b. $\{ (P) + \text{Charge}_{\text{Neg}} + (Pg) + (V) \} \times n$

We claim that all the paired divinatory inscriptions in OBI are derived from this formula, in which only the positive and negative charges are necessary, the rest of the other parts being optional. If $n \geq 1$, then we get a paired divination set.⁴³

Next, we consider the underlying formula of the alternative-type divination set, in which all the charges have the same grammatical structure, with one constituent contrasted. This type of divinatory context may be reconstructed as follows: Let the charges have the form of an open proposition marked by Charge [...x...], in which x stands for a free variable that is assigned different values contextually, such as $x=c_1$, $x=c_2$, $x=c_3$..., and so on. Let the preface be P, the prognostication be Pg, and the verification be V. A completed record of an alternative divination would follow the formula in (II):

(II) Formula for alternative divination set

$$\{(P) + \text{Charge} \text{ [...x...]} + (Pg) + (V)\} \times n$$

Note that in this formula the component A[x] is obligatory, while the rest of the components are optional. When $n \geq 1$, then we get an alternative divination set. We assume that all the alternative divinatory sequences in OBI are derived from this formula. Although we assume that all the

⁴³ In this formula, when $n=1$ (the divinatory context that only includes one subset), the relevant context also counted as a divination set (the same as in II).

recorded divinatory contexts were produced by these two formulas, we must note the following points:

(i) Formulas (I) and (II) predict the generation of many possible divinatory sequences which we expect to see in the Shang divinatory data. However, testing of these theoretical models would constitute a study in itself. What is relevant for our purposes is that the examples cited in section 2.4 do provide preliminary support for the underlying formulas (I) and (II).

(ii) Here we only consider the presence and absence of each of the four divination components, and will put aside the variant of the abbreviations involved in the secondary components. For example, a complete preface formula is “XX 卜 Y 貞,” “XX day divined; Y diviner tested” as in *xinmao bu, Nan zhen* 辛卯卜, 敵貞, “Divining on the *xinmao* day, Nan tested.” But this preface formula may be abbreviated in different ways. Sometimes it can be abbreviated as “XX 卜 Y,” as in *bingyin bu, Nan* 丙寅卜敵, “Divining on the *bingyin* day, Nan (tested),” where the verb *zhen* 貞 is omitted. Or it may be abbreviated to the simplest form, where only the verb *zhen* 貞 appears, while the *ganzhi* day, and the diviner’s name are all omitted.⁴⁴

(iii) There are other recorded divinatory contexts that apparently do not fit either of these two formulas. Such cases include inscriptions occurring independently, without positive or negative counterparts, and inscriptions in which two members are both identically positive (or both negative). Because of the lack of fuller relevant context, we cannot determine whether such inscriptions are regular divinations in which the corresponding members were not inscribed, or whether they require a different treatment. We tentatively refer to these as structurally ambiguous cases, and will discuss them in Chapter 4. For the time being, our major concern is the regular recorded divinatory contexts; in particular, the charges formatted as in the two formulas above.

⁴⁴ See Li (1972:120-169) for a detailed discussion of the different abbreviations in the preface.

Chapter 3

What Semantics of Questions and Speech Act Theory

Tell us about Divinatory Charges

3.1. Introduction

To determine the linguistic form of Shang divinatory charges, we face the problem of distinguishing statements from questions. This section introduces some theories that address this issue, and provides a theoretical basis for the proposed analysis.

The basic question is this: What is a statement and what is a question? An English sentence like (1) is a statement, while the sentences in (2) are questions, with (2a) being a content-question (as it can be answered by a content-word) and (2b) being a yes-no question (as it can be answered either by 'yes' or 'no').

- (1) Sylvia saw me this afternoon.
- (2) a. Who saw you this afternoon?
b. Did Sylvia see you this afternoon?

The utterance in (1) describes a state of affairs; therefore, it has a truth-value, that is, it can be true or false. For example, if (1) is uttered in a conversation, I could challenge it by saying "No, that's not true." In contrast, the utterances in (2) do not describe a state of affairs, and they have no truth values. For example, if either (2a) or (2b) is uttered in a conversation, I cannot challenge it by replying "No, that's not true." Rather, questions are requests for a response of a certain kind. This points to an important difference between statements and questions, which can be characterized as follows. Statements are formally declarative sentences and represent propositions that can be true or false. Questions, on the other hand, are formally interrogative sentences and do not represent concrete propositions, and therefore they cannot be assigned truth values (i.e.,

they are neither true nor false).⁴⁵

The meaning of a statement is often described in terms of its truth-value. But if we say a question has no truth-value, then what is the meaning of a question? Philosophers, logicians, and linguists have proposed various theories to capture the meaning of a question in a natural language. Three principal approaches to the semantics of questions are given here. Although specific theories differ in their details, each attempts to define the meaning of a question on the basis of the meaning of its corresponding answer.

The first is called the epistemic-imperative approach (Åqvist 1965,1975; Hintikka 1974). Based on the epistemic nature of questions (that is, questions are requests for information), this theory assumes that the logic of questions is a combination of the logic of knowledge, known as epistemic logic, and of the logic of requests. Two operators, an epistemic operator and an imperative operator, are postulated for questions. Thus, from this approach, a question like *Will Mary come?* is analyzed as: *Bring it about that I know that Mary will come or that I know that Mary will not come.*

The second approach is called the categorical approach (Keenan and Hull 1973; Hausser and Zaefferer 1979; Hausser 1983), which assumes that questions are functions that form categorical answers to propositions. In this theory, the meaning of a question is understood as an unsaturated

⁴⁵ In linguistics, in order to capture the meanings of sentences, the notion of "propositions," used by philosophers and logicians is employed. In semantics, a proposition refers to the entity that represents the meaning/content of a sentence, in particular a declarative sentence (e.g., Kearns 2000: 25). Sentences in ordinary speaking or writing are not reliable representations of their meanings, as exemplified in the following English sentences:

- [i] a. The cat ate the fish.
- b. The fish was eaten by the cat.

These two sentences are different in grammatical structure, but as far as the objective content is concerned, they denote the same meaning. Sometimes we see the opposite situation, as in the following example:

- [ii] Visiting relatives can be awful.

This sentence can express two different meanings: (a) "It is awful to visit relatives," and (b) "Relatives who visit are awful." By using the notion of propositions, we may say that the two sentences in [i] denote the same proposition, which can be represented by the statement *The cat ate the fish*; while the sentence in [ii] denotes two propositions, which can be represented by the statements *It is awful to visit relatives*, and *Relatives who visit are awful*.

It is worth noting that there is often some confusion between propositions and statements: the presentation of a proposition in its baldest form is usually regarded as a statement, as pointed out by Palmer (1986: 87). Thus, Rescher (1968: 24, as cited in Palmer 1986: 87) says: "A proposition is presented by a complete, self-contained statement, which, taken as a whole, will be true or false: *The cat is on the mat*, for example." For ease of exposition, here let us make a distinction between propositions and statement as follows: A statement, as opposed to a question, a command, or an exclamation, is the utterance in which a speaker is making an assertion about something he has in mind. A proposition, on the other hand, is a semantic entity that deals with the meaning of a sentence.

Even though it is not unusual to see cases as in [i] or [ii], what we see most often is that a declarative sentence usually denotes just one proposition. However, these are not the sentences that constitute the centre of our concern. What we are interested in is the type of sentence that does not denote a particular proposition, but a set of alternative propositions.

structure, or an open proposition expressing an n -place propositional function. The meaning of the constituent answers must supply arguments of the right type. For example, a constituent such as *John* can be an answer to the question “Who saw you this afternoon?” From this view, the semantic content of such a question is an unsaturated proposition in the form of *X saw you this afternoon*, plus the content of the constituent *John* that makes up its answer yields the (true and complete) propositional content of the answer *John saw me this afternoon*. In other words, the categorical approach analyzes questions and answers in such a way that they fit together and make up a proposition. And, since constituent answers are of all kinds of different categories, different kinds of questions are to be of different categories as well.

The third approach is called the propositional approach (Hamblin 1973; Karttunen 1977). In this approach, the meaning of a question is essentially propositional, that is, a question denotes a set of propositions that are possible answers to it.

This thesis adopts the third approach, which is proposed in Hamblin (1973), adopted in Karttunen (1977) with some modification, and developed as partition semantics of questions in Higginbotham (1996). This theory will be discussed in further detail in the rest of this chapter.

3. 2. The meaning of a question is a set of complete answers

Question-answer pairs must be discourse-congruent where questions and their answers correspond in semantic content and in linguistic form. The form and content of an answer to a question is determined by the form and content of the question. This is illustrated in (3) and (4).

(3) Q: Whom did John invite?

A1: John invited BILL.

A2: #JOHN invited Bill.

A3: #Vancouver is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

(4) Q: Who invited Bill?

A1: JOHN invited Bill.

A2: #John invited BILL.

A3: #Vancouver is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The capitalized words are prosodically prominent. Sentences indicated with the symbol # are

odd or infelicitous.

Intuitively, we know that (3A1) is a felicitous answer to the question (3), while (3A2) and (3A3) are not. Answer (3A2) is infelicitous in its sentential intonation, and (3A3) is not appropriate in its semantic content. The same situation arises in (4), where only (4A1) counts an appropriate answer to question (4), while (4A2) and (4A3) do not.

3. 2. 1. The meaning of a question is the set of its possible answers: Hamblin (1958, 1973)

Hamblin (1958) provides a formal analysis of the relation between an answer and a question by postulating the following:

- (i) An answer to a question is a statement.
- (ii) Knowing what counts as an answer is equivalent to knowing the question.

(Hamblin 1958: 162)

Postulate (i) means that if two sentences are related to each other in a question-answer pair, the answer will be a statement. For Hamblin, answers must be complete statements. Thus, even though a sentence fragment can be given as an appropriate answer to a question in a conversation, it must be the elliptical form of a complete statement. For example, with a question such as: *Who did you see yesterday?*, even though a fragment like *Ian* can be given as an appropriate answer, Postulate (i) stipulates that the fragment is an abbreviation of the complete statement *I saw Ian yesterday*.

Postulate (ii) attempts to capture the intuitive meaning of a question, that is, what is communicated when we ask a question like *Who did you see yesterday?* Here Hamblin suggests that, by asking a question, one is actually specifying the type of answer being sought. And to understand a question is to know which statements are possible answers and which are impossible answers. Thus, a question is in fact a grammatical category that specifies the set of “possible answers.” Postulates (i) and (ii) are adopted in this study.

Hamblin (1973) develops postulates (i) and (ii) into a formal semantic framework in which an utterance such a question is assigned a semantic representation (i.e., semantic value), proposing that a question denotes the set of propositions which contains the possible answers to that question. In particular, Hamblin states that: “Pragmatically speaking a question sets up a

choice-situation between a set of propositions, namely those propositions that count as answers to it" (Hamblin 1973: 254). According to him, the semantic value of a yes-no question and a wh-question can be defined as:

- (i) A yes-no question denotes a set of propositions which consist of the questioned proposition and its negative counterpart
- (ii) A wh-question denotes a set of propositions which have the form of an open proposition with a variable in the position corresponding to the wh-word.

That is, a matrix direct yes-no question, as in (5) below, has for its semantic value the set of propositions which consists of the proposition expressed by the neutral core (the affirmative sentence), and its negation. Thus, the question in (5) has as its semantic value the set containing the two contradictory propositions expressed by the two sentences in (6).

(5) Is it raining today?

(6) a. It is raining today.

b. It is not raining today.

To ask a yes-no question like (5) is to ask which of the propositions in (6) is true, and the true answer to this question is selected from the set of possible answers, here given in (6a-b). The answer set in (6) can be formally characterized as in (9). Thus, to ask a yes-no question is to ask for the true value of the saturated proposition that is questioned. A proposition with no free variable is a saturated (or closed) proposition as in (7), and a proposition that contains a free variable (such as a question-word) is an open proposition as in (8):

(7) John saw Mary today.

(8) Who saw Mary today? ⁴⁶

(9) $\lambda p[p = \text{It is raining today} \vee p = \neg(\text{It is raining today})]$

Now let's consider the case of wh-questions (i.e., content questions). According to Hamblin (1973), a wh-question denotes a set of alternative propositions that constitute all the possible answers to the question. A wh-question like (10) would have as its semantic value/meaning the set of the propositions in (11) that contains the possible answers to the question.

⁴⁶ A proposition with no free variable is a saturated (or closed) proposition as in (i), and a proposition that contains a free variable (such as a question-word) is an open proposition as in (ii):

(i) John saw Mary today.

(ii) Who saw Mary today?

(10) Who loves Mary?

(11) $\{a_1 \text{ loves Mary, } a_2 \text{ loves Mary, } a_3 \text{ loves Mary, } a_4 \text{ loves Mary, ...}\}$ where a_1, a_2, \dots are all the people in the domain.

To ask (10) is to ask which of the propositions in (11) are true. A complete answer to (10) in a world w is a list of all the members of (11) which are true in w . The set in (11) can also be characterized as in (12a), or translated formally as (12b):

(12) a. $\{p: \text{for some person } a, p = a \text{ loves Mary}\}$

b. $\lambda p[\exists x (p = \text{love}(x, M))]$

We can see that the set of propositions denoted by question (8) has the form of " a loves Mary", which is an open proposition with a variable in the corresponding position of the wh-word. The possible answers to this question are generated from this open proposition by assigning different values for the variable. In this sense, to ask a wh-question is to ask for the true value of a variable in an open proposition.

In sum, we can say that the semantic value of a question is the set of the alternative propositions that serve as its possible answers. More simply, the meaning of a question is the set of its possible answers.

It is worth noting that what can count as a possible answer to a question is contextually determined and must be discourse-congruent. What is uttered by a respondent in response to a question must be cooperative and appropriate in the discourse. With this "discourse effect" of questions in mind, Hamblin's semantic value of a wh-question like "Who loves Mary?" can be taken as the set of possible answers in (13), in a context where a class consists of only four boys, John, Bill, Jerry, and Ian, and a girl, Mary :

(13) a. John loves Mary.

b. Bill loves Mary.

c. Jerry loves Mary

d. Ian loves Mary

That is to say, the members of a set of the propositions are contextually determined.

Hamblin's (1958; 1973) analysis of questions is compatible with the logical structure of questions postulated by philosophers and logicians with respect to the meaning of questions in

natural language. Ajdukiewicz (1928) describes questions as consisting of a sentential matrix (a sentence with one or more of its components replaced by variables) preceded by an interrogative operator *for what x* (or *for what x,y,z,...*, if the matrix has more than one free variable). For instance, a question like (14a) can be rendered as (14b). Equivalently, the logical structure of this question can be represented with an interrogative operator ($x?$) at the beginning of the sentential matrix, as in (14c):

- (14) a. Who is reading a letter?
 b. For what x , x is reading a letter?
 ^c ($x?$) [x is reading a letter]

And similarly, a question like (15a) can be rendered as (15b), and the logical structure of this question can be represented as in (15c):

- (15) a. Who is reading what?
 b. For what x and y , x is reading y ?
 c. ($x,y?$) [x is reading y]

The interrogative operator plays a similar role to that played by a quantifier in that it binds the free variables of the sentential matrix. Variables bound by an interrogative operator can be replaced by phrases of the same grammatical category as the variable. This captures the discourse congruence discussed above. All the results of replacement are possible answers to the question, and are all grammatical and meaningful. Thus, in the logical structure of questions proposed by Ajdukiewicz (1928), a question such as “Who saw Mary?” can be analyzed as asking for the value of the free variable in the sentential matrix which is an open proposition of the form x *loves Mary*. Here, the question word *who* is interpreted as the interrogative operator which functions as a quantifier binding the variable x , as in (16a). In the logical form, it is written as (16b).

- (16) a. (who $x?$) [x loves Mary]
 b. who x (loves (x , w))

We see that the semantic value of a wh-question is calculated in two steps. First, we form an open proposition that has a variable in the position corresponding to the question word. Then, we substitute in the variable; this yields a set of alternative propositions that contain all the possible answers to that question. So for a logician, the meaning of a question is most naturally

interpreted as the set of propositions that contain all possible answers to the question.

3. 2. 2. The meaning of a question is the set of its true answers: Karttunen (1977)

Karttunen (1977) modifies Hamblin's (1973) proposal by arguing that a question denotes the set of propositions which constitute the *true* answers rather than the *possible* answers to it. Karttunen criticizes the fact that Hamblin did not discuss indirect questions at all, and that Hamblin's proposal is not ideal for explicating the meaning of direct questions, since it does not provide any straightforward semantic account of the intuitive paraphrase relations exemplified in the following examples:

- (17) a. Is it raining?
b. I ask you (to tell me) whether it is raining
- (18) a. Which book did Mary read?
b. I ask you (to tell me) which book Mary read.

Karttunen maintains that any adequate theory of questions should be able to relate direct questions of one to the corresponding indirect questions. Contrary to Hamblin, Karttunen bases the semantics of questions on the semantics of indirect questions, and argues that direct questions can be assimilated to this approach. That is, the direct questions in (17a) and (18a) can be regarded as expressing the same proposition as the corresponding sentences in (17b) and (18b). Thus, Karttunen reduces the problem of the semantics of direct questions to the problem of how indirect questions are interpreted, and he assumes that any adequate solution for indirect questions can, in one way or another, be extended to cover direct questions as well. Based on the observation of indirect questions and the factivizing character of the question-embedded verbs, Karttunen derives the conclusion that the meaning of a question is not the set of propositions expressed by its *possible* answers but the set of propositions expressed by its *true* answers. He notes that even non-factive verbs that relate agents to propositions generally show a kind of factivity when they are combined with indirect questions. Consider the following sentences:

- (19) a. John told Mary that Bill and Susan passed the test.
b. John told Mary who passed the test.

In Karttunen's view, letting a question denote all the possible answers makes it difficult to

explicate the meaning of this kind of sentence. He points out that the verb *tell* (a non-factive verb) with a *that*-complement in (19a) does not entail that what is told is true; but, in the environment of an indirect question such as (19b) it does. That is, while the verb *tell* is non-factive, in (19b) it shows a kind of factivity when it occurs in the indirect question. Namely, the sentence (19b) is true just in the case in which John told Mary every true proposition in the set denoted by the indirect question. Karttunen argues that it is the embedded question that contributes the factive effect to the sentence. Therefore, letting the embedded question *who passed the test* in (19b) denote a set of *true* propositions makes it possible to explicate the meaning of the verb *tell* in (19b) in a straightforward way; having the embedded question *who passed the test* denote all the possible answers, including the false ones, does not help us to understand the meaning of the verb *tell* in the sentence. This is the main reason for Karttunen to propose that indirect questions denote only true complete answers rather than all possible complete answers, and that this restrictive view can be extended to direct questions.

In this view, the denotation of the question in (20) is not the set of propositions in (21), but the set consisting of the propositions in (22):

(20) Is it raining today?

(21) { It is raining today,
It is not raining today. }

(22) { It is raining today. } If it is raining truly, otherwise it is:
{ It is not raining today. }

Formally, the semantic value of the question in (23) is translated as:

(23) λp [$p = \text{It is raining today.}$ If true, otherwise $p = \neg (\text{It is raining today.})$]

Similarly, in Karttunen's analysis, question in (24) does not denote all its possible answers in (25), formally represented as (26), but only the true ones, as represented in (27):

(24) Who loves Mary?

(25) a. John loves Mary.
b. Bill loves Mary.
c. Jerry loves Mary
d. Ian loves Mary

The set of (25) can be formally represented as:

(26) a. $\{p: \text{for some person } a, p = a \text{ loves Mary} \}$

b. $\lambda p [\exists x (p = \text{love}(x, M))]$

(27) $\lambda p [\text{TRUE}(p) \wedge \exists x (p = \text{love}(x, M))]$

According to Karttunen's theory, the interpretation of a content question such as "Who loves Mary?" is a set of propositions with the form "x loves Mary" in which the variable x is a person such that, in fact, x does love Mary. For example, if there were four boys in a class, John, Bill, Jerry, and Ian, and only Jerry and Ian love Mary, then the meaning of this question is the set of propositions in (28), which jointly constitute a true and complete answer to the question:

(28) $\{ \text{Jerry loves Mary},$

$\text{Ian loves Mary} \}$

In an epistemic sense, Karttunen's account is more persuasive than Hamblin's because when we utter a question, we generally want a true answer, or the most informative response. However, there are pragmatic factors which present problems for the truth-conditions of Karttunen's account. First of all, the concept of a complete answer is complicated. Consider the following example:

(29) John knows who loves Mary.

According to Karttunen's denotation of questions, this sentence would be true if John knows for every person, whether he loves Mary or not. In other words, in order to know who loves Mary, John must have some knowledge about all individuals including those he has never heard of and whose very existence is unknown to him.

So we see that, from Karttunen's approach, as from Hamblin's, we also have to consider all the possible answers. Considering (29), pragmatically, it gives the result that questions no longer denote the set of propositions expressed by their true answers, but rather the set of propositions which are contextually determined. In this sense, like Hamblin's theory, Karttunen's needs a modification stipulating that the possible answers/the and true answers must be contextually restricted.

The second pragmatic consideration involves the interpretation of the following sentence:

(30) John told Mary who passed the test.

Let's assume that in this sentence, the agent, *John*, definitely told the truth. Karttunen points out that "this sentence is true just in the case John told Mary every proposition in the set denoted by the indirect question" (Karttunen 1977:11). But Higginbotham (1996) points out that this sentence may also involve the case in which "John may tell Mary every such proposition without Mary's coming to know whether a proposition that he did not tell her was true, and so without knowing whether someone whom John did not mention passed the test" (Higginbotham 1996:370).

The third pragmatic problem with respect to Karttunen's completeness of answers is expressed in the phenomenon called *partial answers* (Higginbotham 1996). Karttunen's account on the denotation of questions does not make room for the so-called partial answers. Consider the following context:

- (31) a. Which students passed the test?
b. At least six students passed the test.

Responses like (31b) are called partial answers because they give information, but the information is less than complete.

The fourth problem with Karttunen's account is that it cannot account for the fact that we can recognize an answer as appropriate even when it is not true (for example, when we say that someone gave 'the wrong answer,' meaning that the response, although appropriate to the occasion, was incorrect). For instance, imagine the following situation: I am staying in my room to study for whole day. Imagine all the windows in the room are covered with heavy curtains. All of a sudden, I decide that I am tired of studying and want to go out for a walk, but I don't know whether it is raining outside and if I should take an umbrella. Just then, my husband happens to come inside from the garden. So I ask, "Is it raining?" Suppose, he answers me as, "Yes, it is raining," but in fact it is not raining. He has given me a wrong answer; nevertheless, I still take it as an appropriate response. As long as he does not answer "Oh, I got a fish today," which obviously cannot count as an appropriate answer to the question I asked, I will accept his response.

It is because of the fact that we can recognize an answer as appropriate even when it is not true, that we can recognize the fundamental relation between a question and an answer in the

broader context. Hamblin's denotation of questions is more compatible than Karttunen's with intuitions of the question-answer relation. Hamblin's account of yes-no questions might be said to assign to them a set of propositions, each of which is an appropriate answer. However, Karttunen's account assigns to them just the one proposition that is the true answer. In this sense, Karttunen's theory does not fully explicate the question-answer relation, since it does not appear to distinguish wrong answers from irrelevant remarks.

3.3. The meaning of a question is a set of partial answers: Higginbotham (1996)

As we have seen above, both Hamblin and Karttunen define the meaning of questions on the basis of the relationship between questions and answers, and from the point of view of explicating the fundamental question-answer relation, Karttunen's account is less than satisfactory. However, linguists are not content with Hamblin's broad view of the denotation of questions, either. Since Hamblin's (1973) and Karttunen's (1977) proposals were first published, many other approaches to account for the relation between questions and answers have been explored. The most important and influential of these is the partition semantics of questions approach, which is first offered in Higginbotham and May (1981), and further developed in Higginbotham (1993, 1996).

In Higginbotham's (1996) view, both Hamblin and Karttunen's accounts are inadequate, because both ignore the notion of partial answers. Taking Karttunen's theory as basic, Higginbotham supplements it with devices needed to reconstruct the notions of completeness and partiality. First, Higginbotham associates interrogatives not with a single set of propositions, but rather *a space of possibilities* whose elements are mutually exclusive (so that no two elements of the space can both be true), and, normally, jointly exhaustive (so that one element must be true). According to him, a person who asks a question wants relief from ignorance. But the degree of information obtained may vary all the way from complete satisfaction, through partial relief from ignorance, down to no information at all. Therefore, to ask a question is to set up a space of possibilities, from which different degrees of answers are obtained. From this point of view, the complete answer to a question will be the response that (whether true or false) limits the space of possibilities most severely; but, there is room for partial answers as well, namely responses that eliminate through incompatibility some of the possibilities that are left open in the questions.

Thus, Higginbotham proposes that the way to capture the value of a question like (32a) is not the set of propositions in (32b), as Hamblin suggests, but rather the cells in (33):

(32) a. Who does Mary love?

b. {that Mary loves a_1 , that Mary loves a_2 , that Mary loves a_3, \dots }

(33) Cell 1 [that Mary loves a_1 , that Mary does not love a_2 , that Mary does not love a_3, \dots]

Cell 2 [that Mary loves a_1 , that Mary loves a_2 , that Mary does not love a_3, \dots]

Cell 3 [that Mary loves a_1 , that Mary does not love a_2 , that Mary loves a_3, \dots]

The cells in (33) partition the logical space of possible worlds into mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive sets. Such a partition represents a state of total ignorance relative to who Mary loves. When asking who Mary loves, what one wants to know is to which of the cells in (33) the world belongs. An answer reduces the ignorance as to who Mary loves. Partial answers rule out some of the cells in (33), while a complete answer rules out all but one cell.

A similar approach is seen in Groenendijk and Stokhof (1984, 1985). In this view, a question is a function which partitions the set of all possible worlds. The partition contains the set of propositions which are possible answers. That is, each partition corresponds to the set of possible worlds in which one of the possible answers is true. For instance, a yes-no question like (34) bipartitions the set of all possible worlds into the set of worlds where *Mary loves John* is true and the set of worlds where *Mary does not love John* is true, as in (35):

(34) Does Mary loves John?

(35) | Mary loves John. |

| Mary does not love John. |

A wh-question like (36) has the function to partition the set of possible words as in (37):

(36) Who does Mary love?

(37) | Mary loves nobody. |

| Mary loves John. |

| Mary loves John and Bill. |

| Mary loves John , Bill and Tom. |

| : |

| Mary loves everybody. |

Each partition represents a possible answer. One of the blocks will contain the answer which is true in the actual world.

Above we have introduced three semantic theories of questions in the generative literature (Hamblin 1973; Karttunen 1977; Higginbotham 1993, 1996). These theories all define the meaning of a question on the basis of the question-answer relation. Hamblin provides a logical space from which answers can be constructed; from this logical space Karttunen has taken the exhaustive answer from which to identify a question. Karttunen's view is a very specific analysis of a question's resolvedness conditions, and emphasizes whether or not a response satisfies the request for information. The partition-view in Higginbotham (1993, 1996) regards questions as partitions of possible states of affairs through an approach which easily defines the notion of partial answer and complete answer. Yet, there is no contradiction between the partition view and the approach as in Hamblin (1973) and Karttunen (1977); the partitions' proposal is compatible with the notion of the set of possible answers. And, the accounts provided by Karttunen and Higginbotham (1993, 1996) do not contradict the denotation of questions interpreted by Hamblin. What Karttunen and Higginbotham try to do is to find out exactly what the answerhood conditions would be on the basis of the possible answers. The fundamental relation between questions and answers is that questions denote sets of possible answers. Following these theories we can say that to understand a question is to understand what constitutes its answerhood conditions, or to know how to divide statements/propositions into "possible answers" and "impossible answers." Thus, the semantic value of a question is the set of propositions which contains the possible answers to it. These details form the core of the approach to questions adopted in this study.

3. 4. Speech Act theory and the pragmatic function of charges in Shang divination

Following the Speech Act theory developed in Grice (1957), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1983, 1990), and others, we hold that intention is a necessary criterion of meaningful language use. Speech acts involve "a speaker, a hearer, and an utterance by the speaker" (Searle 1965). According to Searle, "the unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word, or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or

sentence in the performance of the speech act”(Searle 1969: 16). And when a speaker A produces an utterance *x*, according to Grice (1957: 442), A meant something by *x*, is (roughly) equivalent to A intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of a recognition of this intention (see also Grice 1968, 1989).

Then, to speak of the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges brings out, indirectly or covertly, our conceptions of the purpose/intention of the Shang divination act. As we have discussed in Chapter 1, the biggest disagreement between the scholars who consider charges as “questions” and those who consider charges as “statements” is in that the former insist that divination is a means of asking for information to resolve doubts in one’s mind, while the latter consider that divination in Shang is not necessarily a means of seeking information; rather, it is a means of controlling the future by sending information to the spirits (see Keightley 1984 for more discussion on this view).

Our position is this: It could be argued that in Shang divination, to foretell future events or states, to know the will of the spirits, and to get guidance from the spirits might not be as important as to indicate the Shang rulers’ intentions or will to the spirits. To what extent the Shang divination was no longer simply a means of resolving doubts but a means of controlling the future, and how this worked, are undoubtedly questions worth further exploring. However, we maintain the view that what leads to divination typically presents itself in epistemological terms. This is most readily evident in cultures in which people take divination as an authoritative source of truth: the reason for a person to initiate a divination is usually due to a lack of knowledge on an issue and the person’s desire to seek guidance from oracles.⁴⁷ As long as we admit that the Shang divination is a divination act, then we have to admit that the Shang divination is a means of obtaining information which is unavailable by ordinary means.

With this understanding of divination, we assume that the charges in the Shang divination are the utterance produced by the diviners with the intention of foretelling future events/states, identifying causes of current crises, and requesting spiritual guidance for actions whose outcomes are uncertain. The pragmatic function of the charges is to seek information.

⁴⁷ See Evans-Pritchard (1937); Bascom (1969, 1980); Lin Sheng (1963); Wang Ningsheng (1989a-b; Du Bois (1992).

Even though we are not sure of the intentions of the Shang people when they were conducting a divination, one thing is clear: the diviners were communicating with spirits regarding the matters under consideration by uttering words, and these were recorded and come to us as charges. A tacit agreement held by scholars in the field is that divinatory charges are utterances produced by diviners in order to get a response from spirits through the oracle of the crack. For those who take charges as questions, such a response is considered as an answer from the spirits, but for those who view charges as statements, such a response is considered as an approval or a disapproval from spirits with respect to what was announced to them.⁴⁸ Thus, in this respect, the difference between the two theories is only in that one considers that charges are made in order to get answers, and the other considers that charges are made in order to get confirmation. But both theories admit that charges are made in order to get a response from spirits.

Following Hamblin (1958: 161) and Hagstrom (1998: 125), we define a question as an utterance which requires a response in a well-formed discourse, while an interrogative is a grammatical structure that is typically used to ask questions.⁴⁹ We agree that the feature that distinguishes a question from a statement, in terms of pragmatic function, is that the former requires a response, while the latter does not. If one is making a statement, one is offering information, which may or not be true, and this does not require a response from the addressee about the content of the statement in order to continue the communicative interaction. However, if one asks a question, one is seeking information or confirmation that may be expressed by interrogative sentences or other linguistic strategies, and one is expecting a response from his addressee in order to continue the communicative interaction. Here, if we apply the definition of questions as sentences requiring a response (no matter if it is an answer that provides the information requested, or if it is a confirmation that offers approval or disapproval regarding what is proposed), then we would conclude that, pragmatically, charges are like questions.

However, we have to distinguish between the speech act of asking questions and the grammatical form of interrogatives. We admit that in an ordinary context of language use, the intention of seeking information is usually associated with the speech act of asking questions by

⁴⁸ See Keightley (1972:1).

⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning here that interrogatives are not always used to ask questions—for instance, “rhetorical questions.”

using the linguistic device of interrogative sentences. However, the speech act of asking a question is not necessarily associated with the use of an interrogative sentence all the time, and the linguistic strategies of asking questions may vary depending on the specific context of communication. It is shown in the anthropological literature that the use of language in the divination context is quite different from that in ordinary context. According to Evans-Pritchard (1937) and Du Bois (1992), in the Azande Poison Oracle divination, the speech employed to address the poison oracle presents in a style special to oracle-questioning; namely, the diviner frames the question currently at hand as a pair of opposed propositions, and incorporate the truth of a specific proposition with the death or survival of the fowl. In the Sheep-Bone divination recorded in Wang Ningsheng (1989a-b), we see that the question being divined is uttered as conditionals in which the possible outcomes are assumed and each of them are linked to a presupposed crack respectively. The divinatory utterances in the Han Turtle-Shell divination as recorded in the *Guice liezhuan* 龜策列傳 in the *Shiji* 史記 also show that the question being divined is expressed as a set of binary divinatory propositions.

Therefore, the fact that divination is essentially an act of asking for information from gods or spirits does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that divinatory utterances must be question sentences. Similarly, the similar grammatical structure between the charge sentences and those declarative sentences in the prognostication and verification components of a Shang divinatory context need not lead to the conclusion that Shang divinatory charges are statements, and thus divination in Shang is distinct from that in other cultures; namely, it is not an act of asking for information about the future or the unknown, but an act (e.g., a kind of magic or pray) in which the Shang reported their wishes or intentions and sought the spirits' agreement to their requests.

3. 5. Refining the proposal: Divinatory charges as sets of alternative propositions that provide possible answers to the questions being divined

So far we have established two facts regarding Shang divinatory charges. The first is that charges in a divinatory context are generally presented as either two opposite propositions or as a sequence of parallel alternative propositions, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. The second is that

the pragmatic function of charges is to seek information by getting a response from spirits. An adequate theory of the linguistic nature of the Shang divinatory charges should be able to account for both their formal features and their pragmatic function.

Our proposal is that charges are sets of alternative propositions that constitute the possible answers to the questions that the diviners had in mind. Semantically and pragmatically, charges have a question-like property in that they are sets of alternative propositions (i.e., possible answers) that contain no truth value. In particular, they are utterances that require responses from the spirits to determine their truth values. However, as far as their syntactic form is concerned, charges have the same formal properties as declarative sentences.

3.5.1. Problematic aspects in the question theory

The inadequate aspects of the question theory are as follows. With the view that divination is an act of seeking information to resolve doubts or questions in one's mind, question theorists consider that charges as interrogative sentences were directed to turtle shells or animal bones by diviners in order to get responses or answers from spirits. However, this understanding cannot account for the following: Why did the Shang people seek information by posing a positive question and a negative question at the same time for a single state of affairs? And why were only yes-no questions asked in a divination, and not question-word questions?

Chen Mengjia (1956:128) answers the first question as: “卜辭問句中的‘不’不是肯定的否定，而是反面的不定，‘the *bu* 不，‘not’ used in the interrogative sentences of the inscriptions is not the negation of the positive aspect, but the uncertainty of the negative aspect.” If we understand this correctly, then it means that when the Shang people had been led to divination for a particular matter, they were not only uncertain about its positive aspect, but also about its negative aspect, so they asked a positive question and its negative counterpart.

However, this understanding of asking “negative yes-no questions” poses a problem for a theory of interrogativity: Because a yes-no question elicits whether a given proposition is true or false, negating the question should have no effect other than inverting the polarity of the

answering words 'yes' and 'no.' That is, if a given proposition is true, its negation is necessarily false, and vice versa. For example, if we just want to know whether John will come tomorrow, we would simply need to ask the question "Will John come tomorrow?" There is no need to add the negative question "Won't John come tomorrow?" Because the two questioned propositions (i.e., "John will come tomorrow" and "John will not come tomorrow") are opposed in polarity, if the first proposition is true, then the second must be false. In other words, an answer to the first question will simultaneously serve as the answer to the second question, and thus, in terms of information seeking, there is no need to ask a positive and a negative question at the same time. Then what need would the Shang people have to ask a positive question and its negative counterpart at the same time? The analysis of charges as "questions" does not offer any satisfactory explanation to this. Could it be that the diviners asked negative questions for other reasons? As we know, negative yes-no questions are widely used in many languages, although their function is concerned not with the truth value of the proposition contained in the question, but rather with its pragmatics. Specifically, a negative yes-no question is usually accompanied by a conventional or conversational implicature which the affirmative counterpart lacks (Karttunen 1977: note 17), and "the question of the negated sentence differs only in speakers' attitude but not in substantive meaning from the question of the positive sentence" (Harris 1978: 3). The following example illustrates the effect of a negative question. Suppose a person is suffering a lingering illness and wants to know whether he will recover. It is reasonable for him to ask his doctor a question like "Will I recover?" However, it would be odd to ask the question "Won't I recover?" unless he had been told that he won't recover and now he wants to double-check that this is true. Another example will further illustrate the double-check function of the negative yes-no question: If we just want to know whether it will rain, we ask, "Will it rain?" But if we already have some idea about whether or not it will rain, particularly if we have been informed that it will not rain but are not certain that this is true, then we could ask: "Won't it rain?" Thus, in terms of information seeking, a positive yes-no question is a neutral question, while a negative yes-no question is a question that conveys the speaker's expectation.

If we apply this analysis to the numerous paired divinatory charges involving the divination of rain, we will find that it is hard to explain why the Shang diviner had to pose a negative

question following a positive question, or vice versa, for the pragmatic reason discussed above.

Consider the following charges:

(38) a. 癸酉卜, 自今至丁丑其雨. 不.

guǐyǒu bǔ, zì jīn zhǐ dīngchǒu qí yǔ. bù.

guiyou day/ divine/, from/ present time/ to/ *dingchou* day/ qí/ rain/, not

Divining on the *guiyou* day, (X tested): From now to the *dingchou* day, it may rain (C). It did not rain (V).

b. 自今至丁丑不其雨. 允不.

zì jīn zhǐ dīngchǒu bù qí yǔ. yǔn bù.

from/ present time/ to/ *dingchou* day/ not/ qí/ rain/, indeed/ not

Form now to the *dingchou* day, it may not rain (C). It did indeed not rain (V).

(Heji: 21052)

The letter C here indicates that the sentence is a charge, and the letter V indicates that the sentence is a Verification. In this paired divination, the matter at issue is whether or not it would rain in the period specified in the charges. Given the basic function of negative yes-no questions as discussed above, it is unclear why the diviner had to ask the negative question, unless the crack associated with the positive charge indicated that it would not rain during the days specified. But this would lead us to the unlikely conclusion that all negative questions in the paired divinations of the oracle-bone inscriptions resulted from negative responses to positive questions. This cannot be true, because it is impossible that every paired divination had a negative response to the positive charge.

Another problem with the question theory is that if charges were indeed interrogative sentences proposed by the diviners, why were there no question-word questions found in the oracle-bone inscriptions? Many “question” theorists argue that the lack of interrogative particles in the overt syntax in the OBI does not necessarily mean that charges are not questions, because interrogative particles do not necessarily need to be used in questions (e.g., Qiu Xigui 1988, Fan Yuzhou 1989). It is true that in Chinese, questions need not use final interrogative particles. But this would only support the existence of yes-no questions; it cannot explain the fact that there are no question-words found in OBI. How do we explain why only yes-no questions are

allowed in charges? A simple answer to this would be that an oracle cannot answer a question directly in vocal form or in any intelligible form of language. That is to say, one cannot pose a content question to a piece of bone or shell, because the question-word would have to be replaced in the answer by a constituent belonging to same category, not like for yes-no questions in which the diviner might obtain an answer by pre-assigning a particular crack signal to an affirmative or negative answer. If the reason for not asking content questions is indeed as described here, then we still must explain why some yes-no questions were asked in positive-negative format, while others were asked as parallel alternative sequences. An adequate theory must account for this.

3.5.2. Problematic aspects in the “statement” theory

For those who claim that divinatory charges are declarative statements, the biggest difficulty lies in explaining the reason for making “positive-negative paired statements” in divination. Are they simply the juxtaposition of the two contrasting statements? Why are approximately half of the divination charges organized in this “binary statement” format? Keightley (1972) tackles this problem from a philosophical approach, rather than a linguistic one. In order to support his theory that charges are “statements” of “predictive proclamation” in which the Shang people announced their intentions of controlling the future to the spirits, he proposes the “magic” theory, suggesting that charges contain a magician-dependent incantatory nature. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.3., Keightley’s “magic” theory has difficulty explaining why so many charges expressing undesirable situations were incised, given his view that the incisions bring about magical power to the charges made in the divination. Keightley’s explanation for this is what Takashima (1989) calls the “dualistic magic” theory:

Lucky and unlucky, good and bad, were seen as inextricably entwined, not as contradictory. Both alternatives were presented for choice because that was the way the world was viewed. There was a fundamental, organic tension, between the possible choices facing man. Only by facing both possibilities, by giving each possibility a fair chance to make its mark on the future, could the divination itself be fair, in accord with reality and thus valid. The engraving of both alternatives documented the reality and fairness of the divination and thus validated the king’s decision-making. (Keightley 1972: 57)

This explains the “paired-statement” from a philosophical point of view. Perhaps the Shang divinations were indeed conducted on such a philosophical basis, explaining why the diviners made both positive and negative charges and had them incised on the shells and bones, even though the negative charges sometimes express undesirable situations. However, in my opinion, the formulaic feature of the Shang divinatory charges can be better accounted for in linguistic terms. That is, the *duizhen* format of the divinatory charges is directly determined by the linguistic mechanism of asking yes-no questions using statements. The positive negative divinatory propositions are in fact the binary propositions denoted by the yes-no questions being divined. This is discussed in more detail below. Moreover, if to engrave statements expressing both good and bad situations documents the reality and fairness of the divination, then what does it mean to engrave only a series of bad statements in a divinatory record as in the alternative-type divinations (i.e., the case of alternative charges)? The “statement” theory does not offer a consistent account for both the “paired-statements” and the “alternative statements.”

3.5.3. The present analysis

In previous studies, scholars have paid much attention to the grammatical structure of a charge, that is, whether a charge is to be considered a “question” (i.e., interrogative sentence or a “statement” (i.e., declarative sentence), and have neglected the connection between the question-like function of a charge and its statement-like grammatical form. An adequate interpretation of the linguistic form of charges must consider how a “question” or a “statement” works in a divination.

As discussed in 3.4, the Shang divinatory charges are made with the intention of seeking information; this corresponds to the speech act of asking questions, which suggests that pragmatically charges are like questions. However, on the other hand, we should also admit that the charges are not made to animate beings more or less like us who can answer in intelligible language; rather, they are made to pieces of bone or shell to which fire is applied so that when they crack the diviner believes that he can read a response. Given this, a question that arises is: In the particular discourse of divination, how can a charge realize its pragmatic function of seeking information? Certainly, the ordinary linguistic device for asking questions such as interrogative sentences cannot be used in this context, because the oracle cannot in a direct sense

vocalize the response or answer. The diviner must have designed an effective way by which he believed that he could read a response in his charges directed to the bone or shell.

The crux in understanding the linguistic form of Shang divinatory charges lies in understanding the connection between questions and statements. The semantic theories of questions, especially the accounts proposed in Hamblin (1958, 1973), offer an approach which recognizes this connection. In what follows, we show that once this connection is recognized, the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges is immediately explicated.

A question is indeed very different from a statement in its semantic content, speech act, and syntactic form. In terms of semantic content, a question is neither true nor false (i.e., it has no truth conditions), while a statement is necessarily either true or false (i.e., it has truth conditions). In terms of function as speech act, a question requests information, while a statement provides information. As for syntactic form, in many languages, the linguistic form of a question is very different from that of a statement. Consider these examples in English:

- (39) a. Did John see Mary?
b. Who did John see?
c. John saw Mary.

The sentences in (39a) and (39b) are interrogative, while the one in (39c) is declarative. They are quite different in syntactic form. When compared to the declarative form in (39c), the yes-no question in (39a) and the wh-question or the content question in (39b) show some kind of syntactic realignment. In (39a), the auxiliary verb *did* is placed in front of the subject phrase *John*, and in (39b), the wh-word *who* is fronted from the object position to the beginning of the sentence and the auxiliary verb *did* precedes the subject phrase *John*.

Despite these differences in form and function, questions and statements are not two unrelated linguistic phenomena. Rather, there is a close connection between them. As we have shown, in almost all accounts of questions, questions are related to the corresponding statements (i.e., their answers). In particular, Hamblin (1973: 254) proposes that “a question sets up a choice situation between a set of propositions, namely those propositions that count as answers to it.”

Hamblin’s interpretation of questions sustains the presupposition of a question. Namely,

the action of asking a question always involves a presupposition. For example, whenever we ask a question like (40) in particular, we presuppose that *Mary saw somebody*, which can be viewed as equivalent to the open proposition *Mary saw x*. The set of propositions containing the possible answers to the question in (41) are evoked from the open proposition *Mary saw x*.

(40) Who did Mary see?

(41) a. Mary saw John.

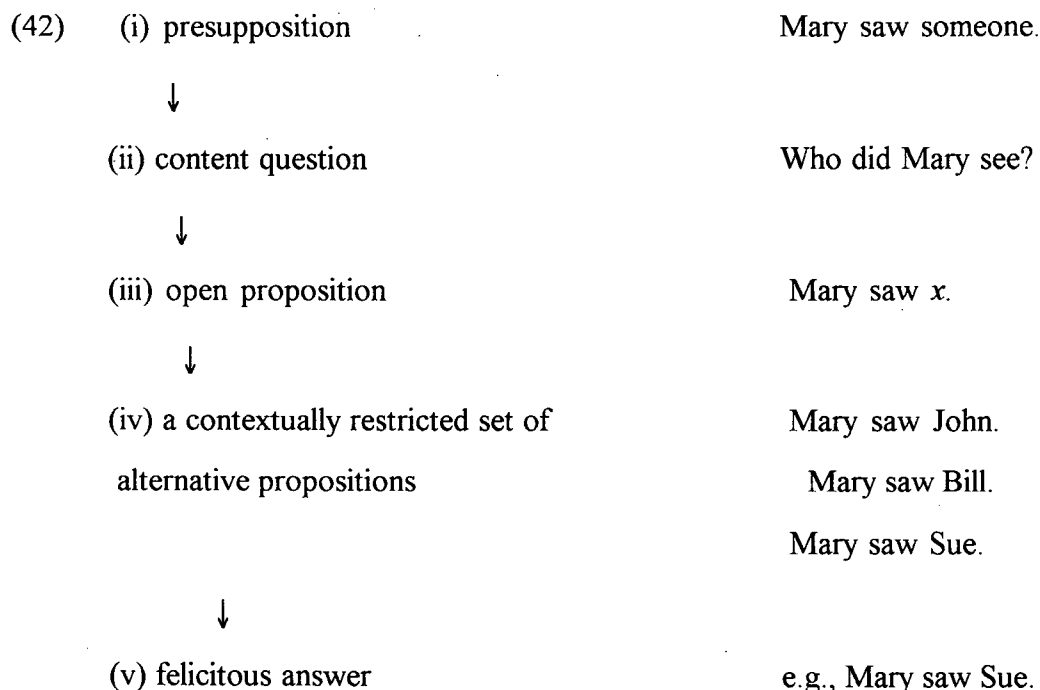
b. Mary saw Bill.

c. Mary saw Sue.

.....

In this set of propositions, each element constitutes a valid option for a response (a possible answer to the question). In most cases, one of the propositions is the true answer (the felicitous answer) to the question as determined contextually.⁵⁰

Therefore, we may say that a content question-answer pair implies the following logical process:⁵¹



⁵⁰ Sometimes it could be the case that more than one of the propositions are true.

⁵¹ Note that this representation of the logical process in a question-answer pair is from the point of view of the speaker/questioner. If from the point of view of the hearer/responder, it would be different. That is, the process would be this: (i) question—> (ii) open proposition (= presupposition) —> (iii) a set of alternative propositions —> (iv) felicitous answers

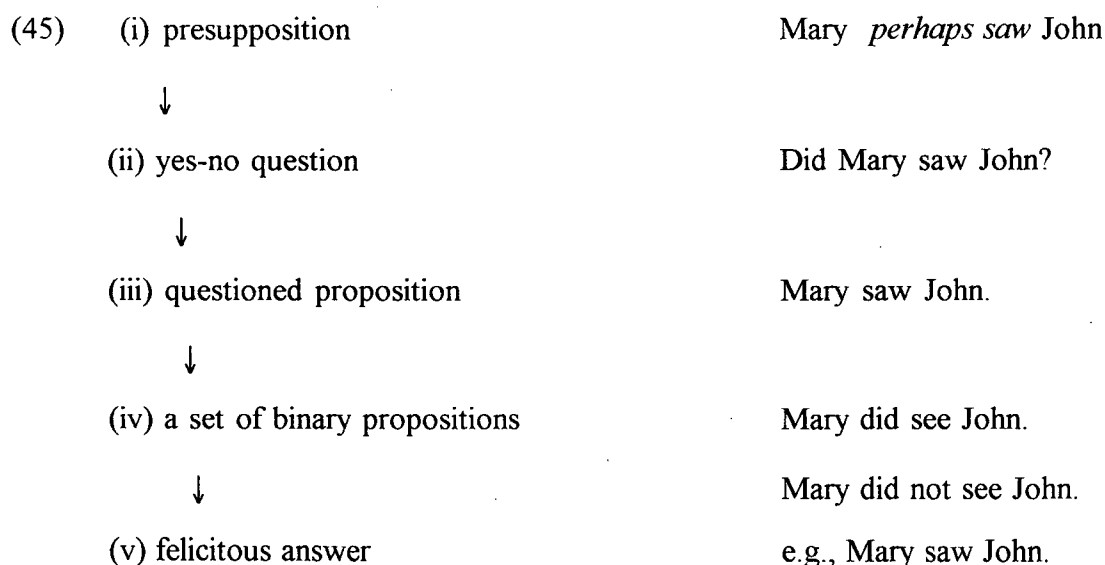
Similarly, to ask a yes-no question also involves a presupposition; that is, when we ask a question like (43) in a particular context, we must presuppose that *Mary perhaps saw John*, which is a proposition whose truth is to be checked by the addressee.

(43) Did Mary see John?

(44) a. Mary saw John.

b. Mary did not see John.

Therefore, a yes-no question-answer sequence may be assumed to involve the following logical process:



In a real conversation context, the question asked and the felicitous answer given as in (42ii,v) and (45ii,v) are overt. Furthermore, the linguistic form of the question is usually an interrogative sentence, while that of the felicitous answer is usually a declarative sentence. However, the open proposition as represented in (42iii) and the questioned proposition in (45iii), which are evoked by the questions, are covert. Similarly, the set of alternative propositions as represented in (42iv) & (45iv), which contain the possible answers to the question, are also covert.

The analysis of question-answer sequences in (42) and (45) characterizes the logical connection between a question and an answer (which is normally in statement form), providing a

solution for the analysis of the linguistic form of the Shang divinatory charges. Given the relation between a question and its answers as recognized here, it is reasonable for us to assume that the linguistic strategy used by the Shang diviners to seek information from the spirits is to presuppose the possible outcomes/answers implied in the question under concern. Namely, instead of asking a question, the diviner framed the question as a set of alternative propositions that are the possible answers or possible outcomes of the questions. This assumption not only has theoretical support, but also finds empirical endorsement from the OBI data.

Consider the following example:

(46) a. 貞：祖丁咎王。

zhēn: zǔ Dīng tuò wáng.

test/ ancestor/ Ding/ impede/ king.

Tested: Ancestor Ding will impede (or is impeding) the king.

b. 祖丁弗咎王。

zǔ Dīng fú tuò wáng.

ancestor/ Ding / not/ impede/ king

Ancestor Ding will not impede (or is not impeding) the king. (*Heji* 1901)

In this divinatory context, the diviner was trying to find out whether or not Zu Ding, “Ancestor Ding,” would impede (or was impeding) the king. There are two possible outcomes implied in the question: One is that Zu Ding will impede (or is impeding) the king in (46a); the other is that Zu Ding will not impede (or is not impeding) the king in (46b). The true answer is determined by the spirits, who reveal the answer in an oracle which appears in the cracks of the shell or bone.

The positive-negative charges in (46) are reminiscent of the set of binary propositions denoted by a yes-no question, as proposed in Hamblin’s (1973) semantic theory of questions. When we look at (46) in terms of the logical process in (45), we find that the paired charges in (46) indeed demonstrate the properties of (45iv). Therefore, the paired charges in (46) can be viewed as a set of alternative propositions denoted by the yes-no question *Will Ancestor Ding impede the king* (or *Is Ancestor Ding impeding the king*)? Accordingly, we can say that the paired charges in (46) are neither pure questions nor pure statements, but the set of binary

propositions (possible answers) denoted by the yes-no question being divined. Consider the following example:

(47) a. 乙卯卜, 癸貞: 隹受年

yǐmǎo bǔ, Bīn zhēn: Duī shòu nián.

yimao day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, Tui/ receive/ harvest.

Divining on yimao day, Bin tested: Dui will receive a (good) harvest.

b. 乙卯卜, 癸貞: 囷受年

yǐmǎo bǔ, Bīn zhēn: Dūn shòu nián.

yimao day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, Dun/ receive/ harvest.

Divining on yimao day, Bin tested: Dun will receive a (good) harvest. (*Bingbian* 282: 3-4)

Dui 隹 and Dun 囷 are two place names, which might have been two agriculture regions of Shang.⁵² In this divination, the Shang diviner was determining which of these two places would receive a good harvest in the year. The two charges have the same grammatical structure, but contrast with each other with respect to the subject phrase. This pattern is similar to the answer-sets of content questions in Hamblin's (1973) theory of questions. That is, we find that the set of charges in (47) actually possesses the same property as the set of alternative propositions (i.e., possible answers) defined by a subject question such as *Which of these two places will receive a good harvest?* This question defines an open proposition x 受年, "x will receive a good harvest." And the charges in (47) can be viewed as a set of alternative propositions evoked by this open proposition x 受年, "x will receive a good harvest" by assigning different values to the subject slot, namely Tui and Dun.

Based on the above analysis, we propose that Shang divinatory charges are the sets of "alternative propositions" that contain the "possible answers" to the questions being divined. In particular, "paired charges" are the binary answers proposed to the implicit yes-no question being divined; a set of "alternative charges" are the sets of possible answers provided to the implicit content question being divined.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in Dong's (1931) "turtle's charge" theory, charges are considered as *wen shi ming gui zhi ci* 問事命龜之辭, "utterances charged to a turtle for inquiring about

⁵² See Takashima (2004b: PP 282, note 1).

things,” which are usually given in the form of positive-negative paired charges. Dong (1931) does not explicitly say whether the paired sentences charged to a turtle are questions or statements. Takashima (1989: section 2) suggests that Dong’s “turtle’s charges” must be considered as “alternative choices/selections” put to the turtle shell. According to Takashima, an interrogative concept may be thought of as underlying this “alternative choice,” but the charges, as “alternative choices,” are not expressed as interrogatives in the surface structure; rather, they appear in the form of both positive and negative narratives.⁵³

The view that charges are “alternative choices/selections” that involve an “interrogative concept” and the proposal I suggest here that charges are “alternative propositions” containing the “possible answers” to the questions being divined are not entirely incompatible. However, the two proposals are not equivalent. The view that charges are “alternative choices/selections” put to the turtle shells or bones insightfully recognizes the fact that charge sentences contain an underlying interrogative force. However, it does not explain how this interrogative force bears on the formal features of charges. In particular, it leaves unanswered the question of why charges, as “alternative choices/selections,” cannot be put in any random narratives/statements; rather, they must be in the form of a pair of positive and negative narratives/statements or a set of parallel alternative narratives/statements.

If we recognize the logical relation between a question and its answerhood condition (i.e., what constitutes a possible answer) in the way proposed in Hamblin (1958, 1973), then the charge members in a divination set can be analyzed as a contextually determined set of “alternative propositions” or “possible answers” denoted by the question being divined. Once this analytic step is taken, then the formal features of divinatory charges as either a set of binary propositions or a set of parallel alternative propositions is immediately accounted for without further stipulation. That is, the paired charges are the binary propositions denoted by yes-no questions, while the alternative charges are the sets of alternative propositions denoted by content questions.

⁵³ See Takashima (1989: 11-12) and Takashima 1988-1989: 15-16). The latter is the English summary of the former.

Chapter 4

Charges as alternative propositions of possible worlds

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we proposed that charges are sets of alternative propositions that provide the possible answers to questions being divined. In this chapter, we test the validity of this analysis with charges of various kinds in the oracle-bone inscriptions. In actual divination sets, charges are not always composed as just one pair of opposite propositions or a set of parallel alternative propositions. Some divinatory sets may include more than one pair of positive-negative charges; some sets may include one subset of paired charges and one subset of parallel alternative charges. Even though simple-sentence charges are common, charges expressed in complex sentences are not unusual. Moreover, charges come in both complete sentences and elliptical sentences. We shall show that apparently complicated charges are in fact variants derived from the two basic patterns, arguing that they can all be accounted for as possible answers denoted by questions of different kinds either as possible answers to yes-no questions or as possible answers to content questions.

4.2. Paired charges as possible answers to yes-no questions

In what follows, we shall show how the pairs of positive-negative charges can be understood as the possible answers to yes-no questions being divined. However, before testing this hypothesis, we make one important note. That is, the set of possible answers essentially depends on the logic on which the question is based. In other words, in logical analysis, the set of possible answers is determined by the question, and vice versa: the question uniquely determines the set

of possible answers. This semantic interpretation of questions implies that the possible answers denoted by a question are semantic possibilities which provide the base from which to derive a logically appropriate answer to the question. As long as the answer falls into the logical space denoted by the question, the answer can be appropriate. Theoretically, we assume that answers to questions are declarative sentences in grammatical form, and accordingly, the possible answers denoted are also declarative sentences; in particular, we stipulate them to be full or complete declarative sentences which provide the base from which to derive an appropriate answer in a particular context. In a word, by “possible answers” we only mean the possibilities that can count as appropriate answers to the question in terms of semantic content.

We consider that a yes-no question denotes as its possible answers a set of full answers that are opposite in positive and negative meaning. But this does not mean that we exclude elliptical or fragmentary answers, as seen in ordinary language use, from the domain of appropriate answers. Instead, we consider elliptical or fragmentary answers as the reduced form of the full answers.

This understanding of the relationship between a yes-no question and the corresponding answers allows us to better understand the full range of the OBI data. It predicts that as possible answers to yes-no questions, the paired charges in Shang divination can be expressed either as a pair of opposite full sentences, a pair of opposite elliptical sentences, or a pair of opposite fragmentary sentences. We shall show that this is exactly what we see in the oracle-bone inscriptions. We call them full answers, elliptical answers, and fragmentary answers respectively. These formal features of paired charges are not surprising, because in ordinary language use, a yes-no question can be answered in one of these three ways.

4.2.1. Paired charges as full possible answers to yes-no questions

In this section, we discuss the paired charges consisting of a pair of opposite propositions that are expressed in full sentences. We consider that the charge sets with this formal feature are full possible answers to yes-no questions.

4.2.1.1. Paired charges in set

It is common to see divination contexts containing more than one pair of positive-negative charges. This is the case in which the same divination was repeated several times, as in example (1). Here we see that three pairs of charges (i.e., a_1 - b_1 ; a_2 - b_2 ; a_3 - b_3) were inscribed with the preface, though the crack numbers indicate that the divination was repeated at least five times. As indicated by the crack sequence numbers, the cracks made in the first and second divinations were inscribed with one paired inscription, and the cracks made in the fourth and fifth divinations were inscribed with one paired-inscriptions. Moreover, the negative charge (a_3) in the last subset has an appended date "Tenth month."

(1) a_1 . 丁巳卜, 王, 余勿輅彤. 一^二

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wù wú róng. ^{1,2}

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ not/ go against / the *rong*-ritual

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should not oppose the *rong*-ritual.

b_1 . 丁巳卜, 王, 余輅彤. 一^二

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wú róng. ^{1,2}

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ go against / the *rong*-ritual

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should oppose the *rong*-ritual.

a_2 . 丁巳卜, 王, 余勿輅彤. 三

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wù wú róng. ³

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ not/ go against / the *rong*-ritual

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should not oppose the *rong*-ritual.

b_2 . 丁巳卜, 王, 余輅彤. 三

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wú róng. ³

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ go against / the *rong*-ritual

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should oppose the *rong*-ritual.

a_3 . 丁巳卜, 王, 余勿輅彤. 十月^{四五}

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wù wú róng. ^{4,5}

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ not/ go against / the *rong*-ritual. Tenth month

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should not oppose the *rong*-ritual.

b₃. 丁巳卜, 王, 余恠彤. 四五

dīngsǐ bǔ, wáng, yú wú róng. 4,5

dingsi day/ divine/ king/, I/ go against / the *rong*-ritual

Divining on the *dingsi* day, the king (tested): I should oppose the *rong*-ritual.

(*Bingbian* 90: 1- 6)

Under our analysis that the affirmative-negative charges are the two possible answers to a yes-no question, all three pairs of charges in (1) can be understood as the possible answers denoted by the same yes-no question *Should I (the king) oppose the rong-ritual?* In terms of the way by which the possible answers are put forward, this type of multiple-pairs of divination is the same in nature as the type in which only one pair of charges is presented, as in example (2) below:

(2) a. 辛卯卜, 般貞: 王入于商.

xīnmaǒ bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng rù yú Shāng.

xianmao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/ king/ enter/ yú/ Shang

Divining on the *xinmao* day, Nan tested: The king should enter into Shang.

b. 辛卯卜, 般貞: 王勿入于商.

xīnmaǒ bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng wù rù yú Shāng.

xianmao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/ king/ not/ enter/ yú/ Shang

Divining on the *xinmao* day, Nan tested: The king should not enter into Shang.

(*Bingbian* 87: 10-11)

The only difference between (1) and (2) is in that in (1) the diviner (in this case, the king) framed the pair of opposed propositions, which function as “yes-no” questions at least five times.

4.2.1.2. Group paired-sets

In Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, there are cases in which several divinations are done on the same day, by the same diviner, and referred to a related but not identical topic. The following divinations consist of several related affirmative-negative pairs:

(3) a₁. 甲辰卜, 偶貞: 今日其雨。一二三四五

jiǎchén bǔ, Chēng zhēn: jīnrì qí yǔ. 1,2,3,4,5

jiachen day/ divine/, Cheng/ test/, today/ qí/ rain

Divining on the *jiachen* day, Cheng tested: It will perhaps rain today.

b₁. 甲辰卜， 偶貞： 今日不其雨。 一二三上吉四五

jiǎchén bǔ, Chēng zhēn: jīnrì bù qí yǔ. 1,2,3 shangji,4,5

jiachen day/ divine/, Cheng/ test/, today/ not/ qí/ rain/, [auspicious]

Divining on the *jiachen* day, Cheng tested: It will perhaps not rain today.

a₂. 甲辰卜， 偶貞： 羽乙巳其雨。 一二三四

jiǎchén bǔ, Chēng zhēn: yǔ yǐsì qí yǔ. 1,2,3,4

jiachen day/ divine/, Cheng/ test/ next/, *yisi* day/ qí/ rain

Divining on the *jiachen* day, Cheng tested: It will perhaps rain on the next *yisi* day.

b₂. 貞： 羽乙巳不其雨。 一二三四

zhēn: yǔ yǐsì bù qí yǔ. 1,2,3,4

test/, next/ *yisi* day/ not/ qí/ rain

(Divining on *jiachen* day, Cheng) tested: It will perhaps not rain on the next *yisi* day.

a₃. 貞： 羽丁未其雨。 一二三

zhēn: yǔ dīngwèi qí yǔ. 1,2,3

test/, next/ *dingwei* day/ qí/ rain

(Divining on the *jiachen* day, Cheng) tested: It will perhaps rain on the next *dingwei* day.

b₃. 貞： 羽丁未不其雨。 一二三小吉

zhēn: yǔ dīngwèi bù qí yǔ. 1,2,xiaoji

test/, next/ *dingwei* day/ not/ qí/ rain/, [little auspicious]

(Divining on the *jiachen* day, Cheng) tested: It will perhaps not rain on the next *dingwei* day. (*Bingbian* 63: 3-8)

All the charges in (3) occur on the same plastron, and they were all divined by the same diviner, Cheng 稱, on the day of *jiachen*, with reference to the same topic, whether it would rain on the days specified. In my opinion, they are three separate sets of paired charges, each of which constitutes an independent set that defines an underlying question. That is, the paired charges in (a₁-b₁) constitute the binary answers to the underlying yes-no question *Will it rain today?*, which was divined five times (as noted by the crack sequence numbers). The charges in (a₂-b₂) constitute the binary answers to the question *Will it rain on the next coming yisi day?*, which was divined four times, according to the crack number; and the charges in (a₃-b₃) are the possible

answers to the question *Will it rain on the next dingwei day?* which was divined for three times.

4.2.1.3. Double-negative paired charges

Paired charges may also involve complex sentences in which the affirmative charge consists of two clauses and the negative counterpart also consists of two clauses, representing the following patterns where “p” and “q” are used to stand for the two clauses contained in the complex charge sentence, and the symbol “-” indicates a negative clause.

Pattern A: Double-negative paired charges

{ p, q }

{ -p, -q }

Pattern B: Single-negative paired charges, which include the following two subpatterns:

B₁: { p, q }

B₂: { p, q }

{ -p, q }

{ p, -q }

In this section, we focus on the charges that follow pattern A, which we refer to as double-negative paired charges. The types of charges following patterns B, namely, the single-negative paired charges, will be discussed in Section 4.1.1.4.

How can we account for the double-negative paired charges in our analysis of charges as possible answers? Let's start with a typical example:

(4) a. 辛酉卜，般貞：今載王從翌乘伐下危，受出又。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn zǎi wáng cóng Wàng Chéng fá Xià Wēi, shòu
yǒu yòu.

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, present/ season/ king/ follow/ Wang Cheng/ attack/
Xia Wei/ receive/ aid

b. 辛酉卜，般貞：今載王勿從翌乘伐下危，弗其受出又。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn zǎi wáng wù cóng Wàng Chéng fá Xià Wēi, fú qí shòu
yǒu yòu.

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, present/ season/ king/ not/ follow/ Wang Cheng/ attack/
Xia Wei/, not/ qí/ receive/ aid (Bingbian 20: 1-2)

The charges in this example are complex sentences, each of which consists of two clauses. The

two clauses in (4a) are both positive, while the two in (4b) are both negative, representing the double-negative pattern. The logical relation and the illocutionary force involved in this pair of charges have been explored by various scholars (including Serruys 1974; Takashima 1977; Chow 1982; Qiu Xigui 1988) in the past decades. Two interpretations have been proposed by the scholars who view charges as statements as below:⁵⁴

(5) Interpretation A:

(a) This season the king should follow Wang Cheng to attack Hsia (i.e., Xia) Wei, (for) he will receive abundant assistance.

(b) This season the king should not follow Wang Cheng to attack Hsia Wei, (for) he will not perhaps receive abundant assistance. (Takashima 1996: 188-189)

(6) Interpretation B:

(a) The present time/ season, if the king follows Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, he will receive abundant help.

(b) The present time/ season, if the king does not follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei this, he will not receive abundant assistance. (Serruys 1974)

Takashima (1977: 53) points out that the illocutionary force in these two interpretations are opposite to each other. Specifically, for the negative charge in (4b), with interpretation A in (5b), the illocutionary force is “so, don’t follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei,” while with interpretation B in (6b), the illocutionary force is “so, follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei.”

Following Takashima (1977), Chow (1982: 83-95) provides support for interpretation A in (5). First, he argues that the presence of prohibitive negative word *wu* 勿 in (4b), suggests that the first clause in (4b) is a prohibition; moreover, the second clause in (4b) expresses an undesirable situation, so it is reasonable to interpret it as the cause for prohibiting the king from following Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei.⁵⁵

Although Qiu (1988) does not think that all charges are statements, he argues that charges with the structure in (4) must be understood as statements. The problem with interpreting this pair of charges as interrogative sentences has been pointed out in Qiu Xigui (1988: 15). According to

⁵⁴ The translation provided in (5) and (6) is cited from (Chow 1982: 80-81). See also Takashima (1973: 292, 1977: 44), as well as Serruys’ and Takashima’s *Bingbian Translation*,

⁵⁵ See Chow (1982: 83).


him, if the charges in this example were to be understood as questions, then they could only be translated as follows:

- (7) a. If this spring the king allies with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, will he be able to receive spiritual aid?
b. If this spring the king does not ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, will he not be able to receive spiritual aid?⁵⁶

Qiu notes that in this question interpretation, the positive inscription in (4a) and the negative inscription in (4b) really do not oppose each other; rather, they have the same meaning. Moreover, Qiu considers that the logical relation between the two clauses in the negative charge makes no sense in the question interpretation, as in (7b). In his view, “the reason that the Shang people conducted this divination is because they wanted to know, ‘if the king allied with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, whether or not he would be able to receive spiritual aid.’ If they did not propose to pursue this action in the first place, then what need would they have had to ask whether or not they would receive aid? Therefore, this type of charge can only be regarded as a declarative statement” (Qiu Xigui 1988: 15; Shaughnessy 1989: 106). As a declarative statement, Qiu proposes that the first negative charge in (4b) implies a conditional clause that expresses an opposite meaning to the preceding negative clause, that is, (4b) should be understood as:

- (8) This spring the king ought not to ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, (for if he were to ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei), he would not be able to receive spiritual aid.⁵⁷

Comparing Qiu’s interpretation of (4b) in (8) with the one given by Takashima in (5b), we see

⁵⁶ The English translation cited here is from the English version of Qiu (1988) provided in Shaughnessy (1989: 106). In the Chinese version of the article, Qiu does not explicitly interpret the time phrase 今 , which is transcribed *jin chun* 今春, “this spring” by Zhang Bingquan (1957-72) in the *Bingbian kaoshi*. In Shaughnessy’s English version of Qiu (1988), this phrase is tentatively interpreted as “this spring.” Yang Shuda (1954) interpreted the graph after *jin* as *zai* 載, meaning “year.” Serruys adopted Yang’s interpretation of the graph as *zai* 載, but assign it the meaning “season” instead of “year.” Takashima (2004b) also adopts the graphic transcription given by Yang, but he interprets *zai* 載 as “cycle,” specifically the hexagenary cycle, a period of time independent of any particular season or month (see Takashima 2004b: PP 12, note 1).

⁵⁷ Qiu (1988) does not offer a translation for the positive charge in (3a). But in Shaughnessy (1989: 106), which is the English translation of Qiu (1988), the two charges in (3) are translated as below:

- a. This spring the king will ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, (for if he does he) would not be able to receive spiritual aid.
b. This spring the king ought not ally with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, (for if he does he) would not be able to receive spiritual aid.

that apart from that Qiu's addition of a conditional clause, the two interpretations are nearly the same in meaning.

If we follow both Takashima's and Qiu's interpretations of (4), charges with the double-negative pattern as in (A) as $\{p, q\}$ $\{-p, -q\}$, can simply be rendered as "Do p, for you will q", "Don't do p, for (if you do p), you will not q."

The statement interpretations given above seem to make sense in terms of the positive-negative logic between the two charges. As far as the logical relation between the two negative clauses in (4b) is concerned, a statement interpretation makes better sense than a question interpretation, as pointed out by Qiu (1988). However, if we consider the function of such "statements" in the divination, then we find that the above-mentioned interpretations are problematic. That is, in this pair of charges, it is hard to identify the question being asked.

Based on the interpretation in (5) or (8), let us consider the following questions: What is the main issue concerned in this pair of charges? Is it whether the king should pursue the action to attack Xia Wei, or is it whether the king will receive a spiritual aid in the attack? Qiu mentions this briefly, saying "the reason that the Shang people conducted this divination is because they wanted to know, *if the king allied with Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei, whether or not he would be able to receive spiritual aid*" (Qiu 1988: 15; Shaughnessy 1989: 106). However, if this is the question being divined, then the interpretation in (8) does not match this question. In this question, the main concern is "whether or not he (the king) would be able to receive spiritual aid." But in (8), the main concern is "whether or not the king should follow (or, ally with) Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei," not "whether or not he would be able to receive spiritual aid," as suggested by the main-cause relationship between the two clauses. Chow (1982) also touches on this issue, stating:

We must admit that such a possibility exists if we adopt Keightley's hypothesis (1972) that *aming-tz'u* [i.e., *ming ci*, "charge"], in some cases, should be understood as a prayer or incantation. However, as illustrated in the following passages, Ping 20 (1) and (2) [i.e., the examples cited in (3) above] would better be understood as divinations soliciting instructions from a supernatural power to determine *whom the king should follow*, rather than prayers or incantations made to see confirmation of a prior decision on the proper course of action to follow. (Chow 1982: 86-87)

It may seem strange that Chow says the divination in (4) is about “whom the king should follow,” given that only one person, Wang Cheng, is mentioned in (4). However, we must note that his conclusion is not only based on the charges in (4), but on a contextual analysis of the other inscriptions occurring on the same plastron. That is, in *Bingbian* 20, other than the two inscriptions in (4), there are four more relevant inscriptions given on the same shell, as shown in (9) and (10):

- (9) a. 辛酉卜，𠬪貞：王从沚戛。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nān zhēn: wáng cóng Zhì Jia

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ follow/ Zhi Jia

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Nan tested: The king should follow Zhi Jia.

- b. 貞：王勿从沚戛。

zhēn: wáng wù cóng Zhì Jia

test/, king/ not/ follow/ Zhi Jia

Tested: The king should not follow Zhi Jia. (*Bingbian* 20: 3-4)

- (10) a. 辛酉卜，𠬪貞：王惠戛从。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nān zhēn: wáng huì Jiā cóng.

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ be/ Jia/ follow

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Nan tested: It should be (Zhi) Jia that the king follows.

- b. 辛酉卜，𠬪貞：王勿隹戛从。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nān zhēn: wáng wù wéi Jiā cóng.

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ not/ be/ Jia/ follow

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Nan tested: It should not be (Zhi) Jia that the king follows.

(*Bingbian* 20: 5-6)

According to Chow, the divinations in (4), (9) and (10) belong to the same group. Based on these inscriptions, Chow concludes that “the main concern of this group is ‘whom the king should follow, Wang Cheng or Zhi Jia’ ”(1982: 86).

It is clear that the paired charges in (9) and (10) were made in order to get a response about whether the king should follow the General Zhi Jia. From the recorded day and the name of the diviner, as well as the somewhat related content, it is possible to take (4), (9) and (10) as

inscriptions belonging to the same group. However, this contextual analysis still does not help us understand what the complex charges in (4) are about, because the part about “whether the king will receive an aid” was not inscribed in (9) and (10).

We should point out that Chow’s understanding of the topic of these divinations does match his interpretation of (4) as a complex sentence with the syntactic relation as “main + cause.” In other words, the main concern in (4) is “whether or not the king should follow Wang Cheng.” However, how is this main concern related to the part *shou you you*, “to receive aid” and its negative counterpart *fu qi shou you you*, “not to receive aid” as occurred only in (4)? Chow does not mention this issue.

The above discussion shows that there are problematic aspects to the complex-statement-analysis of charges. In particular, the interpretation of the two charges in (4) as having the complex-sentence structure of “main clause + cause clause” cannot count as the possible answers to either of the following proposed questions:

(11) (i) If the king pursues the action, will he receive aid from spirits?

(ii) Should the king pursue the action?

The two possible answers to question (i) should be: (a) If the king pursues the action, he will receive aid; (b) If the king pursues the action, he will not receive aid. And for question (ii), the two possible answers should be: (a) The king should pursue the action; (b) The king should not pursue the action.

It seems that the interpretation of (4) as proposed in (5) or (8) cannot count as the possible answers to a meaningful question. It does not make sense to ask a question like *“(Should the king pursue the action for he will get aid?” If the questioner already knew that he would get aid for this action, why would he need to ask the question? The king should certainly pursue the action. Based on the lexical content of the paired charges in (4), maybe we should assume that the questions being considered in this divination are in fact these:

(12) (i) Should the king follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei?

(ii) Will he receive a spiritual aid for this?

In order to get answers to these two questions, the diviner should propose two corresponding pairs of binary propositions. But if we follow the interpretation in (5) or (8), then it would be

understood that diviner proposed the positive answers to both questions, and linked them with a “main + cause” relation; he did the same with the negative answers. But, what is the purpose for the diviner to divine about double-negative charges, given that it contains an illocutionary force as “So, don’t do it.”

A possible argument for the proposed interpretation is that the double-negative charges serve as a way to double-check its truth with the spirits. But if we assume that charges are made in order to get a response from the spirits, then it seems more reasonable to think that the truth of the charge propositions, as possible answers, should be left open and the pieces of bones or shells should not be charged with any specific illocutionary force. Thus, it would be more appropriate to interpret the syntactic relation between the two clauses in each charge as two independent simple clauses, as below:

- (13) (i) The king should follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei. He will receive spiritual aid.
(ii) The king should not follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei. He will not receive spiritual aid.

In this interpretation, the possible answers are given in an objective, impersonal, mechanical, and aleatory way. The final decision as to which of the uttered propositions is true can be rendered by the divinatory cracks, outside the diviner’s control. This analysis is more compelling in the sense that divinatory outcomes are generally considered to be impersonal, mechanical and aleatory.

However, if we consider how the diviner decided two different thing with one charge and one crack, then we will find the interpretation in (13) is still problematic.

Consider the following examples:

- (14) 庚子卜, 辛雨. 至壬雨.

gēngzǐ bǔ, xī yǔ. zhì rén yǔ.

gengzi day/ divine/, xin day/ rain/, arrive/ ren day/ rain

On the *gengzi* day divined: It will rain on the *xin* day. Coming to the *ren* day it rained.

(*Tunnan* 197)

(15) [辛]丑卜, 今日雨. 至壬雨.

xīnchǒu bǔ, jīn rì yǔ. zhì rén yǔ.

xinchou day/ divine/, present/ day/ rain/, arrive/ *ren* day/ rain

On the *xinchou* day divined: It will rain today. Coming to the *ren* day it rained.

(*Tunnan* 154)

These two examples and the interpretations of them are cited from Qiu (1988: 13-14). Qiu points out, according to the punctuation given in Xiao Nan (1980), the two inscriptions following the preface in (14) are understood as an “A or B” question, and the two inscriptions following the preface in (15) are understood as two separate questions. Qiu disagrees with these interpretations, arguing that instead of disjunctive questions, or two separate questions, they are to be considered a charge plus a verification. He contends that, due to the nature of divination, it is impossible to have a charge that consists of two sentences that are not opposite statements (no matter whether they are considered as a disjunctive question like “Is A or B,” or two independent questions like “Is it A? Is it B?”). Qiu gives the following example to illustrate this: When the Shang people divined about the number of sacrifice animals to be used for a ritual, they always put one proposed number in one charge, never two numbers in the same charge. The reason for this is that, from one crack, the diviner can only determine if one proposed number is suitable. We do not see charges in which the diviner proposed two numbers, because he would not be able to decide two numbers with one crack.

If this analysis of the operation of divinations is correct, then we may also apply it to analyze the complex-sentence charges as in (4). That is, we may say, the diviner cannot make two different decisions in one charge. So, the interpretation proposed in (13) is not satisfactory, though the possible answers are proposed in an impersonal and aleatory way.

There is still another possible way to analyze the double-negative paired charges as in (4). First, the questions implied in this pair of charges can be assumed to be the two in (12), repeated as (16) here:

(16) (i) Should the king follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei?

(ii) Will he receive an aid from spirits?

Second, the possible answers to these two questions are given in two separate corresponding pairs:

- (17) (i) a. The king should follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei;
b. The king should not follow Wang Cheng to attack Xia Wei;
(ii) a. He will receive spiritual aid.
b. He will not receive spiritual aid.

Third, we assume that in the actual divination, the diviner dealt with the two questions as in (16) separately, and the proposed two pairs of opposed propositions or statements in (17) as the possible answers. And we assume that he made separate cracks for each of them. Fourth, the fact that the two positive charges are together and the two negative charges are together on the shell are a reorganized record done by the engraver. Namely, it might be the case that the engraver inscribed the two pairs of positive-negative charges as in (17) by rearranging the two positive statements on the “desirable right side” of the shell, and the two negative statements on the “undesirable left side.” The inscription of the two positive statements on the right side as one unit, with the two negative statements on the left side of the shell as one unit, can be explained by the custom of *shang you* 尚右, “desirable right side,” as described in Zhang Bingquan (1956: 244). The charges were inscribed as one single unit, because they referred to related matters, but they had to be considered in two steps in the divination.

Thus, according to the above analysis, in the divinations with the double-negative paired charges, the diviner made individual pairs of charges for each question, and divined them separately. The complex-sentence charges were made by the engraver by obeying the basic inscribing rule of “desirable right side” and “undesirable left side.” This understanding of the complex-sentence charges seems fitting, especially considering the fact that some charges have more than three different sentences, with different verbs referring to different events or states, and correspondingly, the negative counterparts also contains the same elements in negative form. For example:

- (18) a. 丙辰卜, 爭貞: 沚戛啟. 王从. 帝若. 受我又.

bǐngchén bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: Zhǐ Jiā qǐ. wáng cóng. Dǐ ruò. shòu wǒ yòu.

bingchen day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, Zhi Jia/ open/, king/ follow/, God/ approve/, give/ us/
assistance

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Zheng tested: As for Zhi Jia's opening (i.e., making the initial the campaign), the king should follow him. God will approve of this. He will give us assistance.

b. 貞: 汙夏啟. 王勿从. 帝弗若. 不我其受又.

Zhēn: Zhǐ Jiā qǐ. wáng wù cóng. Dì fú ruò. bù wǒ qí shòu yòu.

test/, Zhi Jia/ open/, king/ not/ follow/, God/ not/ approve/, not/ us/ qí/ give/ assistance

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Zheng tested: As for Zhi Jia's opening (i.e., making the initial the campaign), the king should not follow him. God will not approve of this. He will not give us assistance. (*Bingbian* 409: 1-2)

In this pair, we see that each charge contains four verbs: *qi* 啟, "to open, or initial," *cong* 从, "to follow," *ruo* 若, "to approve", and *shou* 受, "to give." The subjects of the first two verbs are different, and the subject of the latter two is the same. The four clauses in each of the charges refer to four different events or states. What is the main concern in this divination? From the parallel positive-negative elements in the two charges, we see there are three things under consideration:

- (i) Whether the king should follow Zhi Jia;
- (ii) Whether God will approve of this action; and
- (iii) Whether God will give assistance.

Maybe one could argue that the questions in (ii) and (iii) can be combined as one, because they are both about God's will on the matter. We think it is better to separate them, because God could approve of the action, but not give aid.

It should be noted that the first clause in the two charges do not contrast with each other in polarity. They do not express the doubt being divined, but the background information of the divination. The interpretation of these two charges as the type of complex sentences in (19) below presents no problem in terms of grammatical structure.

- (19) a. Divining on the *bingchen* day, Zheng tested: As for Zhi Jia's opening (i.e., making the initial the campaign), the king should follow him, for God will approve of this and will give us assistance.

b. Divining on the *bingchen* day, Zheng tested: As for Zhi Jia's opening (i.e., making the initial the campaign), the king should not follow him, for God will not approve this and will not give us assistance.

However, if we consider how the three different matters can be decided by one crack with one charge, then the interpretation of the charges as complex sentences would be problematic. For that reason, it would be better to take them as different sets of paired charges referring to the related issues, following Qiu's view that one divination with one crack can only decide one thing. The combination of the positive clauses on one unit and the negative clauses on another may be attributable to the reorganization done by the engraver. If this analysis holds, then it implies that what was inscribed on the bone or shell as a charge introduced by the verb *zhen* is not necessarily exactly the same sentence spoken by the diviner in the divination. In terms of seeking information regarding the questions being divined, this is a reasonable hypothesis; however, further support would be provided by investigating the divination cracks made for this type of double-negative charges (which would be a separate study itself). In the meantime, double-negative paired charges can be understood as in (13), in which possible outcomes are proposed in an impersonal and aleatory way. This interpretation follows from the traditional understanding of the function of divination act.

4.2.1.4. Complex-sentence paired charges

In this section, we will discuss the paired charges with the latter two patterns mentioned in the last section:

Pattern B: Single-negative paired charges

B_1	{p, q}	B_2	{p, q}
	{-p, q}		{p, -q}

Pattern (B_1) is illustrated by the following example:

(20) a. 貞: 王乍邑, 帝若. 八月. 一 二 三 四 五

zhēn: wáng zuò yǐ, Dì ruò. bā yuè. ^{1,2,3,4,5,}

test/ king/ make/ settlement/, God/ approve/, eight/ month

Tested: The king should make the settlement; God will approve. Eighth month.

b. 貞: 王勿作邑, 帝若。一二三四五

zhēn: wáng wù zuò yǐ, Dì ruò.^{1,2,3,4,5}

test/ king/ not/ make/ settlement/, God/ approve

Tested: The king should not make the settlement; God will approve. (*Bingbian* 93: 6-7)

Similar to the double-negative paired charges, both of the charges in (20) consist of two clauses. However, different from the double-negative paired charges, the negative member in (20) contains only one negative clause. Because only the first clause in each charge are opposed in meaning, the implied question is not hard to identify: the issue here is to identify God's will, namely "Will God approve the king to make the settlement, or will God approve the king not to make the settlement."

However, examples that represent the charge pattern (B_1) as in (20) are rare. Comparatively speaking, examples representing the pattern in (B_2) are more frequent. Consider the following example:

(21) a. 己卯卜, 爭貞: 王作邑, 帝若我从之唐。一二三上吉四五六七八九十

jǐmǎo bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wáng zuò yǐ, Dì ruò wǒ cóng zhī Táng.^{1,2,3,shàngjī,4,5,6,7,8,9,10}

jimao day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, king/ make/ settlement/, God/ approve/ us/ follow/ to/
Tang/, [highly auspicious]

Diving on the *jimao* day, Zheng tested: As for the king's making a settlement,
God will approve that we (build it) along this (place) to Tang.

b. 己卯卜, 爭貞: 王作邑, 帝弗若。一二三四五六七八九上吉十

jǐmǎo bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wáng zuò yǐ, Dì fú ruò.^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,shàngjī,10}

jimao day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, king/ make/ settlement/, God/ not approve/, [highly
auspicious]

Diving on the *jimao* day, Zheng tested: As for the king's making a settlement, God will
not approve [that we (build it) along this (place) to Tang]. (*Bingbian* 321: 1-2)

Two points need to be mentioned regarding this example. First, these two charges are not exactly a symmetrically opposite pair, as seen by the fact that the second part of the positive charge (21a), the sentence *wo cong zhi Tang* 我从之唐, "we will go along (this place) to Tang," is not present in the negative charge (21b). There are two possible interpretations of the absence of

this sentence in charge (21b). One is that charge (b) is an elliptical form, in which the sentence *wo cong zhi Tang* 我从之唐, “we will go along (this place) to Tang” is omitted. The other is that charge (21b) is not an abbreviated form, and the sentence *wo cong zhi Tang* 我从之唐 was not included in the original charge. The second possible interpretation can be given in the translations as below:

- (21') a' Divining on the *jimao* day, Zheng tested: If His Majesty found a settlement, Ti will approve. We will (follow:) go along this (route) to Tang.
 b' Divining on the *jimao* day, Zheng tested: If His Majesty found a settlement, Ti will not approve.

Second, although the lexical content of the charges in (20) and (21) is very similar, the issue in (21) is very different from that in (20). In (21), it is the second clause in the negative charge that is negated, rather than the first clause as in (20). Given that the positive-negative contrast is in the second part of the charges, the paired charges in (21) should be the possible answers to a question like “As for the king’s making a settlement, will God approve that we build it along this place to Tang?” Apart from (21), below is another example of the Pattern B₂:

- (22) a. 癸未卜, 亘貞: 王出厰, 若。⁵⁸
*guǐwēi bǔ, Huán zhēn: wáng yǒu fú, ruò.*¹
guiwei day/ divine/, Huan/ test/, king/ offer/ captive/, approve
 Divining on the *guiwei* day, Huan tested: As for the king’s offering captives (as sacrificial victims), it will meet with (God’s) approval.¹
 b. 王出厰, 不若。⁵⁸
*wáng yǒu fú, bù ruò.*¹
 king/ offer/ captive/, not/ approve
 As for the king’s offering captives (as sacrificial victims), it will not meet with (God’s) approval. (*Bingbian* 53: 1-2)

The sentence structure here can be analyzed as a topical /conditional construction.⁵⁸ Clearly, the question being divined by this pair of charges is “Will the king’s offering captives meet with God’s approval?” Below is an example of the commonly seen topical/conditional construction of

⁵⁸ In this study, we treat conditional clauses as a type of topical clauses. See more discussion in Chapter 5.

paired charges:

(23) a. 貞: 夏往來, 其出困。 一 二 三

zhēn: Jiā wǎng lái, qí yǒu huò. 1,2,3

test/, Jia/ go/ come/, qí/ have/ misfortune

Tested: As for Jia's comings and goings, there will perhaps be misfortunes.

b. 癸丑卜, 爭貞: 夏往來, 亡困。 王固曰。 亡困。 一 二 三 四 五

zhēn: Jiā wǎng lái, wáng huò. wáng zhàn yuē: wáng huò 1,2,3,4,5.

test/, Jia/ go/ come/, not have/ misfortune/, king/ prognosticate/ say/, not have/ misfortune

Divining on the *guichou* day, Zheng tested: As for Jia's comings and goings, there will be no misfortunes. The king, having prognosticated, said: There will be no misfortune.

(*Bingbian* 32: 26-27)

This kind of topical construction charge is also used to seek information about the present. For example:

(24) a. 疾身, 佳出巷。 三 四

jí shēn, wéi yǒu tuò. 3,4

sick/ body/, be/ have/ mishap

Sick body (i.e., the situation being sick), it is due to there being an (ancestral) mishap.

b. 疾身, 不佳出巷。 三 四

jí shēn, bù wéi yǒu tuò. 3,4

sick/ body/, not/ be/ have/ mishap

Sick body (i.e., the situation being sick), it is not due to there being an (ancestral) mishap.

(*Bingbian* 473: 3-4)

In this pair, the diviner was trying to identify the cause of an undesirable situation, which presumably would be the possible answers to a question such as *Is the situation being sick due to there having been an ancestral mishap?*

The logical relation between the two paired charges with the patterns (B₁) and (B₂) is much simpler than that in the double-negative paired charges of pattern (A). This is because in the paired charges with Pattern (B₁) and (B₂), only a pair of propositions are opposite to each other, defining only one question.

4.2.1.5. Apparent counter-examples: the single charges in “weekly divination inscriptions” and “evening divination inscriptions”

Here we discuss the charges in the *xunbu buci* 旬卜卜辭, “weekly divination inscriptions,” and the *xibu buci* 夕卜卜辭, “evening divinations.” Charges in these two kinds of divinations are expressed in one single proposition, rather than a pair of opposed propositions. Thus, they seem to constitute a counter-example to the proposed analysis. Because by assuming charges are the set of possible answers to the questions being divined, we expect to see them either consist of two propositions, one being the negation of the other, or of a set of alternative propositions which share the same sentence structure, but contrast with each other in one of the grammatical slots (see 4.2). But the case of “weekly divination inscriptions” or “evening divinations” constitutes none of these patterns. For example, In Plastron 4 of the *Dagui siban*, “the four large plastrons,” which is collected in *jiabian* 2122, there are 20 such “weekly divination inscriptions.” They all have the same formulaic feature as in the following example:

(25) 癸巳卜，賓貞：旬亡咎。

guǐsǐ bǔ, Bīn zhēn: xún wáng huò.

guisi day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, ten-day week/ not have/ disaster

Divining on the *guisi* day, Bin tested: There shall be no disaster in the week.

(*Jiabian* 2122, as cited in Takashima 1988-89: 19)

Divinations of this kind were recorded in Plastron 4 of the “four large plastrons” as a regular divination repeated every ten days for nine months, and they are all of the formulaic form of 旬亡, “there is no disaster in the week.” Below is an example of the “evening divinations”:

(26) 甲申卜，旅貞：今夕亡禍。在十一月

jiǎshēn bǔ, Lǚ zhēn: jīn xī wáng huò. zài shí yī yuè

jiashen day/ divine/, Lü/ test/, present/ evening/ not have/ disaster/, in/ eleven/month

Divining on the *jiashen* day, Lu tested: There shall be no disaster this evening. In the 11th month.⁵⁹ (*Wenlu* 42, as cited in Takashima 1988-89: 19)

There have been many discussions of the function of this type of charges. The analysis that received the most attention is the “purification-prayer” theory proposed in Shirakawa (1948),

⁵⁹ The inscriptions of “evening divining divinations” are not seen in the *Bingbian* collection.

which considers that the divination act involving such regularly conducted divinations is done to “perform a ceremony of purification.”⁶⁰ Accordingly, the formulaic charges used there are “prayers,” and not questions seeking information about the future. In this sense, the “single affair” charges in this specific kind of divination, called “ceremony of purification,” would have nothing to with possible answers.

However, in our opinion, we can still consider such “weekly divinations” or “evening divinations” as divination acts, rather than prayers, because the verb *bu* 卜, “to make a crack to divine,” and the verb *zhen* 貞, “to test” are still used in such inscriptions. And we can also maintain the answer-set analysis. The difference with this type of divination is that the underlying question does not require a choice from A and not-A pragmatically; rather, it looks only for the desirable answer, which for (25) is *There is no disaster in the week*. In other words, for the yes-no question under the weekly divination *Will there be a disaster in the week?* there is little or no likelihood of the positive (or say, semantically negative) answer *There will be a disaster*. This question only calls for information which is auspicious for the Shang people: *There will be no disaster in the week*. Therefore, we propose that this type of single charge format is motivated by the desire to get an auspicious outcome (i.e. the semantic positive outcome), thus eliminating, for pragmatic reasons, the unlucky outcome (i.e., the semantic negative counterpart).⁶¹

4.2.2. Paired charges as elliptical answers to yes-no questions

As mentioned in Chapter 2, divinatory contexts may come in the form of complete or abbreviated records. And as the heart of a divination, the charge is always recorded; however, it can come in the form of a complete sentence, or of an abbreviated or fragmented sentence. Often, the charges occurring later in a divination set are more concise than the earlier ones. In what follows, we shall show that in the case of paired divinations, the negative charge could be abbreviated in such a way that only a negative word is inscribed, indicating the relation between the abbreviated form and the complete charge as positive-negative pair. Such abbreviation indicates that the members

⁶⁰ See Takashima (1989: Section 3.2) for a detailed evaluation of this theory.

⁶¹ Here we only offer another possible analysis for this kind of single charges, and it is not intended to be definitive. Whether this kind of single charges should be understood as the binary answers in which the unlucky answer was eliminated or the statements expressing “incantation” or “prayer” is still a question to be investigated systematically.

in a charge-pair are not independent linguistic units; rather, they are set-bound elements evoked by the yes-no questions under consideration.

4.2.2.1. Paired charges with lexical items abbreviated

In the paired divination format, the abbreviated form is usually the negative charge. In some cases, the abbreviation involves the absence of some of the lexical content included in the affirmative charge. For example:

- (26) a. 癸未卜, 癸貞: 周𠄎犬延湄.

guǐwèi bǔ, Bīn zhēn: Zhōu bǐ quǎn yán méi.

guiwei day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, Zhou/ net/ Quan tribesmen/ along/ river bank

Divining on the *guiwei* day, Bin zhen: Zhou will net the Quan tribesmen along the river bank.

- b. 周弗其𠄎.

Zhōu fú qí bǐ.

Zhou/ not/ qí/ net

Zhou will perhaps not net [the Quan tribesmen along the river bank].

(*Bingbian* 442: 13-14)

In this pair, both the object phrase *Quan*, “the Quan tribesmen” and the preposition phrase *yan mei*, “along the river bank,” are not present in the negative member. If viewed independently, the content of the two charges is different—they are not exactly opposite propositions denoted by a yes-no question. However, based on the fact that the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions are the abbreviated records of actual divination events, we assume that charges whose propositions are not exactly opposed are so inscribed due to abbreviation. Thus, the charges in (26) are in fact the possible answers to the question *Will Zhou net the Quan tribesmen along the river bank?*

Examples in which the negative member contains fewer lexical items than the positive member, as in (26) are common. Below is a similar example:

- (27) a. 丙子卜, 丙貞: 羽丁丑王步于𠄎.

bǐngzǐ bǔ, Nèi zhēn: yǔ dīngchǒu wáng bù yu Gǔ.

bingzi day/ divine/, Nei/ test/, next/ dingchou day/ king/ go on foot/ to/ Gu

Divining on the *bingzi* day, Nei tested: On the next *dingchou* day, the king should go to Gu on foot.

b. 丙子卜, 內貞: 羽丁丑王勿步.

bǐngzǐ bǔ, Nèi zhēn: yǔ dīngchǒu wáng bù yu Gǔ.

bingzi day/ divine/, Nei/ test/, next/ *dingchou* day/ king/ not /go on foot/

Divining on the *bingzi* day, Nei tested: On the next *dingchou* day, the king should not go [to Gu] on foot. (*Bingbian* 116: 8-9)

In this example, the location phrase *yu* Gu 于 壺, “to Gu” is not present in the negative counterpart. However, scholars generally agree that the absence of this location phrase in the negative charge is a result of abbreviation.⁶²

Sometimes a negative charge can be abbreviated to such an extent that only the negative word is kept to indicate the positive-negative relation between the two charges. In such cases, one can only interpret the charge by looking at the corresponding positive member. For example:

(28) a. 貞: 亡囧.

zhēn: wáng huò.

test/ there is not/ misfortune

Tested: There will be no misfortunes.

b. 其出囧

zhēn: qí yǒu huò.

test/, qí/ there is/ misfortune

Tested: There will perhaps be misfortunes.

c. 亡.

wáng

there is not

There will be no [misfortunes.] (*Yibian* 751)

According to Zhang Bingquan (1960: 395), these three inscriptions belong to a divination set. The inscription in (28c) was only inscribed as one negative verb *wang*, “not have; there is not.” Zhang points out that without the concept of a charge set, charge (28c) would not be related to the other two members (28a) and (28b) occurring in the same shell, and one would have no idea

⁶² See Zhou Hongxiang (1969) and Li Daliang (1972).

about the meaning of the inscription in (28c) means. Note that here, the positive counterpart of (28c) in this elliptical paired-charge set is not present.

4.2.2.2. Paired charges with grammatical structure abbreviated

Now we consider abbreviation involving the simplification of the grammatical structure of the complete form. Sometimes, in a paired charge set, one charge (usually the positive charge) is expressed in a complex sentence consisting of two clauses in a dependent-main relation, but the other member (usually the negative counterpart) is inscribed with the part of the main clause, as in the following example:

(29) a. 貞：我其陷，罕。^{五上吉}

zhēn: wǒ qí xiàn, bǐ. ^{5 shàngjí}

test/, we/ qí/ trap/, catch, [highly auspicious]

As for our trapping (i.e., if we go trapping), we will catch game.

b. 己卯卜，設貞：弗其罕。^五

jǐmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn: fú qí bǐ ⁵

jimao day/ divine, Nan/ test/, not/ qí/ catch

Divining on the *jimao* day, Nan tested: [As for our trapping (i.e., if we go trapping)], we may perhaps not catch game. (*Bingbian* 80: 1- 2)

These two inscriptions are translated by Serruys (as cited in Takashima 2004a) and Takashima as:

(29') a. 貞：我其陷，罕。

(S) (One) tested: We shall anticipate to catch (game) by trap (or net).

(T) Tested: We may happen to (be able) to catch (*mi*-deer) by trapping.

b. 己卯卜，設貞：弗其罕。

(S) At *chi-mao* day [16] divination, Ku tested: (We shall) not anticipate to catch (game) by trap (or net).

(T) Divining on the *chi-mao* day [16], Ku tested: We may not happen to (be able) to catch (*mi*-deer). (Takashima 2004a : PP 80)

The biggest difference between our interpretation and those given by Serruys and Takashima is

that we take the charge in (29a) as a complex sentence in which *wo qi xian* 我其陷 is a nominalized topical/conditional clause,⁶³ while the verb *bi* 罕, “to net” stands as the main clause. We consider that in this example, the dependent clause is omitted in the negative charge. The paired charges in (29) are the binary answers to a question like *If we go trapping, will we catch game?*

Below is a more complicated case:

(30) a. 貞: 王其舞, 若。一

zhēn: wáng qí wǔ, ruò.¹

test/, king/ qí/ dance/, approve

Tested: The king should make a dance; it will be approved (by God).

貞: 王勿舞。一二上吉三

zhēn: wáng wù wǔ.^{1, 2, shàngjí, 3}

test/, king/ not/ dance/, [highly auspicious]

Tested: The king should not make a dance; [it will be approved (by God)].

Or: The king should not make a dance; [it will not be approved (by God)].

(*Bingbian* 100: 8- 9)

Based on the positive charge in (30a), we may assume that there should be a clause in the negative charge corresponding to the sentence *ruo* 若. However, there are two possible ways in which to recover the meaning of this part. One possibility is that the omitted clause could be the same as the one in (30a); that is, the omitted clause in (30b) is also *ruo* 若, “it will be approved by God,” as suggested in Li Daliang (1972: 151). The other possibility is to recover the omitted clause in (30b) as a negative form of *ruo* 若, that is, *bu ruo* 不若, “It will be not approved by God,” as interpreted in Takashima’s (2005) *Bingbian Translation*. As discussed earlier, paired charges in OBI involving complex sentences may have the following patterns with respect to the positive-negative relation between the two charges:

Pattern A: Double-negative paired charges

{ p, q }

{ -p, -q }

Pattern B: Single-negative paired charges

B₁ {p, q}

B₂ {p, q}

{p, -q}

{-p, q}

⁶³ As for the *qi*-marked nominalized dependent clauses, see Chapter 5, and Chapter 8 in Part II.

So it is unclear whether the intended logical relation between (30a) and (30b) is the one in Pattern (A) or that in Pattern (B₂). Such examples are structurally ambiguous cases. Thus, if following Li Daliang's reconstruction, the paired charges in (30) would be the possible answers to a question like *What should the king do (conduct a dance ritual or not conduct a dance ritual) and God will approve?* Or, if we consider that the omitted clause in the negative charge is a negative clause like *bu ruo* 不若, then (30) would be a double-negative case, and the questions implied in (30) should be two: (i) *Should the king conduct a dance ritual?* (ii) *Will God approve that?*

In some cases, an abbreviated charge cannot be understood by itself, that is, if viewed independently, it is an ungrammatical sentence and makes no sense. For example:

(31) a. 貞: 羽丁卯奏舞, 出雨. -

zhēn: yǔ dīngmǎo zòu wǔ, yǒu yǔ. ¹

test/, next/ *dīngmao* day/ perform/ dance/, there is/ rain ¹

Tested: Next *dīngmao* day, (we should) perform dance; there will be rain.

(Lit: Tested: Next *dīngmao* day perform dance; there will be rain.)

b. 羽丁卯勿, 亡其雨. -

zhēn: yǔ dīngmǎo wù, wáng qí yǔ. ¹

test/, next/ *dīngmao* day/ not/, not have/ qí/ rain

Next *dīngmao* day, (we should) not [perform dance]; there may not be rain.

(Lit. Next *dīngmao* day, not; there may not be rain.) (*Bingbian* 223=442: 5-6)

This is also a case of double-negative paired charges. The positive charge contains two verbs, *zou* 奏, "to perform" and *you* 出, "there is; to have." It can be analyzed as two clauses: the first one is *yu dīngmao zou wu* 羽丁卯奏, "next *dīngmao* day perform dance;" the second one contains only one verbal phrase *you yu* 出雨, "there will be rain."

In the negative member (31b), the prohibitive negator *wu* is followed by the negative verb *wang*, "there is not; not have." Zhang Bingquan notes in *Bingbian kaoshi* that the expression in the negative member of this pair must be an elliptic one, as the double-negative sequence *wu wang* 勿亡 makes no sense. That is, the verbal phrase *zou wu* "to perform dance," which is expected to occur after the negative word *wu* 勿, was omitted. Takashima's Commentary of *Bingbian* (i.e., PP 442, note 2) concurs with Zhang's interpretation.

The motivation for the abbreviation is clearly to simplify the engraving task, and for the sake of documentation, it is clear enough to just write one member in full form and the rest in elliptical form, neglecting some grammatical rules.

However, such abbreviation also indicates that the charges in paired divinations are not independent linguistic units, but are closely linked to each other as inseparable set members. If the two charges are not in such a relation, the abbreviation as in (31b) would make it difficult to understand the inscription itself. The elliptical charges emphasize the fact that paired charges are indeed a set of binary possible answers denoted by the yes-no questions being divined. Below is a similar example:

(32) a. 貞：呼雀酹于河五十牛。²

zhēn: hū Què yǒu yú Hé wǔ shí niú.²

test/ call/ Que/ *you*-cutting sacrifice/ yú/ the River God/ fifty/ bovine

Tested: (We should) call on Que to direct the *you*-cutting sacrifice to the River God with fifty bovines (as sacrificial victims).

b. 勿五十牛于河。²

wù wǔ shí niú yú Hé.²

not/ fifty/ bovine/ yú/ the River God

Tested: [(We not should) call on Que to direct the *you*-cutting sacrifice] to the River God with fifty bovines (as sacrificial victims). (*Bingbian* 117: 5-6)

The negative charge in (32b) is not a grammatically independent clause, because it contains no verb; moreover, the prohibitive negator is used immediately before a numeral. And without making reference to its positive counterpart, one would only get partial information about the divination from (32b). In other words, (32b) is only interpretable as part of a divinatory set.

Below is an example in which two sets of elliptical paired charges are grouped together:

(33) a₁. 出父一牛.

yǒu Fù yī niú.

offer/ Father/ one/ bovine

(We should) make sacrificial offering to Father (Yi) of one bovine. (Lit. Offer Father (Yi) one bovine.)

b₁. 勿一牛.

wù yī niú.

not / one/ bovine

[(We should)] not [make sacrificial offering to Father (Yi) of] one bovine. (Lit. Should not one bovine.)

a₁. 二牛.

èr niú.

two/ bovine

[(We should) make sacrificial offering to Father (Yi) of] two bovines. (Lit. Two bovines.)

b₂. 勿二牛.

wù èr niú.

not / two/ bovine

[(We should)] not [make sacrificial offering to Father (Yi) of] two bovines. (Lit.

Should not two bovines.) (*Bingbian* 52: 8-11)

In (33), only the first charge is written in a rather complete form, with the main verb *you*, “to offer,” the indirect object, *Fu*, “Father (Yi),”⁶⁴ and the direct object *yi niu*, “one bovine.” But the later charges are all expressed in elliptical form. Both abbreviated negative charges involve an irregular construction, with the prohibitive negator *wu* immediately before a numeral phrase; such sentences are considered ungrammatical. The engraver likely inscribed such abbreviated sentences because the charges proposed for one divination are bound members. The most important element was to show the paired relations between the charges, as determined by the semantic values of the yes-no question being divined. In terms of getting an answer to the yes-no question being divined from the shell or bone, the simplified or elliptical answers are nevertheless sufficient to define the question under consideration. We cannot determine whether the diviner spoke such elliptical answers, or whether it was the engraver who abbreviated the proposed possible answers in the elliptical form. It seems that the latter is more plausible, because we would not expect to find such ungrammatical, abbreviated forms in spoken language. Even though we are not clear for what reasons the abbreviations can be so done, one point is clear: The existence of such

⁶⁴ According to the related inscriptions on the same shell, *Fu* 父 here refers to *Fu Yi* 父乙, “Father Yi.”

abbreviated forms indicates that paired charges in Shang divination are neither independent declarative sentences, nor independent interrogative sentences. Instead, they are the binary answers evoked by the yes-no questions being divined.

4.2.3. Paired charges as possible fragmentary answers to yes-no questions

In the abbreviated cases discussed, we have seen that one member of the paired charges can be abbreviated as a shorter, simpler sentence, or even fragment sentence. But sometimes, we may even see paired charge sets in which both members are expressed in fragment sentence:

(34) a. 甲午卜, 爭, 于河.

jiǎwú bǔ, Zhēng: yú Hé.

jiawu day/ divine/, Zheng/, yú/ the Rive God

Divining on the *jiawu* day, Zheng (tested): To the River God.

b. 甲午卜, 爭, 勿于河.

jiǎwú bǔ, Zhēng: wù yú Hé.

jiawu day/ divine/, Zheng/, not/ yú/ the Rive God

Divining on the *jiawu* day, Zheng (tested): Should not (...) to the River God.

(*Bingbian* 203: 16-17)

In this context, no main verb is inscribed. But from the use of the negative word in (33b), we know they are a pair of positive and negative charges. And because the object of the preposition is the proper noun He 河, “the River God,” which usually serves as a sacrificial recipient in the divinatory contexts related to sacrificial events, as the indirect object of sacrificial verbs, we can conclude that this pair of charge fragments addresses that whether a sacrificial event directed to the River God should be performed. Below is a similar example:

(35) a. 于高妣己.

yú Gāo Bǐ 己.

yú/ Gao Bi Ji

To (Ancestress) Gao Bi Ji.

b. 勿于

wù yú

not/ yú

Do not (...) to (Ancestress) Gao Bi Ji. (*Bingbian* 57: 11-12)

In this pair, the fragment charges are even more concise than those in example (33), as seen by the omission of the object of the preposition *yu*, “to.” Because the positive charge contains the proper noun Gao Bi Ji, which also commonly serves as a sacrificial recipient, we may assume that this pair of charge fragments is the set of possible answers proposed to a yes-no question concerning whether a sacrificial offering should be made to Gao Bi Ji.

Sometimes a pair of charges can be simplified even further, as below:

(36) a. 貞: 其.

zhēn: qí

test/, qí

Tested: Perhaps (it will).

b. 不.

bù

not

Tested: (It will) not. (*Bingbian* 631: 13-14)

Here, only the particle *qi*, which is often associated with an undesirable situation, and the negative word *bu* were inscribed in order to show that they are a positive-negative pair. This pair is not informative in terms of divination content; however, the elliptical form here is significant, because it indicates that the charges are related to each other as paired members (or parallel alternative members, see 4.2 below). Charges can be very terse, but the positive-negative relation must be indicated.

So far we have discussed different abbreviated forms (including the fragmentary form) involved in the paired charge pattern. It is tenable to assume that the abbreviation of a divinatory record was motivated by the desire to save labor during engraving. Nevertheless, the abbreviations are done in a way that presents the set dependency of Shang divinatory paired charges, indicating that a charge member in a pair is a member belonging to the set denoted by the yes-no question being divined.

4. 3. Alternative charges as possible answers to content questions

In this section, we discuss the less common charge format: alternative charges. We propose that

alternative charges are sets of alternative propositions that contain the possible answers to content questions being divined. We will present some data to show how this type of charge functions as the possible answers to different types of content/question-word questions being divined.

Our proposal predicts that we will find all types of content questions implied in the alternative charges. In other words, if different kinds of content questions in the alternative charges are identified with certainty, then the validity of our theory about the nature of the divinatory charges holds.

The semantics of questions requires that there be a congruence between a content question and its answer: the question-word question must be answered with a word of the same category and in the same grammatical position as the question word. As pointed out earlier, the set of possible answers essentially depends on the logic on which the logic of questions is based. In other words, the set of possible answers is determined by the question and vice versa—the question is determined by the set of possible answers. Thus, if the alternative charges are really possible answers to the implicit content questions, we should be able to identify the questions from the alternative charges (i.e., the alternative possible answers). In what follows, we will demonstrate that this is exactly what happens in the Shang divinatory charges. In the OBI data, we find the kinds of content questions commonly seen in the ordinary use of languages, including: (i) subject questions; (ii) object questions (including indirect object and direct object questions); (iii) time questions; (iv) location questions; and (v) quantity questions. We consider each in turn.

4.3.1. Alternative charges as full possible answers

4.3.1.1. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to subject questions

In the theory adopted in this study, a subject question is viewed as an open proposition containing a variable in the subject slot. A subject question is identified with a set of alternative propositions containing different values in this grammatical slot as its possible answers. For example, in English, a subject question like *Who saw the white cat?* defines a set of alternative propositions constrained by context, which has the form of the open proposition *X saw the white cat*. Thus, in a context involving four people, Mary, John, Bill, and Rose, the question denotes

the following set of alternatives:

(37) *Mary* saw the white cat.

John saw the white cat.

Bill saw the white cat.

Rose saw the white cat.

In this set of possible answers, the propositions contrast each other with respect to the subject position. The subject phrase is the focus of each possible answer, which usually receives a sentential accent. The possible answers may also be introduced by a focus structure such as the cleft sentences *it is Mary that saw the white cat*, or *It is John that saw the white cat*, and so on. In OBI data, we also see the alternative charges expressed in focus structures such as the sentences marked with *wei* 隹 or *hui* 惠.

If there are implicit subject questions in the Shang divinatory charges, we would expect to see alternative charge sets that contain different values in the subject position. We do find some sets of divinatory charges that demonstrate this property. For example, in (36), the alternative charges contrast with each other in the subject position:

(38) a. 南庚𪔐王.

Nán Gēng tuò wáng.

Nan Geng/ impede/ king.

Nan Geng is impeding the king.

b. 羌甲𪔐王.

Qiāng Jiǎ tuò wáng.

Qiang Jia/ impede, king.

Qiang Jia is impeding the king. (Bingbian 607: 8-9)

From the different values in the subject position, we infer that the question being divined referred to the subject: *who is impeding the king?*

Sometimes an implicit subject question is defined by a set of alternatives in which the subject is marked by a focus marker such as *wei* 隹 or *hui* 惠.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *Wei* 隹 and *hui* 惠 are two copulas in OBI language (see Takashima 1990). They are also used to mark focus in the language (see Wu Keying 2001).

- (39) a. 隹母庚𠬪子安.

wéi mǔ Gēng tuò Zǐ An.

be/ mother/ Geng/ impede/ Zi An

It is Mother Geng who is impeding Zi An.

- b. 隹隹𠬪子安.

wéi Xǐ tuò Zǐ An.

be/ Xi/ impede/ Zi An

It is Xi who is impeding Zi An. (Bingbian 257)

In this example, the two charges contrast with each other with different values in the subject position indicating that the questioned element is the subject. In (39), the contrastive subjects are preceded by the copula *wei* 隹 which serves to mark focus in the language. According to the question-answer congruence (i.e., the focused element in an answer corresponds to the element being questioned),⁶⁶ the focus values shown by this set of alternative charges identify the subject question as *Who will impede Zi An?*

4.3.1.2. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to indirect object questions

In the Shang divinatory charges, we also see cases in which the set of alternative charges is the set of possible answers to an implicit indirect object question, as in (40):

- (40) a. 乙未卜，𠬪于妣乙.

yǐwèi bǔ, yù yú bǐ Yǐ.

yǐwei day/ divine/, to lustrate, purify, exorcise/ yú/ ancestral mother/ Yi⁶⁷

⁶⁶ According to the alternative semantics theory of focus proposed in Rooth (1985, 1992, 1996), the focus of a sentence evokes a set of propositions obtained by replacing the focus phrase with an alternative of the same type. As introduced earlier, Hamblin (1973) proposes that a question denotes a set of propositions that constitute all the possible answers to that question—true and false answers alike. Therefore, the constraint forcing question-answer congruence is as follows: the focus semantic value of the answer (a set of alternative propositions evoked by the focus) must be identical to the denotation of the question (also a set of alternative propositions).

⁶⁷ *Yu* 𠬪 (also transcribed as 御), “to lustrate, purify; exorcise,” is one of the sacrificial/ritual verbs that can be associated with four nouns or valents. According to Chow (1982: 188-262), the sacrificial verbs in OBI can be divided into two categories: “Type A sacrificial verbs” and “Type B sacrificial verbs.” The distinct feature of the Type A category is that Type A category are “four-place verbs” that can take an instrument object (Oins) in addition to a direct object (OD) and indirect object (OI). Verbs such as *gao* 告, “to make an announcement,” *yu* 御, “to perform an exorcism,” and *qiu* 求, “to invoke” (note: which should be interpreted as *dao* 禱, “to pray for,” as suggested in Ji Xiaojun 1991) belong to this category. Different from the Type A category, Type B category are not “four-place verbs,” and they can only take an OD and OI. Verbs such as *liao* 燎, “to burn,” *you* 𠬪, “to perform the *you*-cutting sacrifice,” and *you* “, “to offer” belong to this category. Moreover, Chow gives the OD different designations depending on its semantic nature: that is, it can be object-patient (OP), object-goal (OG), or

Divining on the *yīwei* day, we will perform the lustration ritual to ancestral mother Yi.

b. 乙未卜，于妣辛妣癸。

yǐwèi bǔ, yù yú Bǐ Xīn Bǐ Guǐ.

yīwei day/ divine/, lustrate; purify; exorcise/ yú/ ancestral mother /Xin/ ancestral mother/ Gui

Divining on the *yīwei* day, we will perform the lustration ritual to ancestral mothers Xin and Gui. (*Bingbian* 92: 11-12)

In this divinatory context, the charges contrast each other in the indirect object and constitute a set of alternatives which serve as the possible answers to a question regarding the indirect object: *To whom will we perform the lustration ritual?*

In the following set of alternative charges, the charges also have contrastive values in the indirect object position:

(41) a. 惠母先酹。

huǐ mǔ xiān yǒu.

be/ mother/ put first/ *you*-cutting sacrifice

It should be to Mother that (we) put first the *you*-cutting sacrifice.

b. 惠兄先酹。

huǐ xiōng xiān yǒu.

be/ brother/ put first/ *you*-cutting sacrifice

It should be to Brother that (we) put first the *you*-cutting sacrifice.

c. 惠父先酹。

huǐ fù xiān yǒu.

be/ father/ put first/ *you*-cutting sacrifice

It should be to Father that (we) put first the *you*-cutting sacrifice. (*Heji* 27489)

Three points are worth mentioning regarding the above example. First, the indirect objects in this divination are introduced by the modal copula *hui* 惠, which serves to mark focus here. Second,

object-cause (OC). According to Chow, only the Type A category can have an OC as direct object (OD), while the OD of the Type B category can only be OP. Takashima (2000) reanalyzes the ritual/sacrificial verbs in OBI, proposing that the three “Type A sacrificial verbs” *gao* 告, *yu* 御, and *dao* 禱 identified in Chow (1982), plus three more verbs such as *zhu* 祝, “to invoke,” *ning* 寧, “to conduct a pacifying ritual,” and *guan* 裸, “to offer a libation” are to be treated as a specific class of verbs, because they can be associated with four nouns or valents and have the semantic feature [+ request] and [+ rituality], while the “Type B sacrificial verbs” such as *liao* 燎, “to burn,” *you* 酹, “to perform the *you*-cutting sacrifice,” and *you* 卣, “to offer” are simply a category of ordinary verbs that do not require special treatment in grammar.

the word order is not the canonical order SVO, but SOV.⁶⁸ Third, the word *xian* 先 is usually understood as an adverb, meaning “first.” In this interpretation, the above charges such as (41a) should be interpreted as *It should be to Mother that (we) first offer the you-cutting sacrifice*. But it is possible that *xian* 先 here is as a verb, meaning “to be first in order; to put *x* first,” as interpreted in the above translation.⁶⁹ Fourth, the alternatives in this set contrast with each other in the indirect object position, and it seems the implicit question under consideration is with respect to the indirect object: *To whom should we put first the you-cutting sacrifice?*

4.3.1.3. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to direct object questions

The following set illustrates an implicit direct object question:

- (42) a. 辛巳卜, 般貞: 乎雀辜桑。⁷⁰

xīnsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: hū Què dūn Sāng.⁷¹

xinsi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, call/ Que/ attack/ Sang.⁷²

Divining on the *xinsi* day, Nan tested: We shall call Que to attack Sang.⁷³

- b. 辛巳卜, 般貞: 乎雀辜壹。⁷⁴

xīnsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: hū Què dūn Yī.⁷⁵

xinsi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, call/ Que/ attack/ Yi.⁷⁶

Divining on the *xinsi* day, Nan tested: We shall call Que to attack Yi.⁷⁷

(*Bingbian* 119: 1-2)

⁶⁸ It is argued in Wu Keying (2001) that OBI language possesses a designated preverbal focus position into which the focused constituent is moved; moreover, in this position, the fronted focused constituent may also be marked with a focus marker such as *wei* 隹 or *hui* 惠. Thus, the SOV order in this example can be understood as a focus structure.

⁶⁹ It seems that *xian* 先 in the following example is a verb:

- (i) a. 先高祖燎彫。

xiān Gāo Zǔ liáo yǒu.

put first/ High Ancestor/ burnt-offering/ you-cutting sacrifice

We should put first the burnt-offering to High Ancestor, and then the you-cutting sacrifice.

- b. 惠河燎先彫。


huì Hé liáo xiān yǒu.

be/ He (the River-God) / burnt-offering/ put first/ you-cutting sacrifice

It should be the burnt-offering to the River-God that we put first, and then the you-cutting sacrifice.

(*Heji*: 32308)

This example is cited from Shen Pei (1992: 36). The interpretation of the sentences in this example is far from certain. According to Takashima's (1999) notes for Shen Pei (1992), it is better to understand *liao* 燎 as a noun referring to the burnt-offering sacrifice. Because in (ia), *xian* 先, instead of being used immediately in front of either of the two possible verbs, *liao* 燎 and *you* 彫, is used in front of the proper noun Gao Zu, “High Ancestor.” Thus, it is possible to take *xian* 先 as a verb, meaning “to put *x* first,” and Gao Zu *liao* 高祖燎 as a noun phrase, meaning “the burnt-offering directed to Gao Zu (High Ancestor).” The charge in (ib) is a focus structure in which the object He *liao* 河燎, “the burnt-offering to the River-God” is preceded and marked the focus marker *hui*.

According to Zhang Bingquan (1959-72, Vol.1, No. 2: 174), the above charges belong to the second subset of a divinatory set. The graph  is transcribed as 𠂔 by Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1927:26), and this is interpreted as a variant form of the verb *dun* 敦, “to attack” by Wang Guowei 王國維.⁷⁰ Sang 桑 and Yi 壹 are two statelets located in the present Shanxi 山西 province.⁷¹ In this set, the alternative charges contrast with each other with respect to the direct object of the verb *dun*, “to attack” which means that the Shang diviner was giving options between attacking the targets Sang 桑 and Yi 壹. The implicit question should be: *Who shall we call Que to attack?*

The following is another example of a direct object question, in which the contrastive direct objects are marked by a focus maker, the modal copula *hui* 惠, in the preverbal position:

(43) a. 惠卑令省稟.

huǐ Bǐ lìng shěng Lǐn.

be/ Bi/ command/ inspect/ Lin.

It should be Bi whom (we) should order to make an inspection tour of Lin.

b. 惠並令省稟.

huǐ Bǐng lìng shěng Lǐn.

be/ Bing/ command/ inspect/ Lin.

It should be Bing whom (we) should order to make an inspection tour of Lin.

c. 惠寧鼓令省稟.

huǐ Zhù Gǔ lìng shěng Lǐn.

be/ Zhu Gu/ command/ inspect/ Lin.

It should be Zhu Gu whom (we) should order to make an inspection tour of Lin.

d. 惠馬令省稟.

huǐ Mǎ lìng shěng Lǐn.

be/ Ma/ command/ inspect/ Lin.

It should be Ma whom (we) should order to make an inspection tour of Lin.

(Tunman 539)

⁷⁰ See Wang Guowei (1915) “Buqidun gaiming kaoshi 不其且敦蓋銘考釋,” reprinted in Wang Guowei (1968) *Wang Guantang xiansheng quanji* 王觀堂先生全集 Vol. 6: 2057.

⁷¹ See Zhang (1957-72), Vol. 1, No. 2: 175.

The alternatives evoked by the objects marked by *hui* 惠 are the alternative propositions containing the possible answers to the implicit question: *Whom should we order to make an inspection of Lin?*

4.3.1.4. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to time questions

In the Shang inscriptions, there are alternative sets that identify time questions:

- (44) a. 甲戌卜: 丙子雨. 不.

Jiǎxū bǔ: bǐngzǐ yǔ. bù.

Jiāxu day/ divine/, *bīngzǐ* day/ rain/, not

On the *jiāxu* day divined: On the *bīngzǐ* day, it will rain. It did not rain on the *bīngzǐ* day.

- b. 甲戌卜: 丁丑雨. 允雨.

jiǎxū bǔ: dīngchǒu yǔ. yǔn yǔ.

jiāxu day/ divine/, *dīngchōu* day/ rain/, indeed/ rain

On the *jiāxu* day divined: On the *jiāxu* day, it will rain. It did rain on the *dīngchōu* day. (Heji 33874)

In this example, *bu* 不, “not” in (44a) is the abbreviated form of the verification. Similarly, *yun* 允雨, “it indeed rained” in (44b) is also the verification. The alternative charges in (44) contrast with each other with respect to the time phrase. Based on the two possible answers here, the question being divined should be: *Which day will it rain?*

The following example also implies a time question, in which the time phrase is marked by the focus marker *hui* in the preverbal position:

- (45) a. 庚申卜, 貞: 王惠乙令禽暨竝.

gēngshēn bǔ, zhēn: wáng huì yǐ lǐng Qín jǐ Bīng.

gēngshēn day/ divine/, test/, king/ be/ *yǐ* day/ command/ Qín/ and/ Bing

Divining on the *gēngshēn* day, tested: It should be on the *yǐ* day that the king orders Qín and Bing.

- b. 庚申卜, 貞: 王惠丁令禽暨竝。

gēngshēn bǔ, zhēn: wáng huì dīng lǐng Qín jǐ Bīng.

gēngshēn day/ divine/, test/, king/ be/ *dīng* day/ command/ Qín/ and/ Bing

Divining on the *gengshen* day, tested: It should be on the *ding* day that the king orders Qin and Bing. (*Tun* 4048)

The focus marker *hui* emphasizes the contrast in the time phrases between (45a) and (45b). This means the Shang diviner was giving the king an option between times at which to order Qin and Bing. The question under consideration was: *Which day should the king order Qin and Bin?*

4.3.1.5. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to location questions

The following examples shows alternative charges as the possible answers to location questions:

(46) a₁. 庚辰卜, 賓貞: 朕芻于鬥. ⁻

gēngchén bǔ, Bīn zhēn: zhèn chú yú Dòu. ¹

gengchen day/ divine/, Bin/ test / I (king) / forager / go to/ Dou

Divining on the *gengchen* day, Bin tested: My (i.e., the king's) foragers should go to Dou.

b₁. 貞: 朕 (芻) 于丘剌. ⁻

zhēn: zhèn (chú) yú Qīusuǒ. ¹

test/ I (king) / (forager)/ go to/ Qiusuo

Tested: My (i.e., the king's) foragers should go to Qiusuo.

a₂. 貞: 朕芻于鬥. ⁼

zhēn: zhèn (chú) yú Dòu. ²

test/ I (king)/ forager/ go to/ Dou.

Tested: My (i.e., the king's) foragers should go to Dou.

b₂. 貞: 朕芻于剌. ⁼

zhēn: zhèn (chú) yú Suǒ. ²

test/ the king's / forager/ go to / Suo.

Tested: My (i.e., the king's) foragers should go to (Qiu)suo. (*Bingbian* 128:1-4)

The crack sequence numbers here indicate that this divinatory set includes two subsets: (44a₁) and (44b₁) consist of one subset, while (44a₂) and (44b₂) consist of another subset. And it is obvious that the later charges are more concise. Namely (44a₂) is the abbreviated form of (44a₁) in which the preface is simplified as a single word *zhen*, "to test." And (44b₂) is the abbreviated of (44b₁), in which the two syllable place name Qiusuo 丘剌 is abbreviated as one syllable as Suo 剌.

Several points are worth mentioning regarding the interpretation of this divination set. First, the word *zhen* 朕 is a first person pronoun referring (almost exclusively) to the king himself in preclassical Chinese.⁷² Second, the meaning of the word *chu* 芻 is far from certain. According to Zhang Bingquan (1959-72, *Bingbian kaoshi* V. 2, No. 2: 4463, *chu* 芻 has two usages in OBI: (i) it is used as a verb meaning “to weed,” and (ii) it is used as a noun, meaning “forage,” as in the VO structure *qiechu* 芻芻, “to carry, to bring grass.”⁷³ Zhang says *chu* was the forage grass used by the Shang people on which to raise sacrificial animals, or was offered as a sacrificial food to sacrificial animals (i.e., *jiansheng* 薦牲). He considers that in the above divination set, the word *chu* functions as a verb meaning “to weed.”⁷⁴ Following this interpretation, the above charges such as (41a₁) would be translated as: “The king should go weeding (i.e., to make a tour to inspect weeding) at Dou.” However, according to Takashima (2005, *Bingbian Commentary*: PP128, note 1), since *zhen* 朕 can only be possessive, (meaning “my,” the king’s), the following

⁷² See Pulleyblank (1995: 76).

⁷³ According to Rao Zongyi (1959:102), the custom of *qiechu* 芻芻, (which is interpreted as *dichu* 氏芻 by Rao) is recorded in *Lulan jixiaji* 呂覽·季夏紀 as the following:

(ii) 是月也，令四監大夫，合百縣之致芻，以養犧牲。

“In this month, (the king) commanded the officers to put together all the forage grass brought by different counties. The grass would be used to raise sacrificial animals.”

Rao notes that the meaning of *zhichu* 致芻 here is the same as that of *dichu* 氏芻 (= *qiechu* 芻芻) in OBI.

⁷⁴ However, there is still a possibility regarding the meaning of *chu* 芻. According to Xu Zhongshu (1989: 55), *chu* may also mean *yue* 悅, “to be pleased about” in OBI. Xu gives the following example to illustrate this usage:

(i) 貞：父乙芻于王。

zhēn: fù Yǐ chū yú wáng.

test/, father/ Yi/ be pleased about/ yú/ king (*Yibian*: 554)

Following Xu’s interpretation, the above inscription can be interpreted as:

Tested: Father Yi will be pleased about the king.

Shen (1992: 26) considers that in the following inscription, *chu* may also mean “to be pleased about.”

(ii) 丙戌子卜，貞：丁不芻我。(*Heji* 21727)

bǐngxū Zǐ bǔ, zhēn: Dīng bù chū wǒ.

bingxu day/ Zi/ divine/, test/, Ding/ not/ be pleased about/ us

Shen (1992: 26) defines *wo* 我 in this inscription as the personal pronoun *wo*, “we/us,” while *ding* 丁 refers to Ancestor Ding. Following this understanding, this inscription can be interpreted as:

“Zi, divining on the *bingxu* day, tested: Ancestor Ding will not be pleased about us.”

However, Shen is not convinced of this explanation, and he adds one more interpretation as an alternative: *Wo* is a place name, *ding* refers to the *dinghai* day. The meaning of the above inscription, then, is: “On the *bingxu* day, (the king) should not weed at *Wo*.” In my opinion, the interpretation of *chu* as meaning “to be pleased about” does not quite fit the sentence structure in [ii]. As we know, it is a basic rule in the grammar of the OBI language that in a negative sentence, the pronoun object usually occurs in front of the main verb. But in [ii], the object pronoun *wo*, (if it were a pronoun) occurs after the verb *chu*, “to be pleased about” (if it were this verb). In this sense, the interpretation “On the *bingxu* day, (the king) should not weed (i.e., should not make a tour to inspect weeding) at *Wo*” is better.

word *chu* 筍 has to be the noun that is possessed. As for the meaning of *chu* 筍, Takashima considers that there are three possibilities: “soldiers,” “foragers,” or “grooms.” Our translations provided above are based on this interpretation. However, we are not certain whether this is a better interpretation than Zhang’s, since it is difficult to determine that *zhen* 朕 can only be possessive. In relatively earlier classics, *zhen* 朕 is mostly used possessively, but occasionally it is also used as subject pronoun.⁷⁵ According to Zhang Yujin (1994: 318), *zhen* 朕 can be also used as a first person subject pronoun, as in the following example:

(47) 戊寅卜，朕出今夕。

wùyín bǔ, zhèn chū jīn xī

wuyin day/ divine/, I/ go out/ present/ evening

Divining on the wuyin day, I should go out this evening.⁷⁶ (Heji: 22478)

But it could be argued that the *zhen* 朕 in (47) is also used possessively to modify the following verb *chu*, “to go out,” namely *zhen chu* 朕出 can be understood as “my (the king’s) going out.” Accordingly, the charge in (47) can be interpreted as “My (the king’s) going out should be in this evening.” Even though this understanding supports Takashima’s interpretation of (46), we still cannot conclude that *zhen* 朕 cannot be a subject pronoun in the language. The question of whether or not the pronoun *zhen* can be used as a subject pronoun in OBI needs further investigation. But what is relevant for our purposes is that by reducing (46a₂) to (46a₁), and (46b₂) to (46b₁), we see that the alternative charges contrast each other with respect to the locative phrase, and serve as a set of possible answers to the implicit question *Where should the king’s foragers go to?* or *Where should the king go weeding?*

The following set of alternative charges also identifies a locative question, in which the locative phrases are marked by the focus marker *hui*:

(48) a. 王惠牢田，亡災。

wáng huì Láo tián, wáng zāi.

king/ be/ Lao/ hunt/, not have/ mishap

It should be the place of Lao where the king hunts; there shall be no mishap.

⁷⁵ See Pulleyblank (1995: 77).

⁷⁶ Note that Zhang (1994: 318) interprets this sentence as a question. The above translation is ours which is given based on the understanding of *zhen* as a first person subject pronoun.

b. 惠柏田，亡災。

huǐ Bó tián, wáng zāi.

be/ Bo/ hunt/, not have/ mishap

It should be the place of Bo where the king hunts; there shall be no mishap.

c. 惠氏田，亡災。

huǐ Shǐ (?) tián, wáng zāi.

be/ Shi (?)/ hunt/, not have/ mishap

It should be the place of Shi (?) where the king hunts; there shall be no mishap.⁷⁷

d. 惠宕田，亡災。

huǐ Dàng tián, wáng zāi.

be/ Dang/ hunt/, nothave/ mishap

It should be the place of Dang where the king hunts; there shall be no mishap.

(Heji 29255)

In this divination, the diviner was divining for the king concerning the location of the action of *tian*, “to hunt.” Four locations were proposed as possible answers, and the implicit question is: *Where should be the place that the king hunts?*

4.3.1.6. Alternative charges as sets of possible answers to quantity questions

The following example shows that the alternative charges are possible answers to quantity questions:

(49) a. 來甲午出伐上甲十。

lái jiǎwǔ yǒu fá Shàng Jiǎ shí.¹

come/ *jiawu* day/ offer/ decapituri/ Shang Jia/ ten

On the coming *jiawu* day, (we) shall offer *decapituri* numbering ten to Shang Jia.

b. 來甲午出伐上甲八。

lái jiǎwǔ yǒu fá Shàng Jiǎ bā.¹

come/ *jiawu* day/ offer/ decapituri/ Shang Jia/ eight

On the coming *jiawu* day, (we) shall offer *decapituri* numbering eight to Shang Jia.

(Bingbian 233: 7-8)

⁷⁷ The question marker in parentheses means the reading of the previous graph is uncertain.

The charges in this divinatory context are parallel in grammatical form, and the lexical items in each grammatical position are the same, except those in numeral phrase. I follow Takashima (1996:292) in taking the grammatical function of the numeral in these two charges as a quantitative complement to the verb, a kind of adverb placed after the verb to quantify the direct object. That is, the numeral *shi* 十, “ten,” in the first charge contrasts with the numeral *ba* 八, “eight,” in the second one. This means that the Shang diviner was making a decision on the number of the sacrificial victims *decapituri* to offer to the ancestor Shang Jia. The alternative charges in (49) are hypothesized answers to the unspoken question, *How many decapituri shall we offer to Shang Jia?* In the following set of charges, the numeral is indicated by a focus marker:

(50) a. 惠九宰豕大甲.

huǐ jiǔ láo yǒu Dà Jiá.

be/ nine/ penned sheep/ you-cut/ Da Jia

It should be nine penned sheep that (we) *you-cut* for Dajia

b. 惠十宰又五豕大甲.

huǐ shí láo yòu wǔ yǒu Dà Jiá.

be/ ten/ penned sheep/ and/ five/ you-cut/ Da Jia

It should be fifteen penned sheep that (we) *you-cut* for Da Jia. (*Heji* 1445)

This divination is concerned with the number of sacrificial victims used in a sacrificial ritual directed to Ancestor Da Jia, as seen by the fact that the two charges contrast each other only with respect to the numeral. This means that the numeral is the focus of the divination. The focus marker *hui* is used to emphasize this focus. The diviner was considering the number of the sacrificial small penned sheep, and the implicit question should be: *How many small penned sheep shall we you-cut for Da Jia?* In this context, the diviner provided the numbers nine and fifteen as the possible answers to the implicit quantity question. The result of this divination would tell the Shang people how many of the small penned sheep should be used in the sacrificial event.

4.3.1.7. Summary

The discussion above shows that alternative charges are sets of alternative propositions (possible

answers) denoted by the content questions being divined. This is consistent with our proposed analysis of the paired-charges in which we suggest paired charges are actually the two possible answers to the yes-no questions being divined. In this analysis, the formulaic nature of the Shang divinatory charges can be accounted for systematically. Given that paired charges imply yes-no questions and that alternative charges imply content questions, it is not hard to understand why the overwhelming majority of charges take these two formats and why there is no overt content questions found in OBI. This analysis is also compatible with the idea that divination is basically an information-seeking act. What is special in the Shang divination is that, instead of asking a question directly, the Shang diviners manipulated the question being divined by providing a set of possible answers to it linguistically.

4.3.2. Alternative charges as elliptical possible answers to content questions

Similar to the case of paired charges, in a divination context consisting of alternative charges, the alternative charges occurring later tend to be more concise than the earlier ones. And the abbreviation of the later charge members may involve the absence of some lexical content or the simplification of the grammatical structure as compared to the complete charge, but its relation to the complete charge as parallel alternatives is clearly indicated. We propose that alternative charges with elliptical form are to be considered elliptical possible answers denoted by the implicit content questions being divined.

4.3.2.1. Abbreviation with lexical content omitted

Consider the following example:

(51) a. 辛酉卜, 爭貞: 今日出于下乙一牛𠄎十𠄎。

*xīnyǒu bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: jīn rì yǒu yú Xià Yǐ yī niú cè shí láo.*¹

*xinyou day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, present/ day/ offer/ yú/ Xia Yi/ one bovine/ pledge/ ten/ black specially reared ovine*⁷⁸

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Zheng tested: Today (we should) offer to Xia Yi one bovine and pledge ten black specially reared ovines.

⁷⁸ *Ce* 𠄎 is a sacrificial verb indicating a particular method of killing sacrificial victims. See Yu Xingwu (1979: 172-174), Keightley (1991: 432-434), and Takashima (2004 b: PP 32, note 1) for more discussion.

b. 貞: 出于下乙(𠄎)𠄎十𠄎. ¹

zhēn: yǒu yú Xià Yǐ yī lǎo cè shí lǎo. ¹



test/, offer/ yú/ Xia Yi/ a specially reared ovine/ pledge/ ten/ black specially reared ovine
[Divining on the *xinyou* day, Zheng tested: Today] (we should) offer to Xia Yi a
specially reared ovine and pledge ten black specially reared ovines.

c. 出于下乙一牛. ²

yǒu yú Xià Yǐ yī niú. ²

offer/ to/ Xia Yi/ one bovine

[Divining on the *xinyou* day, Zheng tested: Today] (we should) offer to Xia Yi one
bovine. (*Bingbian* 304: 14-16)

This is an example of alternative charges. One point should be mentioned regarding the interpretation of this example. That is, the interpretation of the last character in the first two charges here is different from that given in Zhang Bingquan (1959-72). They were written as  on the shell, which Zhang Bingquan (1959-72) transcribes as two separate characters *lao* 𠄎 and *li* 黎. Moreover, Zhang assigns them in (51a) with the order *lao li* 𠄎 黎, but in (51b) with the order *li lao* 黎 𠄎. It is pointed out in Takashima (2004b: PP 304, note 10) that this charge of word order is odd, and it seems clear that the character  is a single graph, or most likely a case of *hewen* 合文, “combined graph.” Accordingly, he transcribes it as *lao* 𠄎, “black specially reared ovine,” which is adopted here.

The charges in this set are parallel in the basic grammatical structure with a contrast in the object positions. Based on (51a), we may represent the sentence as having the following basic slots:

(52) [Time Adverbial + V₁ + Preposition + OI + OD₁ + V₂ + OD₂]

Let us first consider (51a) and (51b). The charge in (51b) is less wordy, as the time phrase in (51a) is omitted. The charges in (51a) and (51b) differ only in the slot of OD₁, in which (51a) proposes to offer “one bovine,” while (51b) proposes to offer “one specially reared ovine.” From this difference, we see that what was considered in this divination was to determine the kind of sacrificial victims to be offered to Ancestor Xia Yi.

Now, let us consider (51c). Obviously, (51c) is more concise than (51b), with only one verb *you*, “to offer,” and one OD *yiniu*, “one bovine.” The second VP *ce shi wu lao*, “to pledge ten black specially reared ovines” seen in the first two charges is not present here. The absence of this verbal phrase in (51c) allows two possible understandings: The first is that the diviner was making a third option for the sacrificial events directed to Ancestor Xia Yi; namely, instead of offering one bovine and pledging ten black specially reared ovines, as proposed in (51a), or offering one specially reared ovine and pledging ten black specially reared ovines, as proposed in (51b), they would simply just offer one bovine to Xia Yi. And in this understanding, the alternative charges in this set constitute a set of possible answers to the implicit question *What should we do for the sacrificial offering to Xia Yi?* However, there is also a second possibility. That is, as indicated by the crack number associated to (51c), this divination was repeated at least two times, and (51c) is the charge proposed for the second time. If this is true, then (51c) is likely the abbreviated form of (51a). In other words, the charges proposed as possible outcomes to be divined are in fact two, (51a) and (51b). However, in this understanding, the question being divined is still the same. The only difference is that in this understanding, the possible outcomes proposed are just two, while in the first understanding, the possible outcomes are three.

4.3.2.2. Abbreviation with grammatical structure omitted

Sometimes the abbreviation may involve the simplification of the grammatical structure as compared to the full form, as in the following example:

(53) a. 翌日壬王其省田，从宫。

yǐ rì rén wáng qí shěng tián, cóng gōng.

next/ day/ *ren* day/ king/ qí/ inspect/ field/, follow/ Gong.

As for the king's inspecting the field on the next *ren* day, he should take the route along Gong.

b. 从榆。

cóng Yú

follow/ Yu

Along Yu.

c. 从喪.

cóng Sāng.

follow/ Sang

Along Sang.

d. 从盂.

cóng Yú

follow Yu

Along Yu. (*Heji* 29156)

This example is cited in Shen Pei (1992: 141) to show that the focus of a divination can be known from the contrasting constituents. Here, we want to point out, the focus effect in this example is emphasized even more with the abbreviation of the topical clause in (53a) in the later charges. A set like this supports our analysis of alternative charges as the alternative propositions denoted by question-word questions, since the focus part of a sentence is the part that answers the question. Clearly this set of alternatives provides a set of possible answers to the divined question *As for the king's inspecting the field on the next ren day, which route should he take?*

4.3.3. Alternative charges as fragmentary possible answers

In this section, we discuss the “choice-type” divinations in which none of the charges are expressed in complete sentences; we refer to these as fragment charge sets. Consider the following example:

(54) a. 貞：小宰

zhēn: xiǎo láo

test/ small/ specially reared ovine

Tested: Small specially reared ovines.

b. 貞：宰

zhēn: láo

test/ specially reared ovine

Tested: Specially reared ovines.

c. 貞：二𦍋

zhēn: èr láo

test/, two/ specially reared ovine

Tested: Two specially reared ovines.

d. 貞：三𦍋

zhēn: sān láo

test/ three/ specially reared ovine

Tested: Three specially reared ovines.

e. 貞：五𦍋

zhēn: wǔ láo

test/ five/ specially reared ovine

Tested: Five specially reared ovines. (*Heji* 26907)

Each inscription in this divinatory context consists of an abbreviated preface *zhen*, “test,” and a fragmented charge. The charges in the first two inscriptions are noun phrases referring to two kinds of sacrifice animals. The charges in the last three inscriptions consist of noun phrases modified by numerals. We assume that in this set of charges, those NPs function as the direct objects of a verb related to sacrificial use or offering, such as *yong* 用, “to use,” or *you* 出, “to offer.” The contrast with respect to the modifier of the NPs in (51a) and (51b) indicates that these two charges constitute a subset in which the diviner had the option of the kind of sacrificial victims between the *xiaolao* 小𦍋, “small specially reared ovines” and the *lao* 𦍋, “specially reared ovines.” The difference between (54a) and (54b) is that the former specifies that the sacrificial animals must be *xiaolao*, “the small specially reared ovines,” while the latter means that the sacrificial animals could be any kind of *lao*, “specially reared ovines,” not necessarily “the small specially reared ovines.”

The contrast with respect to the numerals in (54c), (54d) and (54e) indicates that these three charges constitute another subset, in which the diviner had the option of offering two, three, or five sacrificial animals, the specially reared ovines. Therefore, the charges in this set in fact deal with two different questions that reflect two aspects of the same event. In other words, they are the fragmentary possible answers to the two implicit content or question-word questions: *What*

kind of penned ovines shall we offer? and How many penned ovines shall we offer?

4.4. Charges as possible answers to sequences of questions

Example (55) below is an example in which the charges are the possible answers to two relevant questions, one of which is a yes-no question, and one of which is a content question:

(55) a. 貞：寮牛。

zhēn: liáo niú.

test/ burn/ ox

tested: (We shall) make a burnt-offering of oxen.

b. 勿寮。

wù liáo.

not/ burn

(We shall not) make a burnt-offering of oxen.

c. 寮二牛。

liáo èr niú

burn/ two/ oxen

(We shall) make a burnt-offering of two oxen.

d. 寮三牛。

liáo sān niú.

burn/ three/ oxen

(We shall) make a burnt-offering of three oxen.

e. 寮一牛。

liáo yī niú.

burn/ one/ ox

(We shall) make a burnt-offering of one oxen. (*Bingbian* 64: 3-8)

The charges in this example are all expressed in fragmented sentences. But our major concern here is not the fragmentary form of these charges, but the relationship among them. We see that (55a) and (55b) constitute a pair of positive-negative charges, and the question under consideration is whether a burnt-offering of oxen should be conducted; while (55c), (55d), and (55e) constitute a set of alternative charges, and the question under consideration is how many oxen should be

used to make the burnt-offering. In other words, the divinatory charges in this divination set are two sets of possible answers to the following two questions: the yes-no question *Shall we make a burnt-offering of oxen?* and the content question *How many oxen shall we burn?*

It is not surprising to see such a combination. As we know, a yes-no question questions the truth value of a proposition, while a content question asks about a specific constituent of the proposition. A diviner might first pose a yes-no question to determine whether they should conduct the event, followed by a content question about specific aspects of the event. However, in order to get a response from the spirits, in the real divination, the diviner framed the questions as sets of alternative propositions of uncertain outcomes. Example (55) is certainly such a situation: the Shang diviner was not sure whether the *liao* sacrificial event should be conducted, and the paired charges were proposed as the possible answers to the implicit yes-no question *Shall we make a burnt-offering of oxen?* After this, the diviner proposed a set of alternative outcomes as the possible answers to a content question about the number of *lao* sacrificial victims, something like *How many oxen shall we burn in the sacrificial event?* We label these types of divinatory charges as possible answers to sequences of questions. In such a context, the charges refer to different aspects of a single event.

In addition, some sets of divinatory charges consist of several subsets, each of which provides possible answers to yes-no questions regarding different aspects of the same event. For example:

(56) a₁. 丁巳卜, 賓貞: 王出于敦.

dīngsǐ bǔ, Bīn zhēn: wáng chū yú Dūn.

dingsi day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, king/ go out/ yú/ Dun

Divining on the *dingsi* day, Bin tested: The king should go out to Dun.

b₁. 貞: 王勿出于敦.

zhēn: wáng wù chū yú Dūn.

test/, king/ not/ go out/ yú /Dun

Tested: The king should not go out to Dun.

a₂. 貞: 王今丁巳出.

zhēn: wáng jīn dīngsì chū.

test/, king/ present/ *dingsi* day/ go out

Tested: The king should go out on this *dingsi* day.

b₂. 貞: 王勿隹今丁巳出

zhēn: wáng wù wéi jīn dīngsì chū.

test/, king/ not/ be/ present/ *dingsi* day/ go out

Tested: It should not be on this *dingsi* day that the king goes out.

a₃. 貞: 于庚申出于敦

zhēn: yú gēngshēn chū yú Dūn.

test/, on/ *gengshen* day/ go out/ yú/ Dun

Tested: It should be on the *gengshen* day that the king goes out to Dun.

b₃. 勿于庚申出.

wù yú gēngshēn chū.

not/ yú/ *gengshen* day/ go out

Tested: It should not be on the *gengshen* day that the king goes out to Dun. (*Heji* 7942)

Clearly, in this divinatory context, the major concern is the king's going out to the place Dun. The first pair (56a₁-b₁) divined about whether the king should pursue the action of going out to Dun. The second pair (56a₂-b₂) is about whether the king should go out to Dun on the *dingsi* day; and the last pair (56a₃-b₃) is about whether the king should go out to Dun on the *gengshen* day. These three pairs of charges are proposed as possible answers to three different yes-no questions related to the same event.

Regarding this example, there is one more important point to be mentioned. Let us consider the charges in the second subset (56a₂-b₂). These two charges constitute a pair of opposed propositions, serving as the binary answers to the yes-no question *Should the king go out to Dun on this dingsi day?* As a pair of positive-negative charges, we expect that they are only opposite in polarity, and exactly the same in other grammatical slots. However, this is not the case. In fact, they show differences in some grammatical details. In (56b₂), the time phrase *jīn dingsi*, "this *dingsi* day" is marked by the focus marker *wei* 隹, while the same time phrase in the positive counterpart (56a₂) is not, although in both charges, the time phrase occurs in the

preverbal focus position.⁷⁹ This indicates that the charges as sets of possible answers are not necessarily identical in syntactic structure. We consider that the diviner might have purposely used different grammatical strategies to mark the members of a possible answer-set differently, indicating his different attitudes towards the possible answers or outcomes proposed. In Part II of this study, we will show that the presence or absence of particle *qi* in a charge serves as one of the most important linguistic strategies for Shang diviners to indicate his attitude to the possible answers proposed.

4.5. Incomplete sets of alternative propositions

In OBI data, there are also charges for which the context is not rich enough to identify the implicit question being divined. In what follows, we present some data to illustrate charges with such status.

4.5.1. Charges in the *danzhen* 單貞, “single divination”

Within the “answer-set theory,” we would expect the charges to be either in the form of positive-negative pairs, or in the form of alternatives with contrast in one constituent, because the former defines the yes-no questions, while the latter defines the content questions. However, in the Shang divinatory inscriptions, we also see charges that belong to neither the paired pattern nor alternative pattern. One example is the case of the so-called *danzhen* 單貞, “single divination,” as follows:

(57) 戊子卜, 爭貞: 己丑雨.

wùzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: Jǐchǒu yǔ.

wuzi day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, *jichou* day/ rain

Divining on the *wuzi* day, Zheng tested: It will rain on *jichou* day. (*Bingbian* 84:1)

(58) 貞: 羽辛亥王出. 一 二 上 吉 三 四 五 六

zhēn: yǔ xīnhài wáng chū. ^{1,2,shangji,3,4,5,6}

test/, next/ *xinhai* day/ king/ go out ,[highly auspicious]

Tested: On the next *xinhai* day, the king will go out. (*Bingbian* 284:1)

⁷⁹ It is shown in Wu Keying (2001) that when a time adverbial phrase is not the focus of the sentence, it occurs in front of the subject, sitting at the beginning of the sentence.

(59) 羽辛勿出祖辛。 一三

yǔ xīn wù yǒu Zǔ Xīn. ^{1,2,3}

next/ *xin* day/, not/ offer/ Zu Xin

On the next *xin* day, we will not offer sacrifice to Zu Xin.” (*Bingbian* 237:1)

Examples in (57) and (58) are single positive charges, while (59) is a single negative charge. Because these three charges appear on the plastrons independently, although accompanied by preface, with no relation in content to the other inscriptions on the same plastrons, we refer to them as *danzhen* 單貞, “single divination” inscriptions. Due to the lack of sufficient context with which to identify the set relationship, it is difficult for us to determine the questions implied in such proposed answers. The previous discussion has shown that charges as possible answers are set-dependent members. So if no set relationship is found, then it is natural that the questions cannot be identified. We propose that they might be incomplete records of a set of paired-charges (or alternative charges). Namely, they might have been proposed as one member of a positive-negative pair (or alternative charges), but the relevant counterpart was not inscribed. We cannot determine whether or not this is true. Examples of this type are rare. According to Li Daliang (1972: 84-85), in the *Bingbian* collection, single positive charges are much more common than single negative charges. This can support the “abandoned record” theory, because it is reasonable to assume that the positive charge was inscribed first.

4.5.2. Identical affirmative pairs

Consider the following examples:

(60) a. 戊寅卜，吉貞：爰于羔。 [/] 上吉

wùyín bǔ, Dūn zhēn: liáo yú Yáng. [/] shàngjī

wuyin day/ divine/, Dun/ test/, offer *liao*-sacrifice/ to/ Yang, [highlyauspicious]

Divining on the *wuyin* day, Dun tested: We will offer *liao*-sacrifice to Yang.⁸⁰

b. 戊寅卜，吉貞：爰于羔。 一上吉二三

wùyín bǔ, Dūn zhēn: liáo yú Yáng. ^{1shàngjī, 2, 3}

wuyin day/ divine/, Dun/ test/, offer *liao*-sacrifice/ to/ Yang, [highlyauspicious]

⁸⁰ The character which Zhang Bingquan (1959-72) transcribes as *gao* 羔 is interpreted as *yang* 羊 in Takashima (2004a: PP 494).

Divining on the wuyin day, Dun tested: We will offer liao-sacrifice to Yang.

(*Bingbian* 494: 6-7)

In this set, the two affirmative charges are exactly the same. We tentatively assume that they belong to a divination set in which the same pair of charges was repeatedly divined, but for some reason, the engraver decided not to inscribe negative counterparts. The crack numbers also show that they are associated with different cracks.

4.5.3. Identical negative pairs

Consider the following inscriptions:

(61) a. 勿舞雩. 三

wù wǔ Yáng³

not/ perform dancing-ritual/ Yang

We should not perform the dancing -ritual to Yang.

b. 勿舞雩. 三

wù wǔ Yáng³

not/ perform dancing-ritual/ Yang

We should not perform the dancing -ritual to Yang. (*Bingbian* 469: 3-4)

In this set, the two negative charges are exactly the same. The crack number inscribed indicates that they were associated to the same crack, but this is surprising. For this particular example, I suggest one more possibility—that there is an engraving error here. The crack number 3 indicates that these two charges were both proposed in the third divination. But why was the same negative charge cut more than once? Maybe one of the negative charges was supposed to be the positive counterpart, but was misengraved as a negative one.

Perhaps the postulation that either the negative counterpart or the positive counterpart was not engraved, or was misengraved, or was missing altogether is too unsophisticated an account for the case of “homo-pairs” as in (60) and (61). A more in-depth contextual study would be required to find a more detailed account of these cases.⁸¹

⁸¹ See Li (1972: 92-94) for the relevant examples cited there.

4.5.4. Lexically identical pairs

We find some case in which charges in a “set” contain the same lexical items but are different in the word order such as the following example:

- (62) a. 癸卯卜，𠬪，出于河三羌卯三牛爰一牛。一

guǐmǎo bǔ, Nán, yǒu yú Hé sān Qiāng liú sān niú liáo yī niú.¹

guimao day/ divine/, Nan/, offer/ to/ He (the River God)/ three/ Qiang/ cut/ three/ bovine/
make a burnt offering/ one/ bovine¹

Divining on the *guimao* day, Nan (tested): We should make an offering to the River God of three Qiang tribesmen, split three bovines, and make a burnt offering of one bovine.

- b. 癸卯卜，𠬪，爰河一牛出三羌卯三牛。一

guǐmǎo bǔ, Nán, liáo Hé yī niú yǒu sān Qiāng liú sān niú.¹

guimao day/ divine/, Nan/ make a burnt offering/ He (the River God)/ one/ bovine/ offer/
three/ Qiang/ cut/ three/ bovine.¹

Divining on the *guimao* day, Nan (tested): We should make a burnt offering to the River God of one bovine, offer three Qiang tribesmen, and split tree bovines. (*Bing* 124: 1-2)

The two charges in (62) are identical in terms of lexical items, but the way in which they are organized is different. The first verb appearing in (62a) is *you* “, “to offer,” while that in (62b) is *liao* 爰, “to offer a *liao*-sacrifice.” According to Chow (1983), both *you* 出 and *liao* 爰 are Type B sacrificial verbs, which refer to two different sacrificial events. Therefore, the charges in (62a) and (62b) do not constitute a positive-negative or an alternative divinatory set that contrasts in only one of the constituents, and they are not a case of “homo-pairs” either. However, given that the sacrificial recipient in both charges is the same—He 河, “the River God”— we may consider that these two charges are the alternative answers to a content question like *What should we do for the sacrificial offering to the River God?* as we know that a question such as *what should we do* can denote the set of alternative propositions in which the VP does not necessarily belong to the same category.

4.6. A special case: sets with non-charge member

So far, we have discussed cases in which the charges serve as possible answers to a yes-no question, and as possible answers to a content question, as well as the cases in which more than one type of question was involved. In what follows, I will discuss a special case showing different properties from those mentioned above.

Consider the following example:

(63) a. 癸卯卜, 今日雨.

guǐmǎo bǔ, jīnrì yǔ

guimao day/ divine/ today/ rain

Divining on the *guimao* day, (X tested): It will rain today.

b. 其自西來雨.

qí zì xī lái yǔ.

qí/ from/ west/ come/ rain

From a westerly direction there might be rain.

c. 其自東來雨.

qí zì dōng lái yǔ.

qí/ from/ east / come/ rain

From an easterly direction there might be rain.

d. 其自北來雨.

qí zì běi lái yǔ.

qí/ from/ north/ come/ rain

From a northerly direction there might be rain.

e. 其自南來雨.

qí zì nán lái yǔ.

qí/ from/ south/ come/ rain

From a southern direction there might be rain. (*Heji* 12870)

The sentence parallelism indicates that (60b), (60c), (60d), and (60e) constitute a set of alternative charges. Based on the traditional interpretations, the sentence *guimao bu* 癸卯卜 would be taken

as the abbreviated form of the preface, and the following sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today,” would be treated as the charge component. Following this understanding of the inscriptions, how should we interpret the relation between the charge *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today,” and the other four charges in terms of the theory that charges are possible answers to the questions being divined? What questions do these five charges answer? The alternative charges from (60b) to (60e) tell us that the diviner was divining about the direction from which the rain will come. Namely, the alternative charges in (60b), (60c), (60d) and (60e) seem to be the possible answers to the implicit question *From which direction will the rain come?* But what question is implied in the sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today,” if it belongs to the charge component? Our theory encounters a problem here, since we only have a single sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today”: If it were followed by a negative counterpart like *jin ri bu yu* 今日不雨, “It will not rain today,” then we would have a positive-negative pair of charges that could be viewed as the possible answers to a yes-no question like, *Will it rain today?* If it were followed by a sentence like *ming ri yu* 明日雨, “It will rain tomorrow,” then we would have a set of alternative charges that could be viewed as the possible answers to a content question like, *When will it rain?* But that is not what we have.

However, this problem is only superficial. We must conduct a more careful examination of the inscriptions in this set. The four parallel charges in (b-e) are all prefixed by the word *qi* 其, but the sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today,” in (a) is not. The use of *qi* in a main clause expresses “uncertain outcome” in OBI (see discussion in Part II). In OBI, *qi* only appears in the contexts such as charges and prognostications, and never occurs in prefaces or verifications.⁸² It seems that here the absence of the word *qi* 其 before the sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, “It will rain today,” is not a case of abbreviation, because this sentence occurs before the other charge sentences in the set. Is it possible that this sentence does not belong to the content being divined, and is just a sentence referring to the topic of the divination? In other words, we propose to treat the sentence the sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨 as a non-charge. If this analysis is correct, then we can assume that before this divination, the diviner had already conducted a divination about

⁸² The charges and the prognostications seem to share the semantic property of nonveridicality, while the prefaces and the verifications share the semantic property of veridicality. That is, the things written in the former contexts are not things that really happened in the world (See Part II of this study).

whether it would rain on that day, and that perhaps the result of this divination was that it would rain on that day. Therefore, a divination was performed aiming to find out the direction from which the rain originated. The implicit question of this context is *From which direction will the rain come?* (b), (c), (d) and (e) are four hypothesized answers to the question. Simply speaking, we consider that the sentence *jin ri yu* 今日雨, "It will rain today," is not a charge member to be divined, but a sentence explaining the background of the matter at issue.

The above analysis suggests that we should find a context in which the preface includes a sentence referring to the topic being divined. This interpretation is plausible for the divinatory context below:

(64) a. 今己巳燎.

jīn jǐsì liáo.

present/ *jisi* day/ burn

(We) will make a burnt-offering on the present *jisi* day.

b. 燎一牛.

liáo yī niú.

burn/ one/ bovine

(We) will make a burnt-offering of one bovine (on the present *jisi* day).

c. 燎二牛.

liáo èr niú.

burn/ two/ bovine

(We) will make a burnt-offering of two bovines (on the present *jisi* day).

d. 燎三牛.

liáo sān niú.

burn / three/ bovine

(We) will make a burnt-offering of three bovines (on the present *jisi* day).

(*Bingbian* 311: 9-12)

In (64), (b), (c) and (d) constitute a set of alternative charges which contrast with respect to the numeral phrase and can be view as the possible answers to the implicit question *How many bovines should we burn?* What is the relation between (a) and these four charges? Is (a) one of

the charges or is it something else? After comparing it with (63a), I suggest we treat (64a) as a sentence referring to the topic of the divination, but not one of the possibilities being divined. In other words, the first “charge” in (63) and (64) is something similar to the topical clause in the following examples:

(65) a. 貞: 父戊歲, 惠宰.

zhēn: fu Wu gui, huǐ lǎo.

test/ father/ Wu/, *gui*-cutting sacrifice/, be/ penned sheep

Tested: As for the *gui*-cutting sacrifice directed to Father Wu, it should be the penned sheep that we use.

b. 貞: 惠小宰

zhēn: huǐ xiǎo lǎo.

test/, be/ small/ penned sheep

It should be the small penned sheep that we use.

c. 貞: 惠大宰

zhēn: huǐ dà lǎo.

test/, be/ big/ penned sheep

It should be the big penned sheep that we use. (*Heji* 23300)

In this example, the first charge is preceded by a topical clause *Fu Wu gui* 父戊歲, “the *gui*-cutting sacrifice directed to Father Wu,” referring to the topic of the divination. We may assume that it was omitted in (b) and (c). The contrast between the second part of (a), and the charges in (b) and (c), indicates that the question being divined is about what kind of sacrificial victims to use for the *gui*-cutting sacrifice to Father Wu. Thus, the first “charges” in (63) and (64) function the same as the topical clause *Fu Wu gui* 父戊歲 in this example.

4.7. Conclusion

The above study proposes an alternative understanding of the linguistic properties of divinatory charges in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions: Shang divinatory charges are neither questions nor statements, but sets of alternative propositions that provide possible answers (which are contextually determined) to the questions being divined. Grammatically, charges have the properties

of declarative sentences, in the sense that they are answers of alternative possibilities. Pragmatically and semantically, they have question-like properties, because they set up a choice-situation among a set of alternative propositions (or a set of possible worlds). This analysis not only provides a consistent account for the distinct formulaic feature of the Shang charges, but also offers a linguistic support for the view that the basic function of divination is to request information from the supreme spirits, and that the Shang divination is also not exceptional in this aspect.

Part II: The Expressions of “Uncertain Outcome” in Pre-Classical and Early Classical Chinese: The *qi*-Marked Constructions

To use the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions as historical documents for the writing of Shang history, it is essential that we understand the conventions that produced them. Such understanding involves, to a significant degree, an understanding of how the Shang word qi functioned.

—David N. Keightley (1995), *Divinatory Conventions in Late Shang China*.

Chapter 5

The grammatical functions of *qi* in early Classical Chinese

5.1. Intriduction

Another issue that bears on our understanding of the Shang Oracle-Bone Inscriptions involves the interpretation of the word *qi* 其, which is ubiquitous in the bone inscriptions. It is used in more divinatory charges than any other word;⁸³ however, what it means and how it functions is still under debate. My proposal that charges are sets of alternative propositions containing the possible answers to the questions being divined does not provide a direct account for the appearance of this word. Without an appropriate understanding of how *qi* functions in OBI, and in particular how it functions in the charge environment, we cannot fully understand the Shang divinatory charges. Therefore, the remainder of this study is devoted to investigating the use of *qi* from a historical perspective in the early Chinese texts.

5.1.1. *Qi* in OBI

While *qi* is used in many divinatory charges, it is omitted from others that are similar or virtually identical in lexical content. Below are some examples that illustrate this situation. The divinations in the four examples below are all about whether it will rain during a particular time indicated. However, we see that some charges are associated with the particle *qi*, but some are not. The

⁸³ According to Takashima (1985: 92-115), *qi* is used over 530 times in just one OBI collection, that is, the *Bingbian*, which only contains the inscriptions of Period I, the first stage of the five-period periodization scheme proposed by Dong Zuobin (1933) and followed generally by the specialists in the field.

distribution of *qi* in these examples does not seem to obey an apparent syntactic or semantic principle by which one can predict the presence or absence of *qi*.

In (1), *qi* occurs only in the affirmative charge, not in the corresponding negative charge, as in the pattern: {*qi* + P}: { -P}.

- (1) a. 羽己卯其雨.

yǔ jǐmǎo qí yǔ

next/ *jimao* day/ qí/ rain

Next *jimao* day, it will perhaps rain.

- b. 羽己卯不雨.

yǔ jǐmǎo bù yǔ

next/ *jimao* day/ not/ rain

Next *jimao* day, it will not rain. (*Bingbian* 349: 46-47)

In (2), *qi* occurs only in the negative charge, not in the affirmative charge, as in the pattern: {+ P}: { *qi* -P}

- (2) a. 貞: 今日雨.

zhēn: jīn rì yǔ.

test/, present/ day/ rain

Tested: Today it will rain.

- b. 貞: 今日不其雨.

zhēn: jīn rì bù qí yǔ.

test/, present/ day/ not/ qí/ rain

Tested: Today it will perhaps not rain. (*Heji*: 140 Reverse)

In (3), *qi* occurs in both charges, as in the pattern as: {*qi* + P}: { *qi* -P}. But in (4), *qi* occurs in neither of the two charges, as in the pattern as: {Ø + P}: { Ø -P}.

- (3) a. 癸酉卜, 自今至丁丑其雨. 不.

guǐyǒu bǔ, zì jīn zhì dīngchǒu qí yǔ. bù.

guiyou day/ divine/, from/ present time/ to/ *dingchou* day/ qí/ rain/, not

Divining on the *guiyou* day, from now to the *dingchou* day, it will perhaps rain. It did not rain.

b. 自今至丁丑不其雨. 允不.

zì jīn zhì dīngchǒu bù qí yǔ. yǔn bù.

from/ present time/ to/ *dīngchou* day/ not/ qí/ rain/, indeed/ not.

Form today to the *dīngchou* day, it will perhaps not rain. (It) did not rain indeed.

(*Heji* 21052)

(4) a. 己丑卜, 爭貞: 羽乙未雨.

jǐ chǒu bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: yǔ yǐ wèi yǔ.

jichou day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, next/ *yiwei* day/ rain


Divining on the *jichou* day, Zheng tested: Next *yiwei* day it will rain.

b. [](乙)未不雨.

yǐ wèi bù yǔ.

yiwei day/ not/ rain

Next *yiwei* day it will not rain. (*Bingbian* 522: 1-2)

The meaning and function of *qi* began receiving scholars' attention as soon as the study of OBI began. And the study of this issue has been continued intensively since the 1970s.⁸⁴ So far, however, a satisfying analysis of this word has not yet been presented. Two basic analyses have been proposed in the literature regarding the grammatical role of *qi* in the OBI language. The first view has its root in the traditional interpretation of the particle *qi* in Classical Chinese.⁸⁵ In Classical Chinese *qi* seems to have two distinct functions. The first is to appear in front of a noun phrase (NP) like a possessive pronoun. The second is used in front a verb phrase (VP) adverbially and seems to convey some sort of modal meaning. Because these two functions cover two apparently unrelated grammatical categories, scholars generally consider that *qi* is the same character used to represent two different words, labelling it as "pronominal *qi*" and "modal *qi*." *Qi* 其 in OBI is written as , resembling the picture of a basket. Since this character is mostly used in front of a verb in a sentence, most scholars assume that *qi* in OBI is an adverbial or modal particle which is connected to the Classical Chinese "modal *qi*," though what precise modal function and meaning *qi* expresses is still a question in dispute (Hu Guangwei 1928; Chen

⁸⁴ See Takashima (1994) for a detailed literature review of the previous studies of *qi* in OBI and the relevant references cited there.

⁸⁵ *Qi* is also a frequently used grammatical particle in early Chinese texts. For example, according to He Leshi 何樂士 (1984 [1989: 357]), *qi* is used 2,469 times in the early Warring States text, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳.

Mengjia 1956; Takashima 1973; Serruys 1974, 1986, among others).⁸⁶

A different analysis of the Classical Chinese *qi* and OBI *qi* is proposed in Nivison (1968, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c), which starts with a completely different assumption with respect to the relation between the so-called “pronominal *qi*” and the “modal *qi*.” According to Nivison, *qi* represents only one word; *qi* is not a modal particle at all in the OBI language; rather, it is a pronominal expression, and the so-called modal *qi* is the same pronominal *qi* used in a different aspect. Nivison’s view did not receive much attention in the literature, until it was taken up and further supported by Takashima (1996).⁸⁷

Although the above two approaches differ greatly in their treatment of the grammatical status of *qi*, especially the relation between the “pronominal *qi*” and the “modal *qi*,” the disagreements are even greater with respect to the interpretation of *qi*’s modal meaning and function. The most influential interpretation is that *qi* expresses “uncertainty” in the OBI (Hu Guangwei 1928; Chen Mengjia 1956; Takashima 1973). But many scholars do not accept this. For example, Serruys (1974) proposes that *qi* does not express primarily “uncertain feelings,” rather, it specifies the “less desired alternative.”⁸⁸

The disagreement amongst scholars over the particle *qi* involves these main issues:

- (i) What is the relationship between the pronoun *qi* and the modal *qi*? Are they two distinct words written with the same character, or are they the same word used in two different grammatical functions?
- (ii) How exactly does the pronominal *qi* operate in the syntax of preclassical and early classical language?
- (iii) What precise modal function does *qi* play in preclassical and early classical language?
- (iv) What is the historical connection between the OBI *qi* and the classical *qi*?

The task of this study is to provide coherent answers to these questions, with a focus on *qi*’s modal function. However, the lack of large contexts in the Shang Oracle-Bone inscriptions makes it difficult for us to grasp *qi*’s true nature. Since *qi* continued to be an active grammatical particle in later texts also, we start our exploration with its use in the later texts where the context is rich

⁸⁶ See Takashima (1994) for different opinions on the modal meanings of the OBI *qi* proposed in previous studies.

⁸⁷ For more discussion of Nivison and Takashima’s analysis of *qi* in OBI, see Chapter 8.

⁸⁸ For more discussion of Serruys’ “undesirable *qi* theory,” see Chapter 8.

enough for us to ascertain its nature. Even though the use of *qi* is not necessarily the same in these two periods of Chinese, we consider that a better understanding of how it functions in the later forms of Chinese will help to elucidate its function in the ancestor language, in particular the Shang language. In this chapter, we first make an effort to distinguish the grammatical functions of *qi* in different grammatical environments in early classical texts, which will give us a more complete picture of this particle in the early stages of Chinese, laying a base for us to reconstruct the use of *qi* in the Oracle Bone language.

5.1.2. The traditional view of *qi* in early Classical Chinese—pronominal *qi* and modal *qi* are two different words

As mentioned above, most scholars in the study of Classical Chinese grammar considered that *qi* functions both as a (possessive) pronoun and as an adverbial particle in classical Chinese (e.g., Ma Jianzhong 1898 [1983]; Yang Shuda 1927[1978]; Wang Li 1958; Zhou Fagao 1959-62; Pulleyblank 1995; among others). The following examples seem to illustrate this contrast. In examples (5) and (6), the particle *qi* occurs before a noun phrase. The use of *qi* in such an environment is commonly considered to be a possessive pronoun and is often called “pronominal *qi*.” In (7) and (8), *qi* occurs in front of the main verb, and is commonly considered as an adverbial modal particle, and for this reason is called “modal *qi*.”

- (5) 之子于歸，言秣其馬。(詩經·漢廣)

zhī zǐ yú guī, yán mò qí mǎ.

zhī/ girl/ yú/ return/, yán/ feed/ qí/ horse

“This young lady goes to her new home, we feed her horses.” (SJ, Han guang; Karlgren 1950a: 9/2)

- (6) 趙盾弑其君。(左傳·宣2/3)

Zhào Dùn shǐ qí jūn

Zhao Dun/ kill/ qí / ruler

Zhao Dun killed his ruler. (ZZ, Xun 2/3) 2. 662

- (7) 天其永我命于茲新邑。(尚書·盤庚)

tiān qí yǒng wǒ mìng yú zī xīn yì.

Heaven/ qí/ prolong/ our/ mandate/ yú / this/ new/ city

Heaven will surely prolong our mandate in this new city.

“Heaven will prolong our mandate in this new city.” (SS, Pan Geng; Karlgren 1950b: 6/4)

- (8) 王室其將卑乎? (國語・周語上/4)

Wáng shǐ qí jiāng bēi hū?

royal/ court/ qí/ will/ decline/ hū

The royal court is surely going to decline, isn't it? (GY, Zhouyu A/4) 1.12

Even though scholars agree on distinguishing the two basic functions for *qi*, they do not agree on how exactly *qi* plays its pronominal or modal functions in the syntax of the classical language (see discussion below).

5.1.3. The proposal — the three functions of *qi* in early Classical Chinese

In this study, we intend to show that the distinction made between the grammatical functions of *qi* as pronominal and modal cannot fully characterize the nature of the particle *qi*. Instead, we hold that the basic grammatical functions of *qi* in early Classical Chinese are as follows:

(i) *Qi* is a genitive marker that specifies a genitive/possessive relation.⁸⁹ The genitive constructions marked with *qi* can be represented as [Gen PRO_[gen] *qi* [NP]]]. Here “PRO” stands for a phonetically silent pronominal possessor.

(ii) *Qi* is a nominalizing marker in dependent clauses. The nominalized constructions marked with *qi* can be represented as [Nom PRO_[nom] *qi* [VP]]. Here “PRO” stands for a phonetically silent pronominal subject; and

(iii) *Qi* is a modality marker in main clauses, which is used to encode the event or state being expressed as having an “uncertain outcome.” The structure of a *qi*-marked main clause is [(Subj) [Mod *qi* [VP]]].

In what follows, we will present data in early Classical Chinese that illustrate these three functions for *qi*. First, we shall demonstrate that *qi*'s usage in front of a noun is not a possessive pronoun used to be a pronominal possessor. Instead, *qi* is a genitive marker in this environment, similar to the well-recognized genitive marker *zhi* 之. In our view, both *zhi* and *qi* are genitive

⁸⁹ The terms “genitive” and “possessive” as used in this study refer to constructions where two nouns enter into a relation with one another.

markers in early Classical Chinese, but they are used in different contexts. *Zhi* is used in the genitive structures in which the possessor NP occurs overtly, while *qi* is used in the genitive structures in which there is no overt possessor.⁹⁰ Furthermore, we will show that the parallel between *qi* and *zhi* in genitive/possessive structure is also seen in nominalized constructions. That is, like *zhi*, *qi* can also be used as a nominalizing marker to mark a clause as dependent or non-main. Lastly, we will demonstrate that apart from being used as a genitive marker in genitive structures and a nominalizing marker in nominalized dependent clauses, *qi* can be also used in independent/main clauses as a modality marker to encode what is said as an uncertain outcome.⁹¹ We propose that *qi*'s three grammatical functions are historically connected. Namely, the nominalizing function of *qi* is an extension of its genitive function, and the modal function of *qi* is a later development from its nominalizing function, *via* a process of de-subordination, whereby a dependent clause comes to be used as an independent main clause, and thus an element that is normally found in a dependent clause begins to occur in a main clause (see Aikhenvald *Evidentiality* (2004 : 110)).⁹²

5.2. *Qi* as a genitive marker in genitive constructions

In this section, we are concerned with the genitive function of *qi* in early Classical Chinese. An example of this function is given in (9):

- (9) 他日吾見蔑之面而已，今吾見其心矣。（左傳·襄25/14）

tā rì, wú jiàn Miè zhī miàn éryǐ, jīn wú jiàn qí xīn yǐ.

Other / day/, I / see/ Mie/ zhī / face/ éryǐ/, now / I / see/ qí/ heart/ yǐ.

Formerly, I had seen only Mie's face, but now I have seen his heart.

(ZZ, Xiang 25/14)3: 1108

⁹⁰ Thanks to Rose-Marie Déchaine (personal communication) for inspiring me with this analysis of *qi*. Based on my description of the genitive constructions in early Classical Chinese, Rose-Marie Déchaine observes that *qi* is not a possessive pronoun or pronoun-like word, more or less like "his/her/its/their" in English; rather, *qi* should be understood as a genitive marker that has the same property as the genitive marker *zhi*. The difference between them is that *zhi* is used when there is an overt possessor NP, while *qi* is used when there is no overt possessor NP. However, we should point out that this complementary distribution is seen only in the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*. In earlier classics such as the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*, *qi* is seen to be used with an overt possessor in a possessive construction or with an overt subject in a nominalized dependent clause in the same way as how *zhi* is used in early classics (see more discussion in 5.2.2). And in the preclassical texts OBI, it is only *qi* that is used as a genitive and nominalizing marker (see Chapter 8).

⁹¹ See discussion in Chapter 6.

⁹² See discussion in Chapter 8.

In (9), there are two structurally parallel sentences which have the same subject and the same verb but only contrast in the object phrases. In the first sentence the object of the verb *jian* 見, “to see,” is the phrase *Mie zhi mian* 蔑之面, “Mie’s face,” in which the genitive marker *zhi* occurs between the two nouns *Mie* and *mian* in the pattern “NP₁ + *zhi* + NP₂,” indicating that the two nouns are in a possessive relation. In the corresponding position of the second clause, we see that the object phrase of the verb *jian* is *qi xin* 其心. By comparing it to the phrase *Mie zhi mian*, we see that the difference between these two possessive phrase is that the one with *zhi* has an overt possessor, while the one with *qi* has no overt possessor.

The question to be considered here is this: What grammatical role does *qi* play in the possessive construction “*qi* + NP,” as in *qi xin* 其心? In most previous studies, *qi* in this type of possessive phrase is treated as a pronominal element, even though scholars disagree as to whether it should be treated as a third-person possessive, or another kind of pronoun, or a substitute of “N + *zhi*.”⁹³

However, in addition to these pronominal or substitute analyses, there is also a genitive analysis proposed in the literature. Yu Min (1949[1984: 358-366]) proposes that *qi* in the possessive constructions should be considered a genitive marker. According to Yu Min, *qi* in this environment has the same nature as the well-recognized genitive marker *zhi* 之 in Classical Chinese, or the genitive marker *de* 的 in modern Mandarin, pointing out that *qi* is morphologically related to the later genitive markers in some modern Chinese dialects such as the *kɛ/kai* in Kejia 客家 dialect, the *kɛ* in Guangzhou 廣州 dialect, and the *kəʔ* in Suzhou 蘇州 dialect (1949[1984: 360]), and they can all be connected to the Tibetan genitive marker *-gji* (which has five different variant forms—*-gji*, *-gi*, *-kji*, *-ji*, or *-i*—depending on the ending sound of the noun preceding it).⁹⁴ It is this genitive view of *qi* that we will follow in this study.

However, Yu does not discuss the difference between *qi* and *zhi* in genitive constructions. As

⁹³ For details of these treatments, see discussion below.

⁹⁴ Yu gives the following comments on the study of *qi*. He notes that there is not yet a satisfactory analysis which can adequately account for the different usages of *qi*, and it seems no answer would be found if we were only to count on the Chinese transmitted texts. At the same time, Yu is well aware that his hypothesis of *qi* as a genitive marker connected to the genitive marker *-gji* in Tibetan is not easily proved, saying that he does not expect it to be accepted without any doubt. However, he suggests that if Chinese and Tibetan belong to the same language family and *qi* and Tibetan genitive marker *-gji* are cognates, then by extension *qi* should be treated as a genitive marker; given this view, Yu says that the several usages of *qi* in Classical Chinese can be *jiang de ji touliang* 講得極透亮, “elucidated thoroughly.”

for this, we propose the following analysis. In early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, *qi* and *zhi* 之 are the same genitive marker in complementary distribution. The difference between them is that *zhi* is used in the environment where there is an overt possessor, while *qi* is used in the environment where there is no overt possessor. By “overt possessor,” we refer to the possessor that is lexically realized by a noun or a pronoun in the surface structure of a sentence. We assume that in certain discourse contexts, a speaker may omit a previously introduced noun as the possessor of another noun in the given context if the contextual meaning is clear enough for the hearer or the reader to identify a possessive relation between them. For example, in (9), the proper noun *Mie* 蔑, appearing in the first clause as the possessor of *mian*, “face,” it is not repeated or replaced by a pronoun in the second clause, even though the semantic relation between it and the noun *xin*, “heart” is that of possessor and possessee.

It is not uncommon for a possessor to be omitted by a speaker in order to avoid repetition. Below are some Mandarin examples:

(10) 我把小王的電話和小王的地址丟了。

wǒ bǎ Xiǎo Wáng de diànhuà hé Xiǎo Wáng de dìzhǐ diū le.

I/ ba/ Xiao Wang/ de / phone/ and/ Xiao Wang/ de / address/ lose/ le

I have lost Xiao Wang's phone number and Xiao Wang's address.

To understand this sentence, three particles need to be explained. *Ba* is a fronted object marker; *de* is a genitive/possessive marker (similar to 's in English), and *le* is an aspectual marker of completed action or state. There are two *de*-marked possessive phrases in this sentence, in which the proper noun *Xiao Wang* is the possessor of both the possessee nouns of *dianhua*, “phone,” here referring to “phone number,” and *dizhi*, “address.” However, the same meaning can be expressed in the sentence (11) below, in which the full noun possessor *Xiao Wang* is replaced by a pronominal possessor, the third-person pronoun *ta*, “he” before the possessive marker *de* in the second possessive phrase:

- (11) 我把小王的電話和他的地址丟了。

wǒ bǎ Xiǎo Wáng de diànhuà hé tā de dìzhǐ diū le.

I / *ba* / Xiao Wang / *de* / phone / and / he / *de* / address / lose / *le*

I have lost Xiao Wang's phone number and his address.

Sentences (10) and (11) are similar in that both possessive phrases contain an overt possessor, and different in that the possessor in (10) is a full noun, while in (11) it is a pronoun. But the meaning of (10) and (11) can also be expressed by a more concise sentence (12), in which the possessor in the second possessive phrase is omitted:

- (12) 我把小王的電話(和)地址丟了。

wǒ bǎ Xiǎo Wáng de diànhuà (hé) dìzhǐ diū le.

I / *ba* / Xiao Wang / *de* / phone / (and) / address / lose / *le*

I have lost Xiao Wang's phone number (and) address.

Clearly, the possessor of *dizhi*, "address" is also Xiao Wang, but it does not occur overtly in full noun or pronoun form, as in (10) and (11). Note that this sentence can be reduced further by omitting the conjunction *he*, "and."

Interestingly, in Mandarin it is also possible for the sentences in (10)-(12) to be reduced into the form in (13) below, in which the possessor Xiao Wang in the second possessive phrase is omitted, but the possessive marker *de* is kept:

- (13) 我把小王的電話、的地址丟了。

wǒ bǎ Xiǎo Wáng de diànhuà , de dìzhǐ diū le.

I / *ba* / Xiao Wang / *de* / phone / *de* / address / lose / *le*

I have lost Xiao Wang's phone number, 's address (= I have lost Xiao Wang's phone number (and) address.

Although this kind of possessive expression is not common as the ones in (10)-(12), it does not mean that it is ungrammatical. In Chao (1968: 292), the following sentence, written by Lu Xun 魯迅, one of the greatest writers in modern Chinese literature, is mentioned:

- (14) 因為從那裡面，看見了被壓迫者的善良的靈魂，的心酸，的爭執...

yīnwèi cóng nà lǐmiàn, kànjiàn le bèi yāpò zhě de shànláng de línghún, de xīnsuān, de zhēngzhí...

because/ from/ there/, see/ *le/ bei* (passive marker) / oppress/ *zhe* (=the ones who)/ *de* / good/ soul/, *de/ bitter/*, *de/* struggle

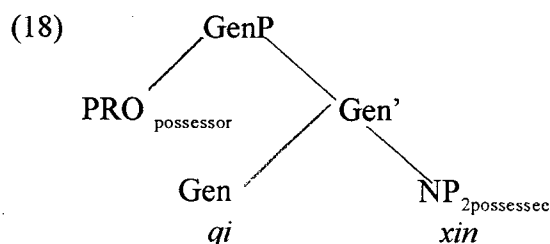
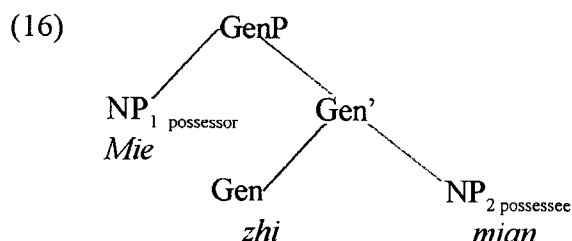
"Because from there one saw the oppressed ones' good soul, 's bitter(ness), 's struggl(ing)..." (cited from Chao 1968: 292)

The existence of the examples like (13) and (14) indicates that it is possible to have possessive constructions in Chinese in which the possessor is omitted but the possessive marker is not, even though such possessive constructions are not common in speech.

Following the X-bar theory of phrase structure that deals with the hierarchical structure of sentences proposed in generative grammar,⁹⁵ the genitive structure with *zhi* like *Mie zhi mian* 蔑之面 in example (9) can be illustrated as in (15) or (16), and the genitive structure with *qi*, as in *qi xin* 其心, can be illustrated as in (17) or (18).

- (15) [Gen NP₁ [_{gen} *zhi* [NP₂]]]

- (17) [Gen PRO [_{gen} *qi* [NP]]]



Here, we label the genitive structure GenP, and it contains a specifier and an intermediate projection Gen'. Gen' contains the head of the projection (Gen), whose sister is the complement NP₂. In (16), *zhi* is in the head position of GenP. NP₁, the possessor, is in the Specifier position of GenP. NP₂, the possessee, is the complement of Gen. Comparing the structure with *qi* in (18) with the one in (16), we see that the only difference between them is that in (18), the

⁹⁵ The first discussion of X-bar theory is in Chomsky (1970) in which the idea is sketched in a rather rough fashion. The most comprehensive discussion and illustration of X'-theory is Jackendoff (1977). For later development of the theory, see Webelhuth (1995). See Roberts (1997) for a general introduction of the theory and relevant references.

possessor NP₁ in the Specifier position of GenP is null. Note that PRO stands for a phonetically silent element. In other words, *qi* is used when a possessive noun or pronoun is not present in the possessor position.

One point to be emphasized about the structure in (18) is that we treat *qi* as the head of the possessive construction, not as a pronominal possessor. As shown in this structure, *qi* is in the position of the head of the GenP. The difference between these two treatments is as follows. In the pronominal analysis, *qi* is considered pronoun-like element such as a third-person possessive pronoun similar to the English “his,” while in the genitive analysis, *qi* is considered a pure genitive marker used between a covert (or overt in earlier texts, see 5.2.2) possessor and a possessed noun similar to the genitive marker *de* 的 in modern Chinese.

Even though the interpretation of *qi* as a third person possessive, more or less like “his/her/its/their” mostly works out contextually, this solution does not necessarily reflect *qi*’s nature. We hold that *qi* is not equivalent to a third-person possessive.⁹⁶ In fact, the reference of *qi* is not consistent all the time as a third person possessive, and it may refer to a first person or second person as well. The fact that *qi* does not have a consistent third-person reference has been observed by other scholars. For example, He Leshi et al. (1985: 412) and He Leshi (1980[1989]) consider *qi* as basically a third-person possessive, which occasionally may also be used to refer to a first person or a second person. Also Takashima (1999, and personal communication) does not accept the treatment of *qi* as a third-person possessive pronoun, pointing out that *qi* is pronominal not just in the category of person, but it is a psychologically “distal” resumptive as opposed to *jue* 厥, which is “proximal.” Takashima (1999) observes that in bronze inscriptions from the Eastern Zhou to the Zhanguo (i.e., the Warring States) period, the contrast between *qi* and *jue* is that of “distal” and “proximal” in their anaphoric function.⁹⁷ According to Takashima (1999: 427), the referential range of *jue* 厥, *qi* 其, and *zhi* 之 can be rendered as follows:

⁹⁶ Our English translation of the *qi*-marked genitive construction with a supplement of a third-person possessive such as *his/her/its/their* only reflects the contextual meaning of the construction; this does not mean that the grammatical function of *qi* in this construction is the same as that of English third-person possessives.

⁹⁷ Since this “distal” and “proximal” contrast between *qi* and *jue* is not seen in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions and the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, which are the major concern of this study, we will not tackle this issue in the following discussion.

[X] [厥 Y] “X, my/your/his/her/their/its” [+stress, proximal]

[X] [其 Y] “X, my/his/her/their/its” [-stress, distal]

[X] [之 Y] “X, this” [-stress, proximal]

Thus, the translation of “*qi* + NP” as “his/her/its/their/my/your + NP” reflects the contextual meaning; it does not mean that *qi* itself is a third-person possessive in this grammatical context. This means that the treatment of *qi* as a third-person possessive is not a satisfactory analysis.⁹⁸

However, the fact that *qi* does not have a consistent reference and *qi*’s “reference” covers a wide range and will change in different contexts does not exclude the possibility to take *qi* as a pronominal element. Namely it seems that *qi* can still be taken as a pronoun-like element. In particular, we can treat it as the kind of pronoun whose reference is not necessarily restricted in third person, or the kind of pronoun which can be used to refer to any antecedent or whatever the speaker has in mind. However, our position is that *qi* should be considered as a genitive marker rather than a pronoun-like element. This proposed analysis is based on the following reasons. First, *qi* is never used in the subject or object position in an independent clause to refer to an antecedent NP. Thus, the hypothesis that *qi* is a genitive marker rather than a pronominal element seems quite reasonable, for if we treat *qi* as a pronominal element, we will have difficulty explaining why *qi*’s referentiality is only restricted in the possessive construction “*qi* + NP” and the dependent clause “*qi* + VP,” while why other pronouns or deictic elements in the language do not have such restrictions.

Logically, this still does not dismiss the possibility that *qi* is a pronoun-like element. Namely, we may still treat it as the kind of pronoun that is only used in some particular types of grammatical contexts. However, as it will be shown later, this pronominal treatment cannot provide a consistent account for historical development of *qi*’s use. That is, although *qi* and *zhi* have complementary distribution in genitive and nominalizing constructions in early Classical Chinese, this is not the case in earlier periods (see more discussion in 5.2.2 and 5.3.2). In the earliest classics such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, *qi* can be used with an overt possessor in a

⁹⁸ It seems that there is still one possible analysis for *qi* used in possessive phrases. That is, instead of treating it as a third-person possessive, we can treat it as a non-personal “distal” resumptive pronoun as opposed to *jue* 厥 (which is “proximal”), as suggested by Takashima (1999, and personal communication). See discussion below for the reasons why we do not consider *qi* as a pronominal element.

possessive phrase or with an overt subject in a nominalized dependent clause. And in the pre-Classical texts OBI, it is only *qi*, rather than *zhi*, that is used in genitive constructions and nominalized dependent clauses, regardless if there is an overt or a covert possessor or subject. However, *zhi* in OBI is only used as a demonstrative and not as a genitive or nominalizing marker. These seem to suggest that *qi* is originally a genitive marker, and *zhi* is originally a demonstrative.⁹⁹ What is different in the classical period is that part of *qi*'s distribution (i.e., in the case where there is an overt possessor or subject) is taken over by *zhi*. In addition to these, there is still one good reason for us to hold the genitive analysis of *qi*. That is, in many modern Chinese dialects, the genitive markers all started with the initial *k-*, which seems to be traced back to *qi* in early Classical Chinese. But in many other dialects, the genitive markers start with the initial *t-*, which is the descendant of *zhi*. To treat *qi* as a genitive marker in the earlier stages of Chinese provides a good explanation for this dialectal divergence historically.

We admit that in order to maintain the analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker rather than a pronoun-like element, we need to explain the apparent "referentiality" of *qi*, even though this "referentiality" is only restricted in possessive phrases or dependent clauses. As for this, I propose that it is the PRO (i.e., a phonetically silent pronoun, or an empty pronoun) occurring in front of *qi*, as in the structure [Gen PRO_[gen] *qi* [NP]] or [Nom PRO_[nom] *qi* [VP]], that is responsible for the apparent "referentiality" of these structures. In other words, it is the PRO, the empty pronoun, rather than *qi*, that plays the grammatical function of referring to a contextually relevant individual.

The evidence that an empty pronoun exists in front of *qi* in the above two structures comes from the fact that an overt pronoun is not always required in a sentence in Classical Chinese. It is a known fact that Classical Chinese is null-subject language; namely, a verb need not have an overt subject. However, a null-subject sentence does not mean that the verb used in the sentence has no semantic agent or doer at all. In fact, the sentence without an overt subject still has the interpretation of having a semantic subject referring to a contextually relevant individual. Why would a sentence without an overt pronoun-subject still have the pronominal interpretation? Or,

⁹⁹ Yu Min (1949 [1984]) also suggests that the genitive marker in the early Zhou period is *qi* but not *zhi*. The examples which clearly show that *qi* has a demonstrative use are only found in the late Zhangguo texts (e.g., Pulleyblank 1995: 80).

what is the source of the pronominal interpretation of the null subject? One reasonable explanation proposed in Generative Grammar literature for this phenomenon is that there is an empty pronoun in the subject position.¹⁰⁰ Given this, it is reasonable to assume that there is an empty pronoun, the PRO, in the genitive structure [Gen PRO_[gen] *qi* [NP]] and the nominalizing construction [Nom PRO_[nom] *qi* [VP]], and it is this PRO that is responsible for the pronominal interpretation of these structures. Thus, the treatment of *qi* in the possessive construction “*qi* + NP” as a genitive marker is not implausible. In what follows, I will sketch out the likely analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker.

5.2.1. The parallel between *qi* and *zhi* in genitive constructions

As mentioned above, we consider that both *zhi* and *qi* are genitive markers used to specify a possessive relation between two nouns in early Classical Chinese, but they have different distributions: *Zhi* is used when there is an overt possessor noun, while *qi* is used when there is not an overt possessor noun. The aim of this section is to show the parallel relation between genitive *qi* and genitive *zhi*.

5.2.1.1. *Zhi*-marked genitive constructions

Let us start with the case in which *zhi* is used as a genitive marker between two nouns, as in the following possessive phrases:

- (19) 寡君之母 (左傳·成 2/3)

guǎjūn zhī mǔ

our ruler/ *zhī*/ mother

the mother of our ruler (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2.797

- (20) 先王之命 (左傳·成 2/3)

xiān wáng zhī mǐng

former / king/ *zhī*/ command

the commands of the former kings (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2.798

¹⁰⁰ See Roberts 1997:149-182 for more discussion on empty pronouns and null subjects in other null-subject languages.

- (21) 君之惠 (左傳·成 2/3)

jūn zhī huǐ

your lordship/ zhī/ kindness

the kindness of your ruler (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2.799

I consider the particle *zhi* in these phrases to be a genitive marker, as do most scholars.¹⁰¹ As a genitive marker, *zhi* is usually used between two nouns, which can be simply represented as “NP₁ + *zhi* + NP₂.” I take the possessive phrases, as in (19)-(21), as genitive structures headed by the genitive marker *zhi*, with the structure as in (16) above.

Two points must be mentioned about the *zhi*-marked genitive structure. The first is that *zhi* may be omitted from the “NP₁ + *zhi* + NP₂,” as in the following example. In (22), there are three possessive phrases: *Xia wang* 夏王, “the king of Xia dynasty,” *zhong li* 衆力, “the efforts of the multitude,” and *Xia yi* 夏邑, “the city of Xia.” They are all not marked with *zhi*.

- (22) 夏王率遏衆力, 率割夏邑. (尚書·湯誓)

Xià wáng shuài è zhòng lì, shuài gē Xià yǐ.

Xia/ king/ all/ obstruct/ multitude/, all/ cut/ Xia/ city; settlement

“The Hia (=Xia) king in all (ways) obstructs the efforts of the multitude, in all (ways) he injures the city of Hia (=Xia).” (SS, Tangshi; Karlgren 1950b: 4/3)

The second is that the two nouns in a genitive structure are not always in the relation of possessor and possessee. Sometimes the genitive relation between two nouns is a kind of descriptive relation in which the function of the specifier is to characterize or describe the complement noun in various respects (e.g., New Year’s day). In classical texts, such descriptive genitive structures are also often seen, as in the phrase *xin zhi guan* 心之官, “the organ-like heart” (*Meng zi*, *Gaozi* A). In the *Guoyu* and *Zuozhuan* texts, we also see this type of genitive structure, as in the following (23). In this example, the two noun phrases *Xia Lü* 夏呂 and *gong* 功 establish a genitive relation in which the function of the first noun phrase is to characterize or describe the second noun phrase.

¹⁰¹ According to Pulleyblank (1995: 61), the *zhi* in this use is etymologically the same word as modern *de* 的. It is pointed out again in Pulleyblank (1999: 4) that *de* is the direct descendant of *zhi*, *zhi* being the reading pronunciation that it has acquired through regular sound change and *de* being a pronunciation which is actually closer to that of Old Chinese that it retained in the colloquial language.

- (23) 其興者，必有夏呂之功焉。(國語·周語下/3)

qí xīng zhě, bǐ yǒu Xia Lǚ zhī gōng yān.

qí/ rising/ zhě/, certainly / have/ Xia (Yu)/ Lǚ (Siyue)/ zhī/ achievements/ yān¹⁰²

As for those who had risen as kings, they certainly had the merits and achievements like Xia Yu and Lǚ Siyue's with them. (GY, Zhouyu C/3) 1.108

5.2.1.2. *Qi*-marked genitive constructions

With the understanding of genitive marker *zhi* as described above, now let us look its variant form *qi*. We claim that the distribution of genitive marker *qi* displays a complementary relationship with *zhi*. Namely, when a NP occurring in a preceding clause does not need to be repeated as the possessor in front of the head noun, then *qi* is used, as in example in (9). Below are more examples. In (24), the first clause has a genitive phrase marked by *zhi*, that is, *Gong gong zhi bei*, 公宮之北, "north of the duke's palace." It has the pattern "NP₁ + *zhi* + NP₂," in which *zhi* is inserted to indicate that the two nouns are in a possessive relation, and its internal structure can be illustrated as in (16). In the second clause in which the same possessor *Gong gong* 公宮 does not need to be repeated in front of the possessee *nan* 南, "south," *qi* is used instead. By comparing it to the phrase *Gong gong zhi bei* 公宮之北, we see that the difference between these two possessive phrases is that the one with *zhi* has an overt possessor, while the one with *qi* has no overt possessor. The internal structure of the possessive phrase *qi nan* 其南 can be illustrated as in (18) in which *qi* is treated as the genitive marker sitting in the head of the genitive phrase, and the possessor of *nan* 南 is not lexically realized.

- (24) 楚子在公宮之北，吳人在其南。(左傳·定4/3)

Chǔ zǐ zài Gōng gōng zhī běi, Wú rén zài qí nán.

viscount/ Chu/ at / Duke/ palace/ zhī/ north, Wu/ people/ at / qí/ south

The viscount of Chu was at the north of the palace of the duke (of Sui); and the people of Wu were at its south. (ZZ, Ding 4/3) 4.1547

Below is another example that shows the complementary distribution of *zhi* and *qi*. In this example, each clause contains a possessive phrase in the object position. But the possessor in all

¹⁰² Xia 夏 here refers to Yu 禹, and Lü 呂 refers to Siyue 四嶽. Note that the *qi* in the topic clause is a nominalizing marker to nominalize the following verb *xing* 興, "rise." See discussion in next section.

these five possessive phrases is the same noun, namely the noun *jun* 君, “ruler,” which occurs only in the first clause when it is first introduced, but not in the following clauses. It is clear that when the possessor *jun* 君, “ruler” occurs overtly, the genitive marker *zhi* is used, while when it does not need to be repeated overtly in the following clauses, *qi* is used.

(25) 畏君之威, 聽其政, 尊其貴, 事其長, 養其親. (左傳·昭 1/7)

wèi jūn zhī wēi, tīng qí zhèng, zūn qí guì, shì qí zhǎng, yǎng qí qīn.

awe/ lord/ zhī/ majesty/, obey/ qí/ government/, respect/ qí/ noble, serve/ qí/ elder,
cherish/ qí/ kin

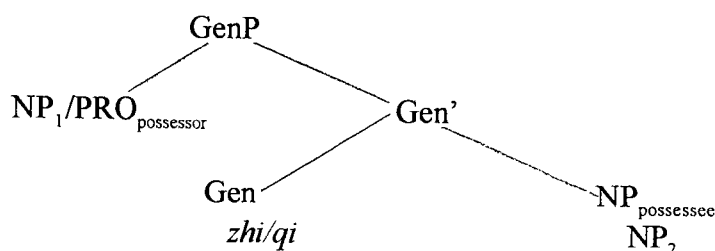
(You should) be in awe of the ruler’s majesty; obey his (i.e., the ruler’s) government;
honour to his (i.e., the ruler’s) nobility; serve his (i.e., the ruler’s) elders; cherish his
(i.e., the ruler’s) kin. (ZZ, Zhao 1/7) 4.1212

The examples in (24)-(25), including (9), suggest that it is feasible to treat *qi* as a variant form of *zhi*, which is used when there is no need to repeat a NP occurring previously as the possessor for the noun following it.

5.2.2. Historical evidence of *qi* as a genitive marker

Other evidence to support our analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker is that in earlier classical texts such as the *Shijing* 詩經 and the *Shangshu* 尚書, *qi* can be used in between two nouns to indicate possessive relationship in the same way as *zhi*. For reasons that will become clear later, I propose that the genitive noun phrases in the language represented by the *Shijing* and *Shangshu* have the basic structures as below:

(26)



Consider the following examples, where *qi* occurs between two nouns to indicate a possessive relation between them, like the genitive marker *zhi*:

- (27) 孺子其朋。(尚書·洛誥)

rú zǐ qí péng.

young/ child/ qí/ friend

The young child's friends (SS, Luogao)

- (28) 罔不配天其澤。(尚書·多士)

wǎng bù pèi tiān qí zé

none/ not /receive/ Heaven/ qí/ blessing

There were none who did not receive Heaven's grace.¹⁰³ (SS, Duoshi)

In the following examples, *qi* is used between a pronoun (or demonstrative pronoun) and a noun.

In this example, *qi* is used between the pronoun *zhen* 朕, a first person pronoun often used by a ruler to refer to himself, and the noun *di* 弟, "younger brother," specifying a possessive relation.

- (29) 朕其弟小子封。(尚書·康誥)

zhèn qí dì xiǎo zǐ Fēng

my/ qí/ younger brother/ small/ child/ Feng

My younger brother, the young child Feng.

"My younger brother, youngster Feng!" (SS, Kang gao; Karlgren 1950b: 14/2)

In (30) below, *qi* occurs after the demonstrative pronoun *bi* 彼, "that," and before the NP *zhi zi* 之子, "that gentleman," and indicate a descriptive genitive relation between the *bi* and *zhi zi*.

- (30) 彼其之子, 美無度。(詩經·汾沮洳)

bǐ qí zhī zǐ, měi wú dù.

that, other/ qí/ zhī/ gentleman, beautiful/ not/ measure

"That gentleman there, he is beautiful beyond measure." (SJ, Fen ju ru; Karlgren: *The Book of Odes*, 108/1)

In examples (27)-(30), *qi* is behaving like *zhi*, co-occurring with an overt possessor to indicate the

¹⁰³ The interpretation of (27) and (28) is adopted from Yu Min (1949 [1984]). Karlgren (1950b) does not interpret the *qi* in examples (27) and (28) as having a function similar to *zhi*, or a possessive pronoun. Rather, his interpretation of the sentences in (27) is as follows:

(i) "The young son should (associate=) find associates." (SS, Luogao; Karlgren 1950 b: 18/9) Karlgren 1950b: 18/9)

This seems to suggest that the *qi* here as a modal word expressing deontic modality, more or less like "should" in English. His interpretation of the sentence in (28) as in [ii] below also indicates that he does not take *tian qi ze* as a possessive phrase.

(ii) "There were none who were not counterparts to Heaven in benefiting (the people)." (SS, Duoshi; Karlgren 1950 b: 19/8)

possessive relation between the preceding noun/pronoun and following noun. Such examples are not only consistent with the analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker, but also suggest that in the earlier stages of the language, *qi*, like *zhi*, occurred with an overt possessor. Thus, the analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker can offer a better account for the historical connection between the *qi* in the earliest classics such as the *Shangshu* and *Shijing* and the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*.

The first scholar to point out that *qi* in the above *Shangshu* and *Shijing* examples might have been used as genitive marker was Yu Min (1949[1984: 358-371]).¹⁰⁴ Yu suggests that *qi* in the above examples should be considered a phonological element used to represent the genitive marker in the early Zhou language, which is similar to the Tibetan genitive marker *-gi* in sound. This hypothesis has strong phonological evidence.¹⁰⁵ Yu points out that sometimes *qi* is also written as *jī* 記, or *jī* 己. For example, the phrase *bi qi* 彼其, as in (30), is also written as *bi ji* 彼記 or *bi ji* 彼己.¹⁰⁶ In Yu's view, all these characters, including the most frequently used one, *qi* 其, are just the phonological representations of the genitive marker in the language, which Old Chinese pronunciation might be *gi'g or *ki'g, following Karlgren's reconstruction. Whether or not it is true that *qi* in early Classical Chinese is connected to the Tibetan *-gi* is not the major concern of this study. What is relevant for our purposes is that examples (27)-(30) above indicate that *qi* functions as a genitive marker and has a similar distribution to *zhi*: to be used

¹⁰⁴ Note that Yu's examples also include the cases below:

- (i) 兕觥其觶 (詩經·桑扈)
sǐ gōng qí qí.
rhinoceros/ gong-vase/ qí/ horn/
"The Kuang vase of rhinoceros horn is long and curved." (SJ, Sanghu; Karlgren 1950a: 215/4)
- (ii) 我來自東，零雨其濛。 (詩經·東山)
wǒ lái zì dōng, líng yǔ qí méng.
we/ come/ from east/, falling/ rain/ qí/ dark
"Now that we are coming from the east, the falling rain is darkening." (SJ, Dongshan; Karlgren 1950a: 156/1)

Traditionally, the *qi* in this type of example is treated as a suffix added to adjectives and adverbs in the same way as *ran* 然, being used for descriptive, impressive effect (see Serruys 1991:130, n. 54). Some scholars also consider the *qi* and the following word in this type of example to constitute a case of *chongyan* 重言, "reduplication," that is, saying *qi meng* 其濛 is equivalent to saying *mengmeng* 濛濛 (see Wang Xian 1959). Whether or not the *qi* used in the above examples is a genitive marker is an issue requiring further study. It seems to me that the genitive structures here are a kind of descriptive genitive.

¹⁰⁵ The Early Middle Chinese pronunciation of *qi*, given in the *Qieyun* 切韻 is 渠之反. In Pulleyblank's (1991: 245) Middle Chinese construction, it is reconstructed as [gi] or [gi]. The Old Chinese pronunciation of *qi* is reconstructed as [*gji] in Yu Min (1984). In other Old Chinese reconstruction works such as Li Fang Kuei (1971), it is [*gjəg], and in the framework of Pulleyblank (1991b; 1992b; 1994), it is [*gjäy].

¹⁰⁶ See Yu Min (1949 [1984: 361-362]).

between an overt possessor and a possessee.

Nevertheless, like the *qi* in the early classics, *qi* in the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu* is most commonly used without an overt possessor. In the *qi*-marked possessive phrases in (31)-(35) below, there is no possessor occurring immediately in front of *qi*. We consider *qi* in these phrases to be an indicator of the possessive relation between a noun introduced previously and the noun immediately following it. The behaviour of *qi* in these examples is similar to the genitive *qi* in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*.

- (31) 仲氏任只，其心塞淵。(詩經·燕燕)

Zhòng shǐ Rèn zhī, qí xīn sāi yuān

Zhong/ Lady/ Ren/ zhī, qí/ heart/ sincere/ deep¹⁰⁷

“The lady Chung Jen, her heart is sincere and deep.”

(SJ, Yan yan; Karlgren 1950: 28/4)

- (32) 齊子歸止，其從如雲。(詩經·敝笱)

Qí zǐ guī zhǐ, qí cóng rú yún

Qi/ lady/ return/ zhǐ, qí/ suite/ like/ cloud¹⁰⁸

“The young lady of Ts’i (=Qi) goes to (her) new home; her suite is like a cloud.”

(SJ, Bi gou; Karlgren 1950: 104/1)

- (33) 日月告凶，不用其行。(詩經·十月之交)

rì yuè gào xiōng, bù yòng qí xíng

sun/ moon/ announce/ calamity, not/ use/ qí/ path

“Sun and moon announce calamity, they do not (use:) follow their paths.”

(SJ, Shi yue zhi jiao; Karlgren 1950: 193/2)

- (34) 有扈氏威侮五行，怠棄三正。天用勦絕其命。(尚書·甘誓)

Yǒu Hù Shǐ wēi wǔ wǔ xíng, dài qǐ sān zhèng. tiān yòng jiǎojué qí mìng

The lord of Hu/ violate/ despise/ five/ element/, neglect/ discard/ three/ right force/, Heaven/ thereby/ cut off/ qí/ mandate

“The lord of Hu violates and despises the five elements, (he) neglects and discards the three governing forces (sc. of Heaven, Earth, and Man). Heaven therefore cuts off his appointment.” (SS, Gan shi; Karlgren 1950b: 4/3)

¹⁰⁷The meaning of the particle *zhi* 只 is not clear. In traditional textual studies of *Shijing*, it is simply interpreted as a *yuci* 語辭, “particle” (see Jin Qihua 1984: 61, and the commentaries cited there).

¹⁰⁸The meaning of *zhi* 止 is not clear. Schuessler (1987: 836) notes that it might be an enclitic that does not rhyme.

- (35) 武王既喪，管叔及其群弟乃流言於國。(尚書·金縢)

Wǔ Wáng jǐ sàng, Guǎn Shū jí qí qún dì nǎi liú yán yú guó.

King Wu/ *ji*/ die/, Guan Shu/ and/ *qí*/ / group/ younger brother/ then/ spread/ words/ *yú*/ state

“When Wu Wang had died, Kuan Shu and all his younger brothers spread talk in the state.” (SS, Jin teng; Karlgren 1950b: 12/12)

The genitive marker *zhi* in the texts of the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu* is also in line with the *zhi* in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*. The two examples below show that when there is an overt possessor, the genitive *zhi* is used instead of *qi*.

- (36) 父母之言兮，亦可畏也！(詩經·將仲子)

fù mǔ zhī yán xī, yǐ kě wèi yě!

father / mother/ *zhī* / word/ *xī*/, also/ worth/ fear/ *yě*

“But the words of father and mother are also worth fearing.”

(SJ, Jiang zho zi; Karlgren 1950a: 76/1)

- (37) 遵大路兮，搯執子之手兮。(詩經·遵大路)

zūn dà lù xī, shǎn zhí zǐ zhī shǒu xī.

along/ great/ road/ *xī*/, hold/ grasp/ you/ *zhī*/ hand/ *xī*

“I go along the great road, I grasp your hand.” (SJ, Zun da lu; Karlgren 1950a: 82/1)

The complementary distribution relation between *zhi* and *qi* in genitive noun phrases is seen clearly in the following examples:

- (38) 苕之華，其葉青青。(詩經·苕之華)

tiáo zhī huá, qí yè qīngqīng.

bignonia/ *zhī* flower/, *qí*/ leaf/ green

“Oh, the flowers of the bignonia, their leaves are luxuriant.”

(SJ, Tiao zhi hua; Karlgren 1950a: 233/2)

5.2.3. Alternative analyses

Now let us look at two other proposed analyses regarding the grammatical role of *qi* in the “*qi* + NP” structure discussed above. Although scholars usually consider that the *qi* used in front of a

noun is a pronominal possessor,¹⁰⁹ there is no general agreement as to how this possessive function works in the syntax. Some scholars think pronominal *qi* is basically a third person possessive, meaning “his; her; its; their,” though in some cases it is also used as a second or first person possessive, meaning “my; your” (e.g., He Leshi et al. 1985: 415). Other scholars do not consider *qi* in front of a noun to be a pure third person possessive pronoun; rather, it is a substitute for “NP+ *zhi* 之,” namely, *qi* replaces a noun phrase introduced previously plus the genitive marker *zhi* 之 (e.g., Jiang Baoqi 1982; Pulleyblank 1995: 62-66).

The question to be considered here is why don't we just treat *qi* in the above examples as a third person possessive, given that in these cases, this interpretation yields a contextually compatible meaning? We have mentioned in 5.2 that one of the reasons that we don't take this analysis is that *qi* does not always have the reference to a third person.

Consider the following examples:

- (39) 臣竭其股肱之力，加之以忠。貞。(左傳·僖9/4)

chén jié qí gǔ gōng zhī lì, jiā zhī yǐ zhōng zhēn.

your subject/ exhaust; use up/ *qí*/ leg/ arm/ *zhī*/ strength/, add/ *zhī*/ with/ royalty/
rectitude; correct

¹⁰⁹ But scholars notice that not all cases of *qi* can be simply treated as a possessive pronoun. For example:

- (i) 晏子立於崔氏之門外，其人曰：“死乎？”曰：“獨吾君也乎哉？吾死也？”(左傳·襄25/2)
Yanzǐ lì yú Cuīshì zhī mén, qí rén yuē: “sǐ hū?” yuē: “dú wú jūn yě hū zāi? wú sǐ yě?”
Yanzi/ stand/ yú/ Cuishi/ *zhī*/ door/ outside/, *qí*/ man/ say/, die/ hū/, say/, only/ my/ lord/ yě/ hū/ zāi/,
I/ die/ yě

Yanzi was standing outside Cuishi's door, his follower/someone asked: “Will you die for the lord?”
(Yanzi) said: “Is he only my own lord? Should I die?” (ZZ, Xing 25/2) 3.1098

As for the phrase *qi ren* 其人 in this example, I understand it as a genitive structure in which *qi* is used to indicate a genitive relation between the antecedent NP possessor Yanzi 晏子, and the following noun *ren* 人, “person.” Contextually, the phrase *qi ren* 其人 can be interpreted as “his follower” (i.e., Yanzi's follower). But some scholars maintain that the *qi* here has no specific reference, and that the meaning of the phrase *qi ren* is not “his follower,” but *mou ren* 某人, “someone” (e.g., Liu Qi 1711[1954: chapter 1: 8]). See Zhou Fagao (1959: 102-103) for more discussion.

Moreover, some scholars (e.g., He Leshi 1989: 4) consider that *qi* is sometimes found as a demonstrative, rather than a possessive, as in the following example:

- (ii) 苟有其備，何故不可？(左傳·昭5/4)

gǒu yǒu *qí* bèi, hé gù bù kě?

if/ have/ *qí*/ preparation/, what/ reason/ not/ permissible

If (we) have that preparation, for what reason is it not permissible? (ZZ, Zhao 5/4) 4.1267

Indeed, in the context cited in (ii), we cannot see an antecedent NP which is the possessor of the noun *bei* 備, “preparation” in the previous context, and it seems that to take the *qi* here as a demonstrative pronoun meaning “that” is contextually conforming. However, it seems that there is one more possibility for the understanding of *qi* in this example. That is, we may take the word *bei* following *qi* as a verb, and the function of *qi* here is to nominalize this verb and mark it as the embedded object clause of the main verb *you* 有, “to have” (see below for more discussion of the nominalizing function of *qi*).

Your subject (=I) will exhaust the strength of **his (=my)** legs and arms (i.e., I will do my utmost) [to assist your son, the young king], adding it (i.e., the work of assisting the young king) with the royalty and rectitude [of a minister]. (ZZ, Xi 9/4) 1.328

The speaker of this sentence is Xun Xi 荀息, a minister of Duke Xian 獻 of the Jin 晉 State. The setting of this speech is that Duke Xian was very sick and he entrusted with the care of his young son to Xun Xi. The sentence cited here is what Xun Xi responded to the entrustment. The word *chen* 臣 means “subject,” which is an expression used by a minister to his ruler in place of first person pronoun.

Let us now pay attention to the phrase *qi gu gong zhi li* 其股肱之力. What does *qi* function here? It seems that there are three possible analyses:

- (i) This phrase has the same meaning as the phrase *chen zhi gu gong zhi li* 臣之股肱之力, “the strength of *chen zhi* legs and arms.” And in this analysis, *qi* is viewed as the replacement for the phrase *chen zhi* 臣之, “the subject’s.”
- (ii) *Qi* is a pronoun which is the possessor of the noun phrase 股肱之力, “the strength of legs and arms,” referring to the speaker. In this analysis, *qi* can be considered as a third person possessive. The reason to take *qi* as a pronoun with the third person reference is as follows. *Chen* can be considered as a noun expression used by a speaker to refer to himself in third person for the pragmatic strategy of expressing “polite distancing.”¹¹⁰
- (iii) *Qi* can be interpreted as a first person possessive, because *chen* can be taken as a regular term for a speaker to refer to himself before his ruler, and it is in fact equivalent to a first person pronoun.

If we only consider to have a contextually compatible meaning, the above three analyses are

¹¹⁰ Thanks to Derek D. Herforth (personal communication by letter) for pointing out the following ideas to me. According to him, the use of *qi* here (including *zhi* used in the similar context) need not be taken as evidence against the standard treatment of these forms as basically third person. The sociolinguistic generalization seems to that in a highly status-conscious society, first person forms are likely to sound unacceptably ego-centric if used by an inferior in conversation with a social superior, while some, if not all, second person forms will imply a degree of intimacy quite inappropriate to the public sphere. Thus, it is not surprising to see that in these particular contexts, status nouns such as *chen* 臣 in (39), *gu* 孤 in (40), *zi* 子 in (41), and *ao* 嫪 in (42) with their corresponding third person pronouns (i.e., *qi/zhi*) are used for reasons of indirection/politeness to refer to the speech-event participants (i.e., the speak/addressee). Even though this is a good argument to support the analysis of *qi* as a third person pronoun, I still hold a reservation to treat *qi* as a third person in these examples, because I feel difficult to explain why as a third person pronoun, *qi*’s deictic function is only found in possessive phrases and dependent clauses. And if we consider the fact that in earlier texts (e.g., the *Shangshu*, *Shijing*, and the OBI texts), *qi* is used in the same way as *zhi* in its genitive and nominalizing function in early classical texts, *qi* seems to be better treated a genitive marker rather than a third person possessive.

all plausible. However, if we allow a historical development of *qi*'s use from a genitive marker to a word with a deictic function in later periods, we may still maintain the genitive analysis for the use of *qi* here; that is, *qi* is a genitive marker which is used to indicate the possessive relation between the noun phrase 股肱之力 and the antecedent noun *chen* 臣. In similar lines, the following example can also be understood in this way:

- (40) 民知受窮困，而受盟於楚。孤也與其二三子不能禁止。(左傳·襄8/7)

mín zhī shòu qióng kùn, ér shòu méng yú Chǔ. gū yě yǔ qí èr sān zǐ bù néng jìn zhǐ.

people/ know/ suffer/ exhausted/ stranded/, ér/ accept/ covenant/ yú/ Chu. I/ yě/ and/
qí/ two/ three/ gentleman / not/ can/ forbid/ stop¹¹¹

People know the situation of destitution (i.e., they are at the end of their rope), and have accepted a covenant with Chu. I and several of **my** ministers were not able to prevent (that). (ZZ, Xiang 8/7) 3. 959

In this example, *qi* is used preceding the NP *er san zi* 二三子, "several gentlemen," referring to the "ministers" here. From the context, we know that this NP is the possessee of the subject NP *gu* 孤, originally meaning "orphan; a person who lacks good virtue," often used by a ruler in self-address. Here, it is functionally equivalent to a first person pronoun "I," referring to the speaker. To put it simply, the subject NP *gu* 孤, "orphan; a person who lacks good virtue" = "I" and the NP *er san zi* 二三子, "several ministers" are in a possessive relation. Similarly, *qi* here also seems to allow the following analyses: (i) *qi* is a substitute for *guzhi* 孤之; (ii) *qi* is a first person possessive; or (iii) *qi* as a third person possessive, following Herforth's suggestion that the use of the status noun *gu* and *qi* which both have third person reference here to refer to the speaker himself (first person) is pragmatically determined. However, I propose to take *qi* here as a genitive marker used to indicate the possessive relation between the following noun phrase and an antecedent possessor. Below is a case in which the *qi* seems to be a second person possessive such as "your":

- (41) 子有令聞而美其室，非所望也。(左傳·襄15/1) 3.1021

zǐ yǒu lìng wén ér měi qí shǐ, fēi suǒ wàng yě.

sir; you/ have/ good/ reputation/ ér/ beautiful/ house/, not/ suǒ/ expect/ yě.

¹¹¹ Zi 子, originally meaning "son, child," is also used as a complimentary designation of men, and here is used to refer to an officer.

You have a good reputation but make **your** house beautiful; this is not what people expect.”¹¹² (ZZ, Xiang 15/1) 3.1021

In this example, the word *zi* 子, “master; sir” is a honorific term used by a speaker to refer to his addressee, with a second person reference equivalent to “you.” Contextually, *qi* can be taken as the substitute for *zi zhi* 子之. And if we take *qi* as a pronominal possessor, then *qi* should be interpreted as the second person possessive, “your,” because it refers to the addressee. Or it may also be taken as a third person possessive, if we consider that the use of *zi* and *qi* to refer to the address, the second person, is pragmatically determined for the reason of indirection/politeness. However, we propose another possible analysis—to treat *qi* here as a genitive marker.

Below is an example from the *Zhanguo*, a Warring States period text later than the *Zuo* and *Guoyu*. It also shows that *qi* is not necessary to be taken as a third person possessive:

(42) 老臣以媼為長安君計短也，故以為其愛不若燕后。（戰國策·趙策）

lǎo chén yǐ Āo wéi Chángān Jūn jì duǎn yě, gù yǐwéi qí ài bù ruò Yàn Hòu.

old/ servant/ consider/ Ao/ for/ Chang An/ prince/ plan/ short/ ye3, therefore/ consider/

qí / love/ not / like/ Yan / empress¹¹³ (*Zhanguo*, Zhaoce 4)

I, your old servant, think that Ao (Your majesty) arranges a short plan for prince Chang An. Therefore, I think that **your** love for Prince Chang An is not as much as (your love) for Princes Yan. (*Zhanguo*, Zhaoce 4)

In this example, the speaker Chu Zhe 觸讐, who was a great officer of the Zhao 趙 State, talked to Zhao Taihou 趙太后, the Dowager-Empress of Zhao, about her plan for her two children, Prince Chang An and Princess Yan. In his speech, Chu Zhe 觸讐 referred to himself as *laochen* 老臣, “old servant,” and addressed Zhao Taihou as Ao 媼 (a respectful form of address for an elderly lady). In the second sentence, we see that *qi* is used immediately before the word *ai* 愛, which can be a verb meaning “to love” or a noun meaning “love.” In this case, it is a noun. From the context, we know the phrase *qi ai* 其愛 is a possessive phrase, referring to the love of the addressee Zhao Taihou 趙太后 for Prince Chang An. If we take *qi* as a pronominal possessor, then *qi* should be interpreted as the second person possessive, “your,” because it refers to the

¹¹² The adjective *mei* 美 here is used as a transitive verb in a causative sense—“to make...beautiful.”

¹¹³ *Jun* 君, “ruler, lord,” is here used as a complimentary designation for Prince Chang An. *Hou* 后, “empress,” is used as a complimentary designation for Princess Yan.

addressee. Or we may maintain that *qi* is still a third person possessive, as suggested by Herforth. Such examples show that *qi*'s reference is changeable contextually, and it is not necessary to treat *qi* as a third-person possessive.

Another difficulty in the pronominal analysis is that it is not easy to account for why there is only one possessive form (if there is any) in the pronoun system of Classical Chinese. As pointed out by Ota Tatsuo (1958), to analyze the particle *qi* in Classical Chinese as a third person possessive is just a convenient treatment, because possessive pronouns do not exist as a grammatical category in the Chinese grammatical system.¹¹⁴ As we know, in the Chinese pronoun system, there is no a particular possessive form for each personal pronoun equivalent to the English possessives such as "my; our," "your," and "his/her/their." A pronoun can be used as a possessor in the same form as it is used as subject or object. When it is necessary to use a pronoun as possessor, it follows the same rule as that for using a noun as possessor, namely, that the pronoun is to be used immediately in front the possessee noun, like *wu zi* 吾子, "my son," (ZZ, Cheng 2), or that the genitive marker *zhi* is to be inserted between the pronoun and the noun, like *yu zhi di* 余之弟, "my brother" (ZZ, Xiang 14). To treat *qi* as a pronominal element, we will have difficulty explaining why the Chinese pronoun system has a pronoun in third person that can only be used possessively in front of a noun.¹¹⁵ This problem would not arise if *qi* is considered as a genitive marker used in front of a noun to indicate that this noun has a possessive relation with an antecedent possessor.

Now let us look at the treatment of *qi* as the substitute for "N + *zhi*." As mentioned early, this is one of the common treatments hold by many scholars, and it is strongly supported in Jiang (1982: 201). According to Jiang, the treatment of *qi* as a third-person possessive does not really capture the nature of *qi*; rather, *qi* should be considered as the replacement for "N + *zhi*." One of his arguments is as follows. In early classical Chinese texts, *qi*'s possessive use is different from the other ordinary pronouns such as the first person pronouns *wo* 我, "we; us," *yu*

¹¹⁴ As cited from the Chinese translation by Jiang Shaoyu and Xu Changhua (1987: 100).

¹¹⁵ Derek D. Herforth (personal communication by letter) points out to me that this might not be a good argument to support the view that *qi* cannot be treated as a third person possessive, because "gaps, often filled by suppletion, are extremely common in this area of grammar; consider the lack of a third person subject pronoun in pre-Han Chinese, for example." If I understand him correctly, this might suggest that Old Chinese might have a pronominal system with an imperfect or defective paradigm for possessive pronouns. In other words, it is possible that Old Chinese only has a possessive pronoun in third person. I consider that this is a very interesting hypothesis whose validity is worth a systematic investigation in the future study.

余, “I; me,” *wu* 吾, “I; me,” and second person pronouns *ru* 汝, “you,” *er* 爾, “you,” *ruo* 若, “you,” and *nai* 乃, “you,” in syntax. These pronouns can all be used in front of a noun or a verb as possessor, and the genitive marker *zhi* 之 may occur after these pronouns, as in the phrases such as 余之功, “my achievement.” But when *qi* is used in front of a noun or a verb, the genitive marker *zhi* 之 never shows up; that is, there is no structure **“qi + zhi + NP.”*¹¹⁶ According to Jiang, one explanation for this difference is that *qi* already contains the covert genitive marker *zhi* in it. We consider that this observation is significant in the sense that it tells us *qi* does not function the same as ordinary pronouns in its possessive usage, and has a close relation to the genitive marker *zhi*. However, the analysis of *qi* as the replacement of “NP + *zhi*” is untenable, because in many cases, *qi* is also used when a “NP + *zhi* 之” does not occur in the previous context, as in examples (43) and (44). In (43), *qi* is used in front of the noun *shou* 手, “hand.” From the previous clause, we know its possessor is the person Zhong Zi 仲子. The analysis of *qi* as the replacement of “N + *zhi*” is untenable because in this example, there is no a “NP + *zhi*” phrase to be substituted for. Therefore, instead of taking *qi* as the substitute for “NP + *zhi*,” we consider that *qi* here functions in the same way as the genitive marker *zhi* 之. That *qi* is used here, rather than *zhi*, is due to the fact that the possessor phrase Zhong Zi 仲子 has already been introduced in the first clause and does not need to be repeated in the second clause. This gives rise to the grammatical environment of a covert possessor; therefore, *qi* is used.

¹¹⁶ However, in the *Shijing*, we do see two cases in which *qi* is followed by *zhi*. They occur in the same poem, as below:

- (i) 玼兮玼兮，其之翟也。（詩經·君子偕老）
 cǐ xī cǐ xī, qí zhī dí yě.
 bright/ oh/ bright/oh/, qí/ zhī/ pheasant robe
 “Freshly bright is her pheasant robe.” (SJ, Junzi xielao; Karlgren 1950a: 47/2)
- (ii) 璩兮璩兮，其之展也。（詩經·君子偕老）
 cuō xī cuō xī, qí zhī zhǎn yě.
 bright-coloured/ oh/ bright-coloured/, qí/ zhī/ ritual robe
 “Freshly bright is her ritual robe.” (SJ, Junzi xielao; Karlgren 1950a: 47/3)

Such examples are puzzling. Why do both genitive markers *zhi* and *qi* co-occur in the same context, if one accepts our view that *qi* is a genitive marker? My answer to this question is that the *zhi* in this case is a demonstrative pronoun, rather than a genitive marker. If this analysis is correct, then these examples would be the evidence that as a genitive marker, *qi* can be also used in the context when there is an overt possessor (see discussion about the distribution of *qi* in relation to the overt possessor in earlier texts).

For a detailed discussion of the morpheme *zhi* used as a demonstrative pronoun in preclassical and early classical texts, see Pulleyblank (1996). Below is one of the familiar examples where *zhi* is used as demonstrative pronoun meaning “this”:

- (iii) 之子于歸，宜其家人。（詩經·桃夭）
 zhī zǐ yú guī, yí qí jiā rén.
 this/ lady/ yu2/ return/, good/ qí/ house-poeple
 “This young lady goes to her new home, she will order well her house-poeple.” (SJ, Taoyiao; Karlgren 1950a: 6/3)

- (43) 仲子生而有文在其手. (左傳·隱1/1)

Zhǒngzǐ shēng ér yǒu wén zài qí shǒu.

Zhong Zi/ be born/ ér/ have/ graph/ at / qí/ hand

Zhong Zi was born with a character in **her** palms. (ZZ, Ying 1/1) 1.3

Similarly, in (44), *qi* occurs in front of the locative particle *zhong* 中, “inside,” indicating the possessive relation between the antecedent possessor noun *gui* 龜 “turtle-shell” and *zhong* 中, “inside.”

- (44) 如龜焉, 灼其中, 必於文外. (國語·魯語下/6)

rú guī yān, zhuó qí zhōng, bǐ yú wén wài.

like/ turtle shell/ yān, burn/ qí/ inside/, certainly/ yú/ crack and line/ outside

Just like the turtle shell, if you burn its inside, cracks and lines must show on its outside.

(GY, Luyu B/6) 1.195

Another reason for us not to take *qi* as a replacement for “N + *zhi*” is that in earlier classical texts, *qi* can be used with an overt possessor in the same way as *zhi*, as shown in 5.2.2 above.

5.3. *Qi* as a mark of nominalization in dependent clauses

In this section, we are concerned with the nominalizing function of *qi* in dependent clauses, as illustrated in (45):

- (45) 且君知成之從也, 未知其待於曲沃也. (國語·晉語一/1)

qiě jūn zhī Chéng zhī cóng yě, wèi zhī qí dài yú Qǔwò yě

moreover/ your lordship/ know/ Cheng/ zhī/ follow/ yě, not yet/ know/ qí/ wait/ at/

Quwo/ yě

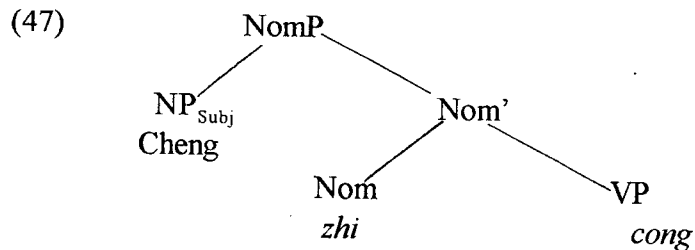
Your Lordship only knew of Cheng’s following you to die, but did not know of his waiting for you (with an unfaithful heart) in Quwo. (GY, Jinyu 1/1) 1.251

This example consists of two parallel sentences, each of which contains the same main verb *zhi* 知, “to know.” What we are interested in is the complement clause of the main verb in both sentences. In the first sentence, the complement clause of the main verb *zhi* 知, “to know,” is Cheng *zhi cong* 成之從, which is an “NP + *zhi* + VP” structure. In the second sentence, the complement clause of the main verb *zhi* 知, “to know,” is *qi dai yu* Quwo 其待於曲沃, which is

a “*qi* + VP” structure.

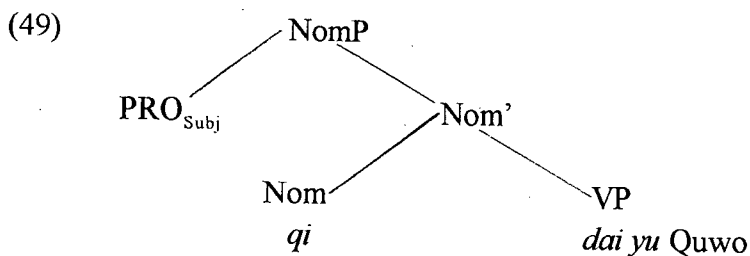
We propose that here *qi* is also used as a nominalizing marker (or called nominalizer) in front of verbs in dependent clauses, parallel to the well-recognized nominalizing marker *zhi*.¹¹⁷ In this function, *qi* is also a variant form of *zhi*. The difference between them is that *zhi*, as a nominalizer, is used in the dependent clause where there is an overt subject, while *qi* is used in the dependent clause where there is no overt subject. The nominalized constructions “NP + *zhi* + VP” such as Cheng *zhi cong* 成之從 in (45) have structures as in (46) and (47).

(46) [Nom Subj_{[Nom *zhi* [VP]]]]}



The nominalized constructions “*qi* + VP” such as *qi dai yu* Quwo 其待於曲沃 in (45) can be illustrated as (48) or (49) below.

(48) [Nom PRO_{[nom *qi* [VP]]]}



In (48) and (49), NomP here stands for nominalizing phrase. We see that both *zhi* and *qi* are the heads of the nominalized phrases, and when there is an overt subject in the Specifier position of the structure, *zhi* is used, while when there is null subject in the Specifier position, *qi* is used. In

¹¹⁷ *Qi*'s function here is recognized as a nominalizer similar to *zhi* in the similar context has been pointed out by some scholars (see Pulleyblank 1995: 64). However, different from previous studies which treat the nominalizing source of *qi* comes from its being a third-person possessive, I consider that the nominalizing function of *qi* comes from its being a genitive marker (see more discussion below).

other words, *zhi* and *qi* are the same nominalizing marker in complementary distribution. The biggest difference between our treatment and the pronominal treatment is as follows. In our treatment, *qi* is considered as a genitive marker being used to nominalize a dependent clause. In the pronominal treatment, *qi* is considered as a possessive pronoun being used to nominalize a dependent clause.

In our analysis, the difference between the *qi* and *zhi*-marked nominalized constructions as in (48) and (49) and that between the *qi* and *zhi*-marked genitive constructions as in (16) and (18) can be accounted for by a consistent principle. Namely, the “*qi* + VP” and “NP + *zhi* + VP” constructions, as well as the constructions “*qi* + NP” and “NP + *zhi* + NP,” are all treated uniformly as the same type of construction; that is, they are all genitive constructions formed with the genitive markers *qi* and *zhi*. The use of *qi* as a nominalizing marker in the “*qi* + VP” construction is the extension of its genitive function in the construction “*qi* + NP,” just like the use of *zhi* as a nominalizing marker in “NP + *zhi* + VP” is the extension of its genitive function in “NP + *zhi* + NP.” In particular, we consider “*qi* + NP” and “NP + *zhi* + NP” as nominal genitive constructions, while “*qi* + VP” and “NP + *zhi* + VP” are nominalized or de-verbal genitive constructions. Thus, the relation between “*qi* + VP” and “NP + *zhi* + VP” is parallel to that between “*qi* + NP” and “NP + *zhi* + NP.” *Qi* and *zhi* are variants used in different grammatical environments. In the case of the nominal genitive, *qi* is used when there is no overt possessor, while *zhi* is used when there is overt possessor. In the case of the nominalized genitive, *qi* is used when there is no overt subject, while *zhi* is used when there is an overt subject, as shown in the data provided above.

5.3.1. The parallel between *qi* and *zhi* in nominalized constructions

In the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, *qi* is not only parallel to *zhi* in as a genitive marker in the type of possessive genitive construction as discussed above, but also parallel to *zhi* as a mark of nominalization in dependent clauses.

By dependent clauses, we refer to the clauses that cannot stand alone as complete sentences. In other words, a dependent clause requires an independent clause (or a main clause) to complete it. Dependent clauses serve the same function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. In many

languages, a dependent clause is usually connected to a main clause by some kind of subordinating word, thus a dependent clause is also called a subordinate clause. The notion "dependent" is concerned with whether or not a clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. However, the notion "subordinate" is concerned with the way in which a dependent clause is connected to the main clause. The concept corresponding to "subordinate/subordinating/subordination" is "coordinate/coordinating/coordination." According to Palmer (1986: 127-8), there are basically three types of subordinate clause: complement clauses, oblique clauses, and relative clauses. Complement clauses are like nouns that function as either subjects or objects of the main verb, and are regarded as essential, often obligatory, elements of the main clauses. Oblique clauses (such as conditional, cause, or time clauses) are rather like adverbs, or adjuncts, and are often inessential or optional elements of the main clauses. Relative clauses are rather like adjectives which function as the modifier of a noun in main clauses.

In what follows, we will present data illustrating five different types of nominalized dependent clauses which show the parallel between *qi* and *zhi* in their nominalizing function. The five types of nominalized dependent clauses to be discussed are: (i) complement clauses; (ii) topic clauses; (iii) conditional clauses; (iv) temporal clauses; and (v) rationale clauses.

5.3.1.1. Embedded complement clauses with *zhi* and *qi*.

Example (45) above is a case in which one can see the parallel between a *zhi*-marked complement clause and a *qi*-marked complement clause. Below is another similar example:

(50) 吾見師之出而不見其入也。(左傳·僖 32/3)

wú jiàn shī zhī chū ér bù jiàn qí rù yě.

I/ see/ army/ *zhī*/ go out/ ér/ not/ see/ *qí*/ enter/ yě.

(Now) I see the going out of the army, but I will not see its coming back. (ZZ, Xi 32/3)

1.490

In this example, there are two object clauses *shi zhi chu* 師之出 and *qi ru* 其入. The former is marked with *zhi*, and the latter is marked with *qi*. For convenience, we refer to the former as "NP + *zhi* + VP₁," and the latter as "*qi* + VP₂." These two structures should be treated as the same type of construction, because they occur in the same syntactical position and the main

clauses in which they occur are in a coordination relation. The only difference is that in the former structure, there is a subject NP, while in the latter, there is not. That is, *qi* is used in the nominalized clauses in which the subject is not present, while *zhi* is used in those in which the subject is present.

5.3.1.2. Topic/conditional clauses with *zhi* and *qi*:

Now let us look at the examples in which “NP + *zhi* + VP” and “*qi* + VP” are used as topical clauses:

- (51) 貢之不入, 寡君之罪也. (左傳·僖 4/1)

gòng zhī bù rù, guǎjūn zhī zuǐ yě.

tribute/ zhī/ not / enter, our ruler/ zhī/ fault/ yě

As for the tribute's not entering, it is our ruler's fault. (ZZ, Xi 4/1) 1.292

In this example, the genitive marker *zhi* is used as a mark of nominalization in the left-dislocated clause between the subject NP *gong* 貢, “tribute,” and the VP *bu ru* 不入, “not enter.” There is also a *zhi* in the second clause, where it is used between two nouns to indicate the possessive relation between them.

Consider the following example in which *qi* is used in a topical sentence:

- (52) 必於申生. 其為人也, 小心精潔. (國語·晉語一/6)

bǐ yú Shenshēng. qí wéi rén yě, xiǎoxīn jīngjié.”

necessary/ yú/ Shensheng/, qí/ behave/ human/ yě, careful/ clean

It must be from Prince Shensheng. His conducting himself as a human being is careful and clean (i.e., he bears no tarnish or insult). (GY, Jinyu 1/6) 1.268

In this example, the clause *qi wei ren ye* 其為人也 is the topical clause of the following main clause. Comparing this with the *zhi*-marked topical clause in (51), we see that this *qi*-led topical clause does not contain an overt subject NP. However, from the context, we know the antecedent NP Shensheng and the VP *wei ren* 為人 have a semantic relation of doer and action. The examples (51)-(52) indicate that the use of *zhi* in a nominalized topic clause is associated with the presence of a subject, while *qi* is not.

Compare the *zhi*-marked and the *qi*-marked conditional clauses in the following examples:

- (53) 皮之不存,毛將安傅? (左傳·僖14/4)

pí zhī bù cún, máo jiāng ān fù?

skin/ zhī/ not/ exist, hair/ be about to/ where/ attach

If the skin does not exist, where is the hair going to attach to? (ZZ, Xi 14/4) 1. 348

The left-dislocated clause *pi zhi bu cun* 皮之不存 here is understood as a conditional clause (e.g., Yang Bojun 1981: 1.348, 2. 902; He Leshi et al. 1985: 808). It is functionally similar to the conditional clauses introduced by *ruo* 若, or *ru* 如, “if.” However, instead of using this conjunction particle, *zhi* is used to mark the clause as non-main, leaving the semantic relation between the protasis and the apodosis to be derived from the logical relation of the two clauses. Yang Shuda (1981: 2. 902) notes that the *zhi*-marked clause in example (54) below is a conditional clause:

- (54) 我之有罪, 吾死後矣. (左傳·成17/10)

wǒ zhī yǒu zuǐ, wú sǐ hòu yǐ.

I/ zhī/ have/ sin, I/ die/ late/ yǐ

If I had fault/sin, my death would be already late (i.e., it would be too late for me to die even now). (ZZ, Cheng 17/10) 2.902

Parallel to “NP + *zhi* + VP,” “*qi* + VP” can be also used as a conditional clause, as in the following example:

- (55) 其濟, 君之靈也; 不濟, 則以死繼之. (左傳·僖 9/4)

qí jǐ, jūn zhī líng yě; bù qǐ, zé yǐ sǐ jǐ zhī

qí/ succeed, your lordship/ zhī/ ingenious/ yě; not/ succeed, then/ use/ death/ continue/ zhī

If I succeed (lit. Succeeding), it will be owing to your lordship’s influence; if I do not succeed, my death shall follow my endeavors. (ZZ, Xi 9/4) 1. 328

The interpretation of *qi* in the “*qi* + VP” conditional clause as in (55) is controversial. Some scholars treated it as a conditional conjunction similar to the word *ruo* 若, “if” (Yang Shuda 1927[1978]: 162; He Leshi 1989 [1984]: 361); Some scholars treat it here as a modal particle (Zhou Fagao 1961:216); and other scholars consider it as a subject pronoun (Malmqvist 1981). However, we hold that the above *qi*-marked conditional clause should be understood as a nominalized construction, the same as the *zhi*-marked nominalized conditional clause, as in examples (53) and (54). The use of *qi*, instead of *zhi*, is due to that fact that there is no subject in the clause. This

can be seen more clearly in the following example:

- (56) 若其予之，賞大姦也。（國語。晉語九/2）

ruò qí yǔ zhī, shǎng dà jiān yě.

if/ qí/ give/ zhī/, award/ great/ sycophant/ yě

Conferring him (i.e., If I confer [the rank of nobility] to him), then I award a crafty sycophant. (GY, Jinyu 9/2) 2. 484

- (57) 若其有凶，備之為瘳。（國語。晉語一/2）

ruò qí yǒu xiōng, bèi zhī wéi chōu

if/ qí/ have/ mishap, prepare/ zhī/ be/ improve

Having a mishap (i.e., If there is going to be a mishap), a preparation for it will make less loss. (GY, Jinyu 1/2) 1.253

These two examples show that the conjunction *ruo* 若, “if,” can also be used to introduce a *qi*-marked conditional clause.

5.3.1.3. Temporal clauses with *zhi* and *qi*

Similarly in temporal clauses, *zhi* and *qi* are also in complementary distribution. Namely, when there is an overt subject in the temporal clause, *zhi* is used to mark the clause as a nominalized structure; while when the subject of the temporal clause need not be repeated, *qi* is used. For example, in the following example (58), *qi* is preceding the verbal phrase in the temporal clause *qi wang* 其亡, which is parallel to the *zhi*-marked the temporal clause *Shang zhi xing* 商之興 in the first clause. The parallel structure shows that the difference between the two temporal clauses is that the *zhi*-clause has a subject noun phrase, while the *qi*-clause does not.

- (58) 商之興也，櫓杙次於丕山；其亡也，夷羊在牧。（國語。周語上/12）

Shāng zhī xīng yě, Tao Wu cǐ yú Pǐ shān; qí wáng yě, Yì Yáng zài mù.

Shang/ zhī/ rise/ yě, Tao Wu/ camp/ yú/ Pǐ/ mountain; qí/ decline/ yě, Yi Yang/ be at/ pasture

During the rising of Shang, Tao Wu frequently made his inspection tour in the Mountain Pi; During the falling of Shang, Yi Yang showed up in the pasture of the Shang suburbs.¹¹⁸

(GY, Zhouyu A/12) 1.30

¹¹⁸Tao Wu and Yi Yang are both deities of Heaven.

Sometimes, we may see that a “*qi* + VP” temporal clause is introduced by the preposition *ji* 及, “coming to, by the time, when,” as in the temporal clause 及其敗戎師也 in (59). We consider that *qi* is used as a nominalizing marker. The reason why *qi* is used here, instead of *zhi*, is that there is no need to repeat the NP Zheng *taizi* Hu 鄭太子忽, “Prince Hu of Zheng,” or a pronoun referring to him as the subject in the context.

- (59) 齊侯欲以文姜妻鄭太子忽，太子忽辭。及其敗戎師也，齊侯又請妻之。（左傳·桓 6/4）

Qí hóu yù yǐ Wén Jiāng qī Zhèng tàiǐ Hū, tàiǐ Hū cí. jí qí bài Róng shī yě, Qí hóu yòu qǐng qī zhī

Qi/ marquis/ want/ use/ Wen Jiang/ to give one's daughter to somebody as wife/ Zheng/ prince / Hu/, prince/ Hu/ refuse/, up to; when/ qí/ defeat/ Rong/ army/ yě, Qi/ marquis/ again/ request/ to give one's daughter to somebody as wife/ zhī

The marquis of Qi wanted to marry Wen Jiang to Prince Hu of the Zheng State, but Prince Hu had refused the match. On the occasion when Prince Hu defeated the army of the Rong State, the marquis of Qi again asked Prince Hu to marry another of his daughters.

(ZZ, Huan 6/4) 1.113

5.3.1.4. Rationale clauses with *zhi* and *qi*

In the following examples, we see that the *qi*-marked clause in (61) has the same grammatical function as the *zhi*-marked nominalized clause in (60), that is, they both serve as the cause clause of the main clause. They only differ in that there is an overt subject in the *zhi*-marked clause in (60), while in the *qi*-marked clause in (61), there is no overt subject.

- (60) 晉以衛之救陳也，討焉。（左傳·宣公13/5）

Jìn yǐ Wèi zhī jiù Chén yě, tǎo yān

the Jin State/ because/ the Wei State/ zhī/ rescue/ Chen/ yě/, reprove/ yān.¹¹⁹

Jin reproached Wei for Wei's coming to the rescue of Chen (Lit. Jin, because of Wei's coming to the rescue of Chen, reproached it.) (ZZ, Xuan 13/5) 2.752

¹¹⁹ The word *tao* 討 usually means “to punish by issuing a declaration of war.” But here, according to the context, *tao* means *ze* 責 “to reproach; to reprove; to blame” (Yang Bojun 1981: 2. 752).

- (61) (范宣子)執莒公子務婁, 以其通楚使也. (左傳·襄14/1)

(Fàn Xuānzǐ) zhí Jǔ gōngzǐ Wù Lóu, yǐ qí tōng Chǔ shǐ yě.

Fan Xuanzi/ seize/ Ju/ prince/ Wu Lou/, because of/ qí/ be in communication/ envoy/ yě

(Fan Xuanzi) caused Prince Wu Lou of Ju to be seized, because of Ju's interchanging communication with the envoy of Chu. (ZZ, Xiang 14/1) 3.1005

5.3.2. Historical evidence of *qi* as a nominalizing marker

If we trace back to earlier texts such as the *Shangshu*, we find that there are more cases in which *qi* is just a pure nominalizing marker and has non-specific "reference." Consider the following example:

- (62) 今不承于古, 罔知天之斷命, 矧曰其克從先王之烈. (尚書·盤庚)

jīn bù chéng yú gǔ, wǎng zhī tiān zhī duàn mìng, shěn yuē qí kè cóng xiān wáng zhī liè.

now/ not continue/ yú/ old; ancient/, there is no/ know/ Heaven/ zhī/ cut off/ mandate/,

moreover; besides/ say/ qí/ be able to/ follow/ former/ king/ zhī/ eminent deeds

"If we now do not continue the old (practice) (it means that) we do not understand that Heaven will cut off our mandate; how much less shall we be able to follow up the brilliant deeds of the former kings!" (SS, Pan Geng; Karlgren 1950b: 6/3)

Our understanding of this sentence is somewhat different from Karlgren's. We suggest it be interpreted as:

"If (we) now do not continue the old (practice), then there is no one who knows

(or, nobody knows) if Heaven will cut off (our) mandate, how much less to say that (we)

will be able to follow up the brilliant deeds of the former kings!"¹²⁰

This complex sentence is a conditional construction. Let us first consider the apodosis, the last two clauses. In the first clause of the apodosis, the complement clause of the main verb *zhi* 知, "to know," is 天之斷命, "Heaven's cutting off (our) mandate," which is an "NP + *zhi* + VP."

¹²⁰ Thanks to K. Takashima (personal communication) for correcting the interpretation of the sentence 罔知天之斷命 for me. He suggests that the negative word *wang* 罔, which contains the final *-N, and has an indefinite referential function, should be interpreted as "there is no one."

The second clause of the apodosis is introduced by the idiomatic expression *shen yue* 矧曰, which consists of the conjunction *shen* 矧 meaning *kuangqie* 況且, “moreover,” or *hekuang* 何況, “much less; besides; let alone,” and the verb *yue* 曰, “to say.” Here the complement clause of the verb *yue* is 其克從先王之烈, “to be able to follow up the brilliant deeds of the former kings,” which is a “*qi* + VP” structure. It seems that 其克從先王之烈 should also be taken as a nominalized structure similar to 天之斷命, due to the general principle of parallelism in forming sentences in Classical Chinese. That is, both of the clauses should be treated as nominalized constructions. However, here we find that the interpretation of *qi* as the subject of the clause, or as the substitute for the “NP + *zhi*” phrase occurring in the preceding context, does not work. Here *Qi* does not refer to any antecedent noun at all, because there is no antecedent noun that is related to the verb phrase 克從先王之烈 in a relation of subject and predicate.¹²¹ In other words, 其克從先王之烈 is a null-subject clause, a clause that does not have a subject in the overt structure; the subject “we” as provided in the English translation is inferred from the context. And we may assume that this pronominal interpretation of the null subject comes from the existence of an empty pronoun, (i.e., the PRO) in front of *qi*.¹²² The presence of *qi* here is to mark the clause as a nominalized clause.

In the *Shijing* texts, we also see *qi*-marked dependent clauses in which *qi* has a non-specific reference. For example, in the following example, we see that the verb *yun* 云, “to say,” in the first sentence has an embedded object clause in which *qi* is used. *Qi* does not refer to any antecedent in this context, and it is simply a nominalizing marker to mark the object clause as non-main.

(63) 卜云其吉, 終焉允臧. (詩經. 定之方中)

bǔ yún qí jí, zhōng yān yǔn zāng.

(turtle-shell) divination/ say/ qí/ auspicious, in the end/ yān/ indeed/ good

¹²¹ K. Takashima (personal communication) points out to me that we must assume an indefinite noun for the VP 不承于古, and *qi* in the following 其克從先王之烈 is co-referential to it. If I understand him correctly, this indefinite noun might be something like “one.” But in my opinion, the sentence 今不承于古 is an ordinary null-subject sentence, for which we may assume that there is an empty PRO that refers to the contextually relevant subject *wo* 我, “we.” Similarly, the following nominalized clause 其克從先王之烈 is also a null-subject clause that contains a PRO underlyingly. The use of *qi* here is not to refer to the underlying subject *wo* 我, “we,” or indefinite noun. Instead, *qi* is used as a nominalizing marker to nominalize the following VP, the same as the nominalizing marker *zhi* used in the previous clause.

¹²² See discussion in Section 5.2.

The divination announced that it is auspicious, indeed it was good.

“The tortoise-shell oracle was auspicious, all through it was truly good.” (SJ, Ding zhi fang zhong; Karlgren 1950a: 50/2)

In our understanding, the sentence 卜云其吉 can be literally translated as: “The tortoise-shell oracle says that it was auspicious.” Here there is no any antecedent in the previous context for *qi* to refer to. In other words, 其吉 is a null-subject embedded clause.¹²³

The fact that *qi* has no reference to any antecedent when used in a dependent clause can be seen more clearly in the following example:

(64) 其在祖甲，不義惟王，舊為小人。(尚書·無逸)

qí zài Zǔ Jiǎ, bù yì wéi wáng, jiù wéi xiǎo rén.

qí/ at/ Zu Jia/, not/ right/ be/ king/, long/ be/ little/ people

“When the turn came to Tsu Kia (i.e., Zu Jia), it was not (right, reasonable=) to be expected that he should become king (sc. two brothers preceding him on the throne), and for long he was (one of) the small people.” (SS, Wuyi; Karlgren 1950b: 20/6)

It is clear that in this example, the *qi* used in the temporal clause, 其在祖甲 “its being the time of Zu Jia (i.e., when the turn came to Zu Jia)” has no specific reference to any antecedent noun. Thus, *qi* is better understood as a nominalizer that nominalizes the following verbal phrase, marking the clause as dependent, just like *zhi*.

Lastly, as we have shown in the previous section, the use of *zhi* in the possessive constructions is associated with the presence of an overt NP possessor, while the use of *qi* in such constructions is not. Moreover, this rather strict distinction is seen in the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, but is somewhat blurred in the even earlier texts such as the *Shangshu* and *Shijing*, as shown in the fact that *qi* can also be used in environments in which there is an overt possessor. We propose that this not quite clear-cut distribution indicates that *qi* is in fact the same element as *zhi* in nature. A parallel situation is also seen in the distribution of *qi* and *zhi* in the nominalized constructions. That is, generally speaking, *qi* is used when there is no overt subject, while *zhi* is used when there is an overt subject, as seen in the examples from the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* texts. However, in the earlier classical texts such as the *Shangshu*, we also see that *qi* can be used in an environment with an overt NP subject, as below:

(65) 繼自今我其立政立事準人牧夫，我其克灼知厥若。(尚書·立政)

jǐ zì jīn wǒ qí lì zhèng lì shì zhǔn rén mù fū, wǒ qí kè zhuó zhī jué ruò.

continue/ from/ now/ we/ qí/ establish/ government/ establish/ manager/ law man/ pastor/,
we/ qí/ be able to/ brightly/ know/ their/ good

“From now on when we establish government and nominate the manager, the law man, and the pastor, we should be able (brightly =) clearly to know the suitable ones.” (SS,

Lizheng; Karlgren 1950b: 23/16)

There are two *qis* in this example, occurring in both the subordinate clause and the main clause.¹²³

Let us consider first the *qi* in the subordinate clause in which *qi* is used immediately after the subject pronoun and before the verbal predicate. The use of *qi* in this dependent clause with a subject shows that it functions the same as *zhi*. This example reminds us of the fact that, like *zhi*, *qi* in the earlier classical texts is also seen to occur between two nouns in possessive phrases, as in *zhen qi di* 朕其弟, “My younger brother.” Both phenomena suggest that *qi* is the same kind of grammatical element as *zhi*, and that they are parallel in both genitive and nominalizing functions.

Another important point about this example is that in the continuation of the *qi*-marked dependent clause (the main clause), there is also a *qi* occurring between the subject and the main verbal phrase. What grammatical role does *qi* play there? The nominalizing analysis cannot apply. The function of *qi* in this environment of main clause, and how this function is related to that in the nominalized and possessive functions, are the issues to be discussed in the next chapters of this study.

5. 3. 3. Alternative analyses

So far, we have presented data from early classics such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* to show the similarities between the “NP + *zhi* + VP” and “*qi* + VP” constructions in their grammatical functions. The common feature shared by “NP + *zhi* + VP” and “*qi* + VP” is that they both serve as a device to mark nominalized dependent sentences. But we must note that this device only signals the syntactic relationship between the connected sentences as dependent and main, and

¹²³ In Egerod (1989: 434), this example is also treated as a complex sentence in which the first clause is subordinate, and the second is main.

does not specify the particular semantic relationships between the sentences: the semantic relation involved is to be inferred from the context.

Now let us look at two other proposed analyses regarding the grammatical role of *qi* in the “*qi* + VP” constructions discussed above. The first is that *qi* is a subject pronoun, when used in front of a VP in a dependent clause. This analysis is first given in Ma Jianzhong (1889: 27). According to Ma, *qi* can be used as a pronoun referring to a noun, and it has two basic distributions: one is used attributively before a noun; the other is used in the subject position in a *dou* 讀 (i.e., a non-main or dependent clause).¹²⁴ The former usage is the case in which *qi* is used in possessive phrases (as discussed in the previous section). As for the latter usage, based on the examples listed by Ma, we know that it in fact refers to the case in which *qi* is used in front of a verbal phrase in a dependent clause. Ma treats *qi* in such an environment as a third person pronoun being used as the subject of the dependent clause. This analysis is accepted by many scholars (Zhou Fagao 1959: 105; Malmqvist 1982; He Leshi 1985 et al: 414).

Apparently, interpreting *qi* in this case as a (third person) subject pronoun works in terms of the contextual meaning. However, this interpretation cannot capture the grammatical function of *qi* in the language. The most important reason for us to argue against this subject-pronoun analysis is that *qi* is never seen to occur in a main clause as a pronominal subject. Then the problem we have to explain is: If it is a pronoun, why is *qi* only used as a subject in dependent clauses but not as a subject in main clauses? This analysis is not consistent with the grammar of classical Chinese. In classical Chinese grammar, there is no general third person pronoun equivalent to modern *ta* 他/她/它, “he/she/it” (see Wang Li 1958; Zhou Fagao 1959 Pulleyblank 1995; Guo Xiliang 1997; among others). When a noun introduced previously needs to be repeated as a subject or an object in the following sentences, the basic rule is to repeat the noun or just leave the position empty.¹²⁵ Given these facts, why does a dependent clause need to have a third person pronoun subject? This suggests that the analysis of *qi* as subject pronoun is problematic, even though it provides a convenient interpretation of dependent clauses with *qi*.

¹²⁴ *Dou* 讀 is a term used in the traditional textual study of ancient texts. It originally refers to a sentential pause in reading texts, but it seems that Ma Jianzhong uses this term to refer to syntactic units such as small clauses, or non-main/dependent clauses.

¹²⁵ Sometimes, demonstrative pronouns such as *bi* 彼, *fu* 夫, and *zhi* 之 may be used to refer to a third person. But in such a case, it is used in a demonstrative sense, indicating something like “that person” rather than “he.” Even for such use, only *bi* 彼 can be used in the subject position (see Pulleyblank 1995: 78-79).

Thus, we suggest that *qi* in the “*qi* + VP” construction should be considered a nominalizing marker that is extended from its genitive function. However, there is one more question to be addressed in order to maintain this analysis. Is it necessary to understand *qi* as a nominalizing marker derived from the genitive marker *qi*? Why can *qi* not be analyzed as a possessive pronoun-like element used in a genitive function? Consider the following English nominalization constructions:

- (66) a. John’s performing the dance.
b. His criticizing the book

These two English nominalization examples use genitive marker ‘s and the third-person possessive *his*. This seems to indicate that we still have one more alternative; namely, instead of treating *qi* as a genitive marker like *zhi*, we might just treat it as a possessive pronoun with a nominalizing function. However, we do not believe that this analysis can account for the nature of *qi* in Classical Chinese. First of all, we do not think that the “*qi* + VP” construction is analogical to the English “possessive pronoun + V-ing” construction. In English, only a gerund form (or a derived nominal like the deverbal noun *performance*, as in “his performance”) can combine with a possessive pronoun or the genitive marker ‘s. In other words, the nominalizations as in (66) are not marked by the possessive pronoun or the genitive marker ‘s; rather, they are marked by the gerunds. In Chinese, a verb does not change morphologically when used in a nominalized construction. However, this does not mean that the verb in a nominalized construction is not formally marked. It is pointed out by Zhu Dexi (1983) that nominalizations in Chinese are all formally marked by nominalizing markers. According to Zhu, in modern Mandarin, the nominalizing marker is *de* 的, and in Classical Chinese, the nominalizing markers include *zhe* 者, *suo* 所, and *zhi* 之. Zhu also mentions the construction “*qi* + VP,” considering that it is a nominalized construction corresponding to “NP + *zhi* + VP” (1983:30). Maybe the analogy made by Zhu (1983) between “NP + *zhi* + VP” and “*qi* + VP” does not necessarily mean that *qi* is equal to *zhi* in both constructions, and that they should both be considered as genitive markers used in a nominalizing function. In other words, we can still take “NP + *zhi* + VP” as a nominalized construction marked by the genitive marker *zhi*, while “*qi* + VP” is a nominalized construction marked by the “pronoun” *qi*. But one point to note about this treatment is that in Classical Chinese, a pronoun,

regardless of whether it is a personal pronoun or a non-personal pronoun such as demonstrative, has no nominalizing function itself. To form a subject-predicate nominalized construction, the genitive marker *zhi* is necessarily inserted between the subject and the VP, regardless of whether the subject is an ordinary NP or a pronoun. A pronoun cannot directly combine with a VP to turn the VP into a nominalized phrase. Instead, it must be followed by the genitive marker *zhi*, as in the following example:

- (67) 我之不德，民將棄我。(左傳·襄9/5)
wǒ zhī bù dé, mín jiāng qì wǒ.

I / zhī/ not/ virtue /, people/ will/ abandon/ I

If I do not have virtue, people will abandon me. (ZZ, Xiang 9/5) 3.969

In this example, 我之不德 is a *zhi*-marked nominalized construction in which the subject is a pronoun, *wo* 我, "I; we." The occurrence of the nominalizing marker *zhi* after the pronoun subject shows that a pronoun such as the first person *wo* does not have a nominalizing function by itself. Then, this poses the problem: Why would there be a pronoun like *qi*, which can be used to express nominalization without using *zhi*?

Another difficulty of the pronominal analysis is that there are some cases in which *qi* does not have a specific reference at all, as we have pointed out earlier. For example, in (68), *qi* does not refer to any NP, and the complement clause with *qi* is a type of zero-subject sentence.

- (68) (商人)是以日知其有天道也。(左傳·襄9/1)
Shāng rén shǐ yǐ rì zhī qí yǒu tiān dào yě.

Shang/ people/ thereby/ in the former times/ know/ qí/ have/ Heaven/ rule/ yě

With this, in the past, (the Shang people) knew that there exists the rule of Heaven.

(ZZ, Xiang 9/1) 3.964

And in the context in which sentence (69) is used, we do not find a specific antecedent noun to which *qi* refers. It seems that *qi* here is just a pure genitive marker using its nominalizing function to mark the dependent clause.

- (69) 其然，將具敝車而行。(左傳·襄公23/5)
qí rán, jiāng jù bǐ che ér xíng

qí/ to be so, be about to/ prepare/ poor/ carriage/ ér/ leave

Being so (i.e., If it is so), I will get my carriage ready and leave the State.

(ZZ, Xiang 23/5) 3.1078

Now let us look at the second analysis of the function of *qi* in the “*qi* + VP” structure, namely the view that *qi* is a substitute for a previously introduced “NP + *zhi*” (e.g., Jiang Baoqi 1982). This analysis is more plausible than the subject-pronoun analysis as discussed above, especially when we consider the examples in which *qi* is functionally equivalent to the phrase “NP + *zhi*” that appears in the preceding clause. Moreover, it recognizes the nominalized nature of the “*qi* + VP” structure and explains that *qi*’s nominalizing function has to do with *zhi*, because it assumes that *qi* contains the nominalizing marker *zhi*. However, looking deeper, we find that the analysis of *qi* as the replacement of “NP + *zhi*” is also problematic. That is, in this analysis, *qi* plays a double-role: one is to replace an antecedent noun to serve as the pronominal subject of the following VP; the other is to replace the nominalizing marker *zhi* to nominalize the following VP. This treatment is problematic in the following aspects. First, it has the same problem as the subject-pronoun analysis in that it treats *qi* as the replacement of the antecedent noun in the subject position of the clause and implies that a dependent or a nominalized clause must have an overt subject. If the noun is not repeated, *qi* must be used. Then we have to explain why a dependent/nominalized clause must have *qi* as the subject referring to an NP introduced earlier formally. Moreover, the assumption that *qi* is a form used to replace “N + *zhi*” also implies that *qi* itself does not have a nominalizing function, and that the source of the nominalization in a “*qi* + VP” clause comes from a previously introduced *zhi*. In this analysis, we cannot identify the nominalizing source of the type of *qi*-marked dependent clause which occurs without a previously introduced *zhi*, as in the following example (70). In this example, there is a *qi*-marked construction *qi pi wan* 其辟丸. Its position in the sentence suggests that it is the complement clause of the main verb *guan*, “to watch; to look; to see.”

(70) 晉靈公不君。從臺上彈人，而觀其辟丸也。（左傳·宣2/3）

Jīn Líng Gōng bù jūn. cóng tái shàng tán rén, ér guān qí pǐ wán yě.

Jin/ Ling/ duke/ not/ ruler/, from/ terrasse/ shoot/ people/, ér/ watch/ qí/ avoid/ pellet/
yě

Duke Ling of Jin does not behave like a ruler. (He often) shoots people (with a catapult)
from the terrace, and watches their avoiding the pellets. (ZZ, Xuan 2/3) 2.655

Therefore, this *qi*-marked clause is the same type of *qi*-marked complement clause as the one in

(69) below:

(71) 吾見師之出而不見其入也。(左傳·僖 32/3)

wú jiàn shī zhī chū ér bù jiàn qí rù yě.

I/ see/ army/ zhī/ go out/ but/ not/ see/ qí/ enter/ yě.

(Now) I see the going out of the army, but I will not see its coming back. (ZZ, Xi 32/3)

1.490

As far as example (71) is concerned, to assume that *qi* is used to replace the previous “NP + *zhi*” phrase (“師 + 之”) is plausible. In other words, we can assume that the second embedded clause *qi ru* 其入 is derived from “師 之入.” Thus, being the replacement of *zhi*, *qi* also has the nominalizing function to mark the clause in which it occurs as dependent, or non-main. But when we apply it to the *qi*-marked dependent clause as in (70), we find that the replacement analysis is hard to maintain. First, in example (70), *zhi* does not occur in the previous clause, so to take *qi* as the replacement for “NP + *zhi*” does not work in terms of the surface structure. At most, we can only say that *qi* is used to replace the object noun *ren* 人, “people,” in the previous clause as the subject of the verbal phrase *pi wan* 辟丸, “to avoid pellets.” Then, this *qi*-clause should not be taken as a nominalized clause, because there is no *zhi* to be placed here. This leads to conclusion that the *qi*-led complement clause in (70) and that in (71) are not the same type of clauses. The one in (71) is a nominalized construction, but the one in (70) is not. This implies that the “*qi* + VP” constructions consist of two types: one is a nominalized construction, when there is a “N + *zhi*” phrase occurring in the previous context; the other is a non-nominalized construction, when there is no “N + *zhi*” occurring in the previous context. Obviously, this is a problematic analysis. Maybe one can still maintain the analysis of *qi* as the replacement for “NP + *zhi*” by proposing that *qi* is a designated linguistic device that is functionally equivalent to “NP + *zhi*,” whenever it is used, it means “NP + *zhi*,” no matter whether or not there is a *zhi* occurring previously in the surface structure. However, this modified version of the replacement analysis will still have problems when we consider the nominalizing use of *qi* in earlier texts such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*. That is, parallel to the possessive construction, *qi* in the nominalizing construction may also co-occur with an overt subject in the earlier stages of the language, as discussed above; in earlier texts, there are constructions like “NP + *qi* + VP” in which *qi* is used

between the subject and the VP, in the same way as *zhi* in the “NP + *zhi* + VP” construction. Evidence like this indicates that *qi* is originally a nominalizing marker itself, and not a replacement for “NP + *zhi*.”

5.3.4. Summary

We have discussed the use of *qi* in dependent clauses in the early classical texts, arguing that *qi* in these environments is not an element of pronominal nature, but rather a pure genitive marker being used as a nominalizing marker like the well-recognized *zhi*. That is, grammatical functions of these two particles are parallel to each other in genitive constructions and nominalized constructions; the only difference between them is that they are used in different syntactic environments—*zhi* is used in contexts with an overt subject, while *qi* is used in contexts without an overt subject. However, the complementary distribution of *zhi* and *qi* is not strictly obeyed in the preclassical texts such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, as shown in the discussion that *qi* may sometimes be used with an overt subject.

5.4. *Qi* as a modality marker in main clauses

As well as being used in front of noun phrases to mark possessive and in front of verbs in dependent clauses to mark nominalization, *qi* is also frequently used in independent or main clauses. The grammatical role of *qi* in the former two syntactic environments can be characterized as that of genitive marker. That is, the function of *qi* used in front of a verb to mark nominalization can be regarded as an extension of its genitive function used in front of a noun. We may call the “*qi* + NP” construction nominal genitive, and the “*qi* + VP” nominalized genitive. However, the grammatical function and semantic feature of *qi* in the environment of the main clauses differs greatly from the *qi* in the types of genitive constructions. The remainder of this study is devoted to investigating these issues. In this section, we focus on the description of the syntactic distributions of *qi* in main clauses, leaving the detailed semantic explication of *qi* to the following chapters.

As we shall demonstrate in the following chapter, the basic semantic function of *qi* in main clauses is that of “uncertain outcome” marker, indicating that the event or state being expressed is

something whose factual status is not yet certain for the speaker at the moment of speaking. For convenience, I interpret *qi* in the examples cited below as *surely*, *perhaps*, *probably*, or, sometimes as *may*, *might*, *must* for a functional translation. However, this does not mean that *qi*'s grammatical role in a sentence is the same as these adverbs or modal auxiliaries in English.

5.4.1. The *qi*-marked simple sentences

Based on the position of *qi* in relation to the subject, the *qi*-marked simple sentences in early classical texts can be represented by the following patterns:

Pattern A: [Subj + *qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

Pattern B: [*qi* + Subj + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

Here, we consider Pattern A as the basic pattern, because the examples in which *qi* occurs before the subject as in Pattern B are rare in number, and they are mostly the cases in which the subject is a question word; moreover, sentences with pattern B usually occur as the main clauses of topic-comment constructions, rather than as simple independent clauses. Let us first discuss the sentences with pattern A. Those with Pattern B will be discussed later.

Depending on the presence or absence of the final particles, as well as the nature of the final particles, the pattern in (A) can be further divided into the two basic types, as in (I) and (II).

I. Declarative *qi*-marked sentences, including the following two types:

- (a) [Subj + *qi* + Predicate]
- (b) [Subj + *qi* + Predicate + Declarative final particle (i.e., *ye* 也 / *yi* 矣 / *zai* 哉)]; and

II. Interrogative *qi*-marked sentences, including the following two types:

- (a) Yes-no questions:
[Subj + *qi* + Predicate + *hu* 乎]

(b) Content questions:

[NP-subj + *qi*+ Predicate containing Q-word + (*hu*乎)]

[Q-word-subj + *qi* + Predicate + (*hu*乎)]

The pattern in (Ia) represents the case in which the *qi*-marked sentence ends without a final particle; (Ib) represents the case in which the *qi*-marked sentence ends with a declarative final particle such as *ye* 也, or *yi* 矣, or the exclamation particle 哉 *zai*. The pattern in (IIa) represents the case of yes-no questions in which the *qi*-marked sentence usually ends with an interrogative final particle such as *hu* 乎 (or sometimes *ye* 耶/邪, or *yu* 歟/與); and (IIb) represents the case of the question-word questions that may optionally be marked with *hu*.

According to Ma Jianzhong (1889[1983: 323-380]), Lü Shuxiang (1942[1990: chapter 15, 16]), and Wang Li (1958: 445-58), the final particles can be divided into two basic categories: those that mark declarative sentences, such as *yi* and *ye*,¹²⁶ and those that mark interrogative sentences, such as *hu*.

Even though the use of a particular final particle in a sentence is determined by many factors such as tense, aspect, modality, and type of predicate, among others, it seems to me that the basic function of these final particles is to indicate the clause type of a sentence (as declarative, interrogative, exclamation, etc.).

5.4.1.1. The basic structure of *qi*-marked simple declarative clauses

In early classical texts such as the *Shijing*, *Shangshu*, *Zuozhuan*, and *Guoyu*, a *qi*-marked simple declarative clause can be formed by adding *qi* in the position between the subject and the predicate, which may end with or without final particles as in the following examples:

(72) 我其為王穆卜。(尚書·金縢)

wǒ qí wèi wáng mù bǔ.

we/ qí/ for/ king/ solemnly/ divine

“We shall for the king solemnly take tortoise oracle.” (SS, Jing teng; Karlgren 1950 b:

12/2)

¹²⁶ Commonly, *ye* 也 is used at the end of sentence with a noun predicate, serving as a mark of noun predication. However, the use of particle *ye* 也 is not confined to main/matrix clauses. It may occur after a nominalized topical clause to mark it as a topic. In this case, *ye* 也 is considered a topic marker.

- (73) 君其圖之! (國語・晉語一/8)

jūn qí tú zhī!

lord/ qí/ plan/ zhī

You must consider that! (GY, Jinyu 1/8) 1.272

- (74) 姜其危哉! (左傳・昭 3/13)

Jiāng qí wēi zāi!

Jiang/ qí/ perilous; in danger/ zāi

The Jiang clan is surely in peril! (ZZ, Zhao 3/13) 4. 1244

- (75) 吾其奔也。 (左傳・僖23/6)

wú qí bēn yě.

I/ qí/ flee/ yě.

I should surely flee. (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1. 404

If there is a series of preverbal particles, *qi* occupies the highest position after the subject, as in the following example:

- (76) 天其或者正訓楚也。 (左傳・哀 1/4)

tiān qí huòzhě zhèng xùn Chǔ yě.

Heaven/ qí/ perhaps/ just, right / admonish/ Chu/ yě

Perhaps Heaven is justly admonishing Chu. (ZZ, Ai 1/4) 4.1608

In (76), *qi* co-occurs with two preverbal adverbs *huozhe* 或者, “perhaps, probably” and *zheng* 正, “right, just, precisely, exactly,”¹²⁷ and precedes both of them. This final point suggests that *qi* occupies a higher position than other elements in front of the predicate phrase. We propose that the basic structure of a *qi*-marked simple clause, as in (72)-(76), can be illustrated as (77) and (78).¹²⁸

¹²⁷ The interpretation of *zheng* 正 in this example is adopted from Shen Yucheng (1981: 551) who translates *zheng* 正 as an adverb meaning *zhengshi* 正是, “right, just, precisely, exactly.” We are not quite sure about this interpretation, because it is not common to see the word *zheng*, which usually functions as a verb (or an adjective) meaning “to correct, to determine, to be straight,” to be used as an adverb in early classical texts. Nevertheless, the adverbial use seems to exist in the relatively later texts such as the *Lunyu* 論語, as in following example:

[i] 正唯弟子不能學也。 (論語・述而)

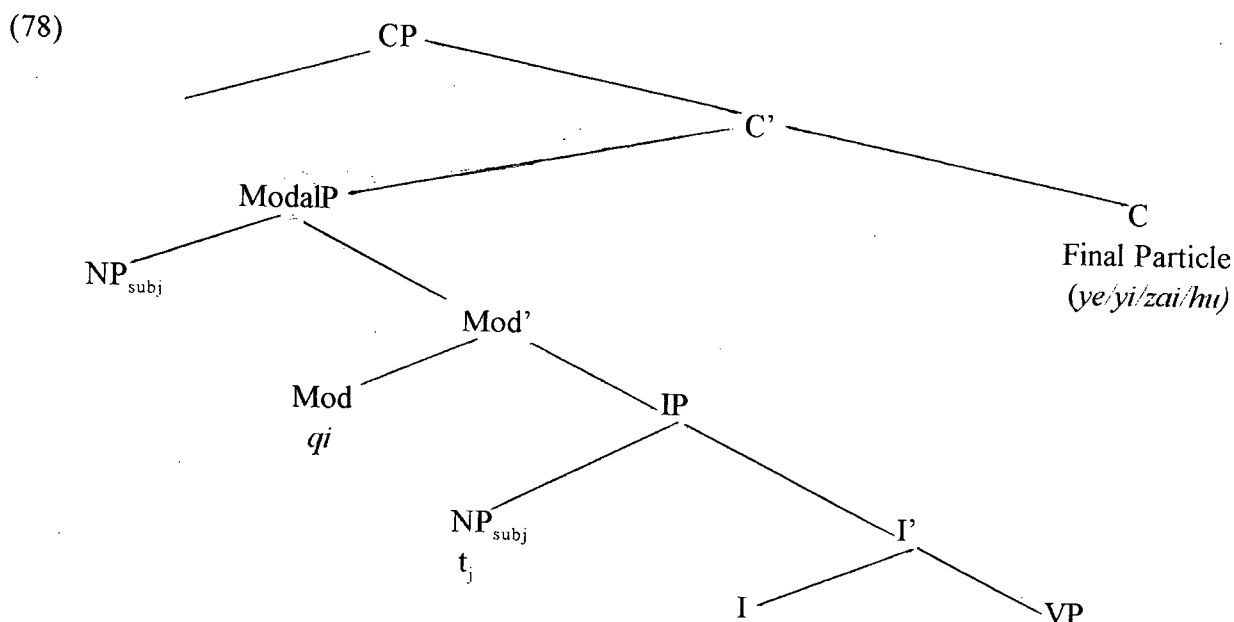
zhèng wéi dīzǐ bù néng xué yě.

just; right/ be/ student/ not/ be able to/ learn/ yě

(This) is precisely the thing that we, your students cannot be able to learn (and master).

¹²⁸ The structure here is given based on the X' theory. In this theory, a simple sentence is analyzed as an IP (inflectional phrase) headed by INFL (inflection), simplified as I in (65), which is the position where “inflectional” information about Tense and Agreement is located (but in some languages, elements expressing such grammatical relationships do not necessarily occur in the overt syntax). CP (Complementizer phrase) is the structure originally

(77) [(Subj) [_{Mod} *qi* [VP]]]



Because the final particles in early Classical Chinese are clausal typing particles associated with matrix/main clauses,¹²⁹ we assume that the position of these final particles, such as *yi*, *ye*, *zai*, and *hu*, is in the head of the CP, that is, in the C position. Since such typing particles appear sentence finally, we assume the CP structure in early Classical Chinese is head-final (see discussion below). Moreover, as shown in example (76), the particle *qi* occupies the highest position in front of a verbal phrase, and the presence of this particle has to do with the modal meaning of the sentence (see discussion in Chapter 6); we assume that there is a functional phrase, modal phrase (ModalP), headed by *qi* in the position between CP and IP. The head, Modal, takes an IP as its complement. We assume that the subject NP raises from Spec of IP to Spec of ModalP in order to be checked by the modal feature of *qi*.

We consider that this structure can accommodate a *qi*-marked main clause with the pattern [Subj + *Qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)], no matter whether it is declarative or interrogative. In the case of a negative sentence, a NegP can be inserted in the position between IP and VP. Thus, a negative sentence as in (79) can be illustrated as in (80) below.

proposed for the subordinate sentence headed by a complementizer, such as *that*, or *if*, in English. It is also the structure for main clauses that involve syntactic movement, such as direct question sentences in English.

¹²⁹We follow Cheng (1991: 25, 35) in calling sentence final particles "clausal typing particles," in the sense that they are used to type a sentence as declarative or interrogative.

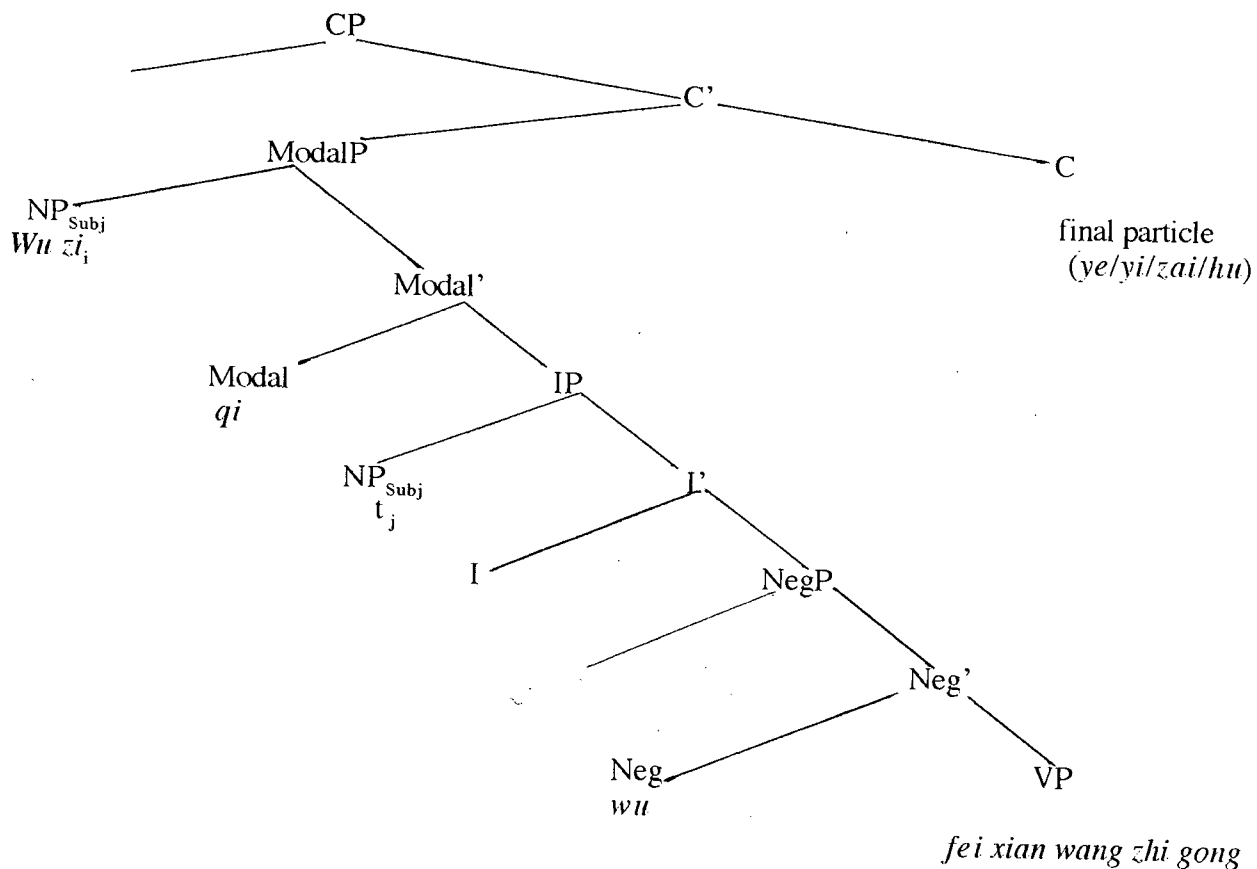
(79) 吾子其無廢先君之功! (左傳·隱 3/5)

wú zǐ qí wú fèi xiān jūn zhī gōng!

Sir/ qí/ not/ nullify/ former/ ruler/ zhī/ achievement

You should not nullify the achievement of the former ruler! (ZZ, Yin 3/5) 1.29

(80)



One point worth noticing is that the word order of *qí* and the negator involves a historical change from pre-Classical Chinese to early Classical Chinese. That is, in OBI, *qí* is usually used after negative adverbs such as *bu* 不, *fu* 弗, *wu* 勿, and *wu* 毋, and the word order of a sentence in which *qí* and negator both occur is “Neg. + *qí* + VP,” while in early Classical Chinese, *qí* is usually used in front of the negative adverbs, as in (79), which has the word order “*qí* + Neg. + VP.”¹³⁰

¹³⁰ However, in the *Zuozhuan*, there are still several examples in which *qí* is used after the negator, as below:

(i) 秦不其然。 (左傳·僖 15/8)

Qín bù qí rán.

Qín /not/ qí/ be so

The Qin State would not be so. (ZZ, Xi 15/8) 1. 366

According to Yang Bojun (1981 v.1: 366), the same sentence also occurs in Duke Xiang 26th year of the *Zuozhuan*. Interestingly, in some variants of the text, the sentence in [i] is written as *Qin qí bu ran* 秦其不然, in which, as in most cases, the negative adverb *bu* occurs after *qí*. Yang concludes that the word order “Neg. + *qí* + VP” as in (i) might be the relic of the OBI order such as *bu qí yu* 不其雨, “It might not rain,” pointing out that the relics of the OBI word order of negative word preceding *qí* are more often seen in the earlier classical texts such

5.4.1.2. The basic structure of *qi*-marked simple interrogative sentences

As well as appearing in declarative sentences, *qi* is also frequently used in direct question sentences. The following example is a case in which *qi* is used in a yes-no question:

- (81) 問於卜偃曰：“吾其濟乎？”對曰：“克之。”（左傳·僖5/8）

wèn yú Bǔ Yàn yuē: “wú qí jǐ hū?” duì yuē: “kè zhi.”

ask/ yú / Bu Yan/ say/, I/ qí/ successful/ hū/, reply/ say/, be able/ zhī

(Jin Hou) asked Bu Yan: “Can I possibly be successful?” (Bu Yan) responded: “Yes, you can make it.” (ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1.310

In this example, the yes-no question *wu qi ji hu* 吾其濟乎, “Can I possibly be successful?” is marked with *qi*. Here *qi* occurs immediately after the subject and in front of the predicate phrase, the same as its position in declarative sentences. We assume that the structure of a *qi*-marked yes-no question can be illustrated as in (78).

Qi is also used in content questions, in which *qi*'s position varies depending on whether the subject is an ordinary NP or a question word. If the subject is an ordinary NP, then *qi* occurs immediately after the NP, as in (82)-(83).

- (82) 吾其何得? (左傳·襄 28/9)

wú qí hé dé?

I/ qí / what / get

What will I probably get? (ZZ, Xiang 28/9) 3. 1146

- (83) 吾子其曷歸? (左傳·昭 1/8)

wú zǐ qí hé guī?

you, sir/ qí/ when/ return

When will you probably return? (ZZ, Zhao 1/8) 4.1215

We assume that there is no movement involved in a content question. Thus, the basic structure

as the *Shangshu*. In later texts, examples with such word order are few. For example, in the *Guoyu*, there is a sentence which is similar to (i), namely the one in (ii). But different from (i), in (ii), *qi* occurs in front of the negator *bu* 不, and there are no textual variants that show *qi* occurring after the negator.

- (ii) 以德為怨，君其不然? (國語·晉語三/7)

yǐ dé wéi yuàn, jūn qí bù rán.

take/ virtue/ as/ hatred/, your lordship/ not/ be so

To take virtue as hatred, you, sir, would surely not be like that, would you? (GY, Jinyu 3/7) 1.331

What is the motivation for the change in the word order of *qi* and negator? Does this change have to do with the change of the grammatical role of *qi*? These questions remain. See Haiman (1978) for the references cited there.

of a content question in which the subject is an ordinary NP as in (82)-(83) can also be illustrated as in (78). However, if the subject is not an ordinary NP but a question word, *qi* usually occurs in front of the question-word subject, as below:

- (84) 其誰受之? (國語・周語上/12)

qí shuí shòu zhī?

qí/ who/ receive/ zhī

Who will possibly receive him? (GY, Zhouyu A/12) 1.32

- (85) 其誰有此乎? (左傳・昭 26/2)

qí shuí yǒu cǐ hū?

qí/ who/ have/this/ hū

Who would probably have this? (ZZ, Zhao 26/2) 4.1480

Questions with *qi* preceding the question-word subject, as in (84) and (85) seldom occur alone; usually, they are coupled with a left-dislocated topic clause. We refer to this type of *qi*-marked sentence as topic-comment construction (see discussion below).

5.4.2. The *qi*-marked complex sentences (the topic-comment constructions).

So far, we have discussed the distribution of *qi* in simple main clauses and the basic structure of *qi*-marked simple main clauses. Here we want to look at cases in which *qi* is used in the main clause of a complex sentence. The most commonly seen complex sentences involving the use of *qi* are topic-comment constructions (or topical constructions)

5.4.2.1. Definition of topic-comment constructions

Topic-comment constructions (or topical constructions) refer to sentences that consist of two basic components: a topic and a comment. Topic refers to the left-dislocated constituent that serves as the topic of a sentence, and is also called topical constituent, or topic clause. Comment refers to the part that expresses the speaker's opinion toward the topic. Even though we have a clear definition of what constitute a topic-comment structure, determining the topic-comment relation between two connected clauses is not so simple.

Let us start from the definitions of topic and comment. A number of definitions have been given in literature, among which the following two are most widely accepted:

- (i) The topic is what the speaker is talking about; the comment is what he says about it (Halliday 1967: 212; Brekle 1970: 72; Hornby 1971: 1976, among others).
- (ii) The topic is the given or old information in the sentence; the comment is the new information (Halliday 1967: 8; Chafe 1972; 1976, among others).¹³¹

As pointed out by Haiman (1978: 583), even though these two definitions are not incompatible, and are often not clearly distinguished,¹³² they are not identical.¹³³ Haiman redefines topic as follows:

The topic represents an entity whose existence is agreed upon by the speaker and his audience. As such, it constitutes the framework which has been selected for the following discourse. (Haiman 1978: 585).

This definition of topic is adopted in this study. The reasons for taking this definition are as follows: By viewing a topic as an entity whose existence is agreed upon by the speaker and his audience, one avoids the contradiction between (i) and (ii) as to whether one should limit topic to just the part of the sentence that provides "old information." Consider the following two examples:

- (86) Meals, Mom-made ones are good; Dimsums, Dad-made ones are good.
- (87) Vancouver's summer is sunny and charming, and I like it; Vancouver's winter is always raining, so I don't like it.

These two examples follow the very commonly seen topical constructions of "contrastive topics." However, some linguists suggest that topics in such sentences convey "new information" (e.g., Chafe 1976).¹³⁴ Then a question arises as to the definition in (ii): Are they topics? Some

¹³¹ See Haiman (1978) for the reference cited there.

¹³² For example, Hornby (1971), in one of the articulations of (i), reintroduces the given/new dichotomy of topic and comment by combining (i) and (ii) as: "the part of the sentence which constitutes what the speaker is talking about will be called topic; the rest of the sentence, the comment, provides the new information about the topic" (cited in Haiman 1978: 583).

¹³³ As for the difference between the positions in (i) and (ii), see Haiman (1978: 854-5).

¹³⁴ Imagine a situation in which two speakers are talking about their parents' cooking skills, and one of them says sentence (86), while the topics "meals" and "dimsums" are not mentioned in the previous context. And as for example (87), imagine a situation in which two old friends are meeting together after a long separation and are talking about their life experiences in the places where they lived, and one of them is asked the question: "Do you like Vancouver?" In this sense, the topics in both of these examples are indeed "new information."

linguists consider that such "contrastive topics" must be taken as real topics, even though they convey "new information," because in languages that have formal markers for topics (e.g., Japanese), they are marked with the same topical marker as "old information" topics. This seems to suggest that the definition in (ii) should be excluded as a definition of topic. Indeed, in many communications, topics are seemingly not "old information" at all.

Then should we take the definition in (i), holding that "the topic is what the speaker is talking about"? In fact, this definition also has its weaknesses, for it allows one to understand "contrastive topics" as "new information," which is a mistaken concept. In Haiman's view, "topics" are in nature "old information," because they are established as givens in the communication. According to Haiman (1978: 584), the difference between "old information" and "contrastive topics" is not in that the first is given and the second is new; the only difference lies in how they are established as givens in the discourse. In his view, "old information topics" are established by the previous context. "Contrastive topics," however, are selected by the speaker as relevant thoughts which he has not yet communicated to his listener. "Contrastive topics" must be established as givens by agreement, and the speaker must solicit this agreement from his listener. In this sense, the common feature shared by topics is not that topics specify "what the speaker is talking about," no matter whether they are "old information" or "new information." Instead, topics are the things selected by the speaker, which are either the knowledge shared by the speaker and the listener, or presuppositions agreed upon the speaker and the listener.

Moreover, Haiman (1978) points out that the definition given in (i) will also lead one to another mistaken concept. With the notion that "comments are really what the speaker says about the topic," one expects the comment part of the sentence to contain some reference to the topic; however, many studies have demonstrated that the left-dislocated topic of a sentence does not necessarily have a corresponding anaphora within the sentence itself (Rodman 1974 for English; Li and Thompson 1976 for Japanese, Korean, and Chinese). Therefore, Haiman holds that "under such circumstances, topics are not necessarily what the sentence is about" (1978: 585). Rather, as Chafe (1976: 50) notes, "the topic sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework which limits the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain."

The above understandings of topics are adopted in this study as the basic principle to

determine whether or not two connected clauses constitute a topic-comment relation.

Another important suggestion by Haiman (1978) is that conditional clauses are also topics. He states that conditional clauses and non-conditional topics are similar in formal features. In many languages, these two grammatical categories have the same formal markers and have similar syntactic distribution—they tend to be left-dislocated with respect to the main clauses. Haiman points out that formal similarity between grammatical categories usually reflects similarity in meaning. And indeed, conditionals and topics share similarity in semantic properties. That is, conditionals, like topics, are givens which constitute the frame of reference in which the main clause is either true or felicitous. Thus, Haiman (1978) redefines conditional clause as follows:

A conditional clause is the part of the knowledge shared by the speaker and the listener. As such, it constitutes the framework which has been selected for the following discourse.
(1978: 583)

Haiman (1978) convincingly demonstrates that conditionals are topics, based on the morphological evidence in some languages such as Hua (a Papuan language), Turkish, and Tagalog, in which the regular markers of conditionals are also the regular markers of topics.

In addition to Haiman (1978), other linguists such as Chao Yuanren (1968: 81-118) also equate conditionals and topics on the basis of evidence from Chinese. Chao (1968) observes that there is a close parallel among topics, questions, and conditionals in formal marking in Chinese.¹³⁵ For example, the pause particles such as *a*, *ne*, *me*, and *ba* that occur after a topic can also occur as interrogative particles at the end of questions (1968: 81).¹³⁶ Clauses of concession, reason, time, and condition may also occur with each of these particles (1968: 113). Because conditional clauses, among others, may occur with topic markers, Chao points out that conditional clauses can be regarded as “clause topics” (1968: 118-9).

In Classical Chinese, we also see that topics and conditionals can be marked similarly, as pointed out in Pulleyblank (1995: 154-155): the use of the particle *ze* 則 in front of the main clause to specify a conditional construction is closely related to its use to mark a noun as

¹³⁵ Note that Chao uses the term “subject” to refer to both categories we call “subject” and “topic.” Here, he is referring to a case we would call “topic.”

¹³⁶ According to Chao, topic and comment are formally equivalent to question and answer, so the parallel between topic and question in formal marking is not accidental, but derives from the nature of topic as a question (1968: 82).

topic.¹³⁷ He further explains the similarity between an if-clause and a topic “the if-clause presents a situation that defines the circumstances under which the statement in the main clause applies and, by implication, contrasts it with other situations. It is thus like a topic for the main clause” (1995: 155).

Because of the arguments and evidence shown in these works, we also regard conditional clauses as a kind of topic. Thus, the topic-comment constructions to be discussed below not only include the case of ordinary topical constituents, but also conditional clauses.

5. 4. 2. 2. The basic structure of the *qi*-marked topic-comment constructions

In early Classical Chinese, as in modern Mandarin Chinese, an independent simple sentence may have both a topic and a subject, or only a subject without a topic, or only a topic without a subject. The first two types of sentences are common in many languages. However, the last type of sentence, with only a topic but no subject, is a striking feature of Chinese. When compared with the languages which do not allow non-overt subject in a sentence, such as English. Accordingly, the main clause of a topic-comment construction in early Classical Chinese may or may not contain a subject. For the topical constructions involving the use of *qi*, the following three types of patterns are seen in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* texts:

(88) Pattern A: [Constituent₁...], [Subj + *Qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

Pattern B: [Constituent₁...], [*Qi* + Subj + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

Pattern C: [Constituent₁...], [*Qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

The left-dislocated structures marked as [Constituent₁...] represent the topical (including conditional) constituent that is coupled with the *qi*-marked main, or comment, clause. The

¹³⁷ The following examples show that the particle *ze* 則, “then” can be used in both topical and conditional constructions:

(i) 鳥則擇木, 木豈能擇鳥? (左傳·哀 11/6)

niǎo zé zé mù, mù qǐ néng zé niǎo?

bird/ then/ choose/ tree/, tree/ qǐ/ be capable/ choose/bird

As for a bird, then it can choose its tree; how can a tree choose its bird? (ZZ, Ai 11/6) 4. 1667

(ii) 若必治國家者, 則其管夷吾乎? (國語·齊語 1)

ruò bǐ zhì guójiā zhě, zé qí Guǎn Yíwú/ hū

if/ certainly/ govern/ state/ zhě/, then/ qí/ Guan Wuyi/ hū

If it is a matter that you need one who can certainly govern the State, then surely it is Guan Yiwu, isn't it? (GY, Qiyu 1) 1. 221

topical constituents can be different kinds of constructions—such as a left-dislocated NP, a left-dislocated VP, a nominalized clause like the “NP + *zhi* + VP” or the “*qi* + VP” constructions, or a non-nominalized clause—all of which may or may not be marked with a topical marker such as *ye* 也, and may or may not be introduced by a conjunction such as *ruo* 若, or *ru* 如, “if.” In what follows, we will not discuss in detail the formation of the topical clause, since our major concern is the comment clause that is associated with *qi*.

In (88), the structures marked with the square brackets on the right represent the basic patterns of the *qi*-marked comment or main sentences in the early classics. The main sentences with the pattern in (88A) represent the cases in which *qi* is used after an overt subject. The main sentences with the pattern in (88B) represent the cases in which *qi* is used in front of an overt subject. The main sentences with the pattern in (88C) represent cases in which *qi* is used without a subject. In all these three types of cases, the main clauses may be declarative or interrogative. Usually, when the main clause ends without a final particle or with the declarative clausal typing particles such as *ye* 也, *yi* 矣, and *zai* 哉, it is declarative; when the main sentence ends with the question final particles such as *hu* 乎, or *yu* 歟, or when there is a question-word involved in the clause, it is interrogative. More detailed descriptions on these three patterns are given below.

I. Pattern A: [Constituent₁...], [Subj + *Qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)].

This pattern can be illustrated by the following examples. In (89) and (90), the main/comment clauses are declarative. The first one ends without a final particle, while the second ends with the exclamation particle *zai*. The structure of the left-dislocated topical clauses in the two cases are different: the one in (89) is a nominalized constituent (i.e., the “NP + *Zhi* + VP” construction), while the one in (90) is a serial verb construction.

(89) 昭王之不復，君其問諸水濱。（左傳·僖 4/1）

Zhāo wáng zhī bù fù, jūn qí wèn zhū shuǐ bīn!

Zhao/ king/ zhī/ not return, your lordship/ qí/ ask/ zhū / water/ bank

As for king Zhao's not returning (from the expedition to the south), you should inquire about it along the banks of the river. (ZZ, Xi 4/1) 1. 290

- (90) 棄禮違命，楚其危哉！（左傳·昭 13/3）

qì lǐ wéi mìng, Chǔ qí wēi zāi

abandon/ proper law/ resist/ command/ Chu/ qí/ danger/ zāi

By abandoning the proper law and resisting the command, Chu is surely in danger! (ZZ, Zhao 13/3) 4.1350

Now let us consider cases in which the *qi*-marked main clause is interrogative. In (91) and (92), both topical clauses are conditional clauses introduced by the conjunction *ruo* 若, “if.” Both the *qi*-marked clauses are interrogatives ending with the interrogative final particle *hu*. However, in terms of discourse function, they are not information-seeking questions; rather, they are inferential questions.¹³⁸

- (91) 若趙孟死，為政者其韓子乎！（左傳·襄 31/1）

ruò Zhào Mèng sǐ, wéi zhèng zhě qí Hān zǐ hū!

if/ Zao Meng/ die /, make/ government/ zhě/ qí/ Han Zi/ hū

If Zhao Meng dies, the person who governs the State will surely be Han Zi! (ZZ, Xiang 31/1) 3.1183

- (92) 若我不出，王其以我為對乎？（國語·周語中/1）

ruò wǒ bù chū, wáng qí yǐ wǒ wéi duì hū

if/ I/ not/ go out, king/ qí/ consider/ I / as/ resentment/ hū

If I do not go on the expedition, the king will surely consider that I have a resentment toward him, won't he? (GY, Zhouyu B/1) 1.29

The following examples are cases in which the *qi*-marked main clauses are content questions.

- (93) 子產而死，誰其嗣之？（左傳·襄 30/13）

Zǐ Chǎn ér sǐ, shuí qí sǐ zhī?

Zi Chan/ ér/ die/, who/ qí/ succeed/ zhī¹³⁹

If Zi Chan dies, who is likely to succeed him? (ZZ, Xiang 30/13) 3. 1182

- (94) 今與王言如響，國其若之何？（左傳·昭 12/11）

jīn yǔ wáng yán rú xiǎng, guó qí ruò zhī hé?

now/ with/ king/ talk/ like/ echo/, state/ qí/ to make it like what

Now (you) talk to the king just like his echo, what could the State possibly do about this (i.e., how can the state stand it?) (ZZ, Zhao 12/11) 4. 1340

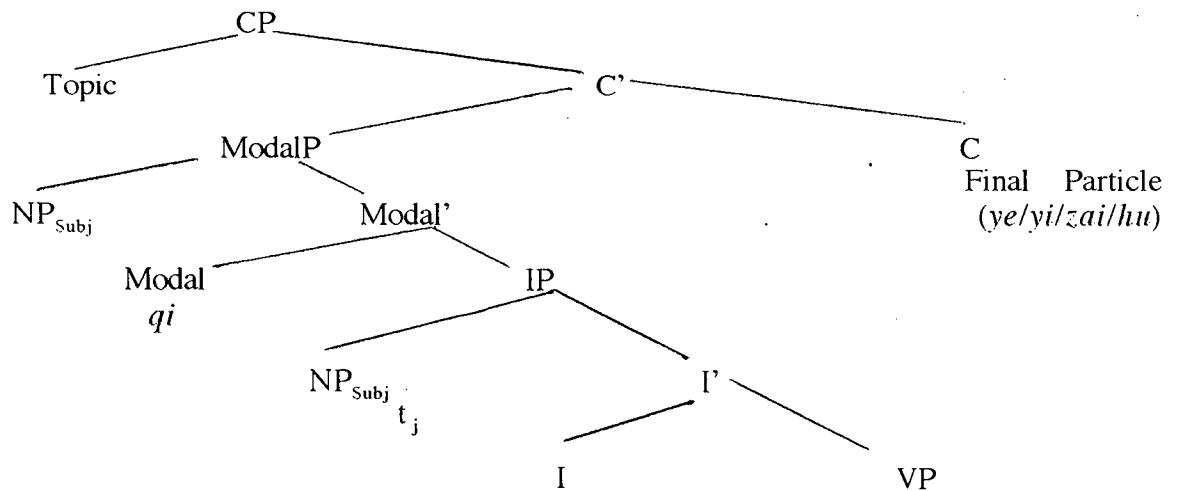
¹³⁸ See more discussion of inferential questions in Chapter 6.

¹³⁹ See footnote 196 in Chapter 6 for the discussion of the function of *er* in this example.

In these two examples, both the *qi*-marked main clauses are content questions. The one in (93) is a subject question in which *qi* follows the question-word subject. In (94), where the subject is not a question-word, but an ordinary NP *guo* 國, “state,” *qi* is used after the subject and in front of the verbal interrogative phrase *ruo zhi he* 若之何, “what is one to do about it?” or “what can one do about it?”¹⁴⁰

The basic structure of the topical constructions in examples (91)–(94) can be illustrated as in (95). In this structure, we assume that the topical constituent is in the Spec of CP, and the sentence final particle is in the head of CP (i.e., the C position), which specifies the clause type of the *qi*-marked sentence. C takes a modal phrase (ModalP) as its complement. The ModalP is headed by *qi*, which is in the Mod position. *Qi* takes an IP clause as its complement. The subject of IP is base-generated in the Spec of VP and raises to the Spec of ModP for checking of the modal feature of *qi*.

(95)



II. Pattern B: [Constituent₁...], [*Qi* + Subj + Predicate + (Final Particle)]

In this pattern, *qi* is used in front of the subject, and it can be illustrated by the following example:

¹⁴⁰ In this expression, *ruo* 若 is used as a verb, meaning “to be like.” According to Pulleyblank (1988), *ruo* expresses a causative meaning, “to make it like” in this phrase; *zhi* is a demonstrative meaning “this; that; it,” and *he* 何 is the question word, meaning “what.” Thus, the expression *ruo zhi he* 若之何, which can be literally interpreted as “to make it like what,” or “to do what about it,” means “what is one to do about it?” or “what can one do about it?”

- (96) 若果行此, 其鄭國實賴之, 豈唯二三臣? (左傳·襄 31/11)

ruò guǒ xíng cǐ, qí Zhèng guó shí lài zhī, qǐwéi èr sān chén?

if/ indeed/ practise/ this, qí/ Zheng/ State/ really/ rely on/ zhī/, qǐ/ two/ three/ minister

If you indeed do this, the whole State of Zheng will really be benefited by it, how only
we two or three ministers? (ZZ, Xiang 31/11) 3.1192

The *qi*-marked comment clause in this example follows Pattern B. It is distinct from the type with Pattern A in that, instead of following the subject, here *qi* occurs in front of the subject. Now a question arises as to the regular position of *qi* in a clause: Is the regular position of *qi* the post-subject or the pre-subject? If the answer is the post-subject position, then we must explain the syntactic motivation that causes the structure in Pattern B.

Due to fact that *qi* occurs after the subject in the majority of matrix/main clauses, we consider the post-subject position as the regular position of *qi* in a matrix/main clause. In fact, sentences in which *qi* is used in front of an ordinary NP subject, as in (96), are rare. In the *Zuozhuan* texts, we only find five such examples. In most cases, when *qi* occurs in front of a subject, the subject is a question-word as in the following examples:

- (97) 一國兩君, 其誰堪之? (左傳·昭 7/1)

yī guó liǎng jūn, qí shuí kān zhī?

one/ sate/ two/ ruler/, qí/ who/ stand/ zhī

One State with two rulers, who can possibly bear this? (ZZ, Zhao 7/1) 4. 1283

- (98) 四方諸侯, 其誰不惕惕以從命? (國語·晉語四/10)

sī fāng zhūhóu, qí shuí bù tǐtǐ yǐ cóng mìng?

four/ quarter / feudal lords/, qí/ who/ not/ cautiously/ therewith/ follow/ command

Among the feudal lords in all quarters, who would possibly not follow (Your Majesty's)
command with caution? (GY, Jinyu 4/10) 2. 360

As noted above, we assume that the base position of *qi* is post-subject. Thus, we need to explain why *qi* is preposed from the post-subject position to the pre-subject position, as in these examples. We suggest that the fronting of *qi* to the pre-subject position is motivated by the pragmatic purpose of emphasizing the subject in the clause. This proposal is self-evident,

because the subjects that are preceded by *qi* are mostly interrogative pronoun subjects.¹⁴¹ This is expected, because in a content question, the focus is usually the question word itself. However, this analysis seems to suggest that *qi* has a function to mark that what follows it is the focus of the sentence, and that *qi* should occur in front of the interrogative word if the clause contains one. Indeed, we find that *qi* usually occurs immediately before an interrogative pronoun or adverb, no matter which grammatical slot the interrogative word is in. For example:

(99) 孤之不元，廢也，其誰怨？(國語·晉語七/1)

gū zhī bù yuán, fèi yě, qí shuí yuàn?

I/ zhī/ not /good/, dethrone/ yě/, qí/ who/ resent¹⁴²

I am not good and thus am dethroned, whom should I resent? (GY, Jinyu 7/1) 2. 429

Note that in (99), the interrogative pronoun *shuí* 誰, “who,” is not the subject but the fronted object. To front an interrogative pronoun object to a preverbal position is a basic rule in Classical Chinese grammar. This example shows that *qi* is used immediately in front of an interrogative object pronoun, although it seems possible to have the word order like **shuí qi yuán* 誰其怨. Below are more examples which show that *qi* occurs immediately before the fronted interrogative object-pronoun.

(100) 君子也，其何不知？(左傳·襄 26/6) 3. 1115

jūnzǐ yě, qí hé bù zhī

lord; gentleman/ yě/, qí/ what/ not/ know

Being a lord, what do (you) not know? (ZZ, Xiang 26/6) 3. 1115

Similarly, in (100), *qi* occurs in front of the interrogative pronoun *he* 何, “what,” which is the object of the question sentence, even though it seems possible for *qi* to occur in the position between the fronted object and the verb, such as having the order **he qi bu zhi*, 何其不知.¹⁴³

The following example shows that *qi* is used immediately in front of a question word that occurs in an adverbial position:

¹⁴¹ In the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, we find only one example in which *qi* follows the interrogative subject pronoun, which is the sentence in example (88).

¹⁴² According to the commentary of the *Guoyu* given in Shanghai Shida (1978: 2. 430), the word *yuán* 元 in this sentence, means *shàn* 善, “good.”

¹⁴³ In the earlier classics such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, also including later texts *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, there are examples in which *qi* appears after the interrogative pronouns. But we consider that *qi* in such examples is a nominalizing marker. See 5.2.3.3.

- (101) 吾子其曷歸? (左傳·昭 1/8)

wúǐ qí hé guī?

you, sir/ qí/ when/ return

When will you probably return? (ZZ, Zhao 1/8) 4.1215

In the above discussion, we have shown that the fronting of *qí* ahead of the interrogative pronoun subject is motivated by the fact that the interrogative pronoun subject is the focus of the sentence. Now let us return to cases in which *qí* precedes an ordinary NP subject, as in (96). In the *Zuozhuan* texts, we see only five examples in which *qí* is used in front of an ordinary NP subject. In addition to example (96), there are four more as (102)-(105). These examples share three features: First, they are all topic-comment constructions. Second, in each main clause, the subject is a noun phrase referring to a third person or a thing. Third, in each example, the subject phrase is preceded by *qí*.

- (102) 反先王則不義, 何以為盟主? 其晉實有闕. (左傳·成 2/3)

fǎn xiān wáng zé bù yì, hé yǐ wéi méng zhǔ? qí jìn shí yǒu què.

against/ former/ king/ then/ not/ righteous/, what/ with/ be/ covenant / lord/, qí/ Jin/ shí/
have/ error

To go against the former kings is to be unrighteous; how can [the State that does so] be lord of covenants? Jin is surely in error. (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2.798

- (103) 若常膏之, 其天下輯睦, 豈唯敝邑? (左傳·襄 19/3) 3.1047

ruò cháng gāo zhī, qí tiānxià jí mù, qǐ wéi bì yǐ?

if/ often/ fatten/ them, qí/ the world/ united/ harmony, qǐ / only/ poor/ State¹⁴⁴

If you always dispense a cherishing influence on them (i.e., the small States), then the whole world will surely harmoniously unite under you, and how could it only be our humble State! (ZZ, Xiang 19/3) 3.1047

- (104) 若火作, 其四國當之, 在宋, 衛, 陳, 鄭乎! (左傳·昭 17/5)

ruò huǒ zuò, qí sì guó dāng zhī, zài Sòng, Wèi, Chén, Zhèng hū!¹⁴⁵

if/ fire/ appear/, qí/ four/ State/ bear/ zhī/, at/ Song/ Wei/ Chen/ Zheng/ hū

¹⁴⁴ *Bì* 敝, originally meaning "poor; unworthy," is often used as a modest term for "my" or "our."

¹⁴⁵ This translation is based the understanding in Yang (1981: 1391) and Shen (1981: 458). Legge has different understanding of this sentence, in which he interprets *huo* 火, "fire," as the Star Huo and gives the following translation: "When Ho (i.e., Huo) [again] appears, the States to which this comet has references will be, I apprehend, Sung, Wei, Ch'in, and Ch'ing." (Legge 1872, Vol. 5 (2): 668)

If the fire appears, there will probably be four States suffering it, and (they) must be Song, Wei, Chen, and Zheng! (ZZ, Zhao 17/5) 4. 1391

- (105) 梓慎曰：“是謂融風，火之始也。七日，其火作乎？”(左傳·昭18/3)

Zi Shèn yuē: “shǐ wèi róngfēng, huǒ zhī shǐ yě. qī rì, qí huǒ zuò hū?”

Zi Shen/ say, this/ call/ north-east wind, fire/ zhī/ begin/ yě/, seven/ day, qí/ fire/ start/ hū

Zi Shen said: “This is called a Rong-wind, it is the beginning of fire. In seven days, the fire will surely break out, won’t it?”¹⁴⁶ (ZZ, Zhao 18/3) 4. 1394

In addition to these five examples from the *Zuozhuan*, there is one example of *qi* used preceding an NP subject found in the *Guoyu*:

- (106) 今天降禍災於周室，余一人僅亦守府，又不佞以勤叔父，而班先王之大物以賞私德，其叔父實應且憎。(周語中/2)

jīn tiān jiàng huòzāi yú Zhōu shǐ, yú yī rén jǐn yǐ shǒu fǔ, yòu bù nǐng yǐ qín shūfù, ér bān xiān wáng zhī dà wù yǐ shǎng sī dé, qí shūfù shí yīng qiě zèng.

now/ heaven/ send down/ disaster/ yú/ Zhou/ court, I/ one/ person/ only/ also/ keep watch/ royal property/, again/ not/ eloquent/ thereby/ trouble/ uncle/,¹⁴⁷ ér/ distribute/ former/ king/ zhī/ great/ object/ thereby/ award/ self/ virtuous conduct/, qí/ uncle/ this/ should/ thus/ hate

Now Heaven has sent down disaster to the royal court of Zhou, I myself can only keep watch of the property belonging to royal court; I cannot trouble the feudal states with fine and pleasant words, and use the former king’s great precious object and grant it to those that had rendered outstanding service to me, (if I really do so), then you, my uncle should be hated by other feudal states. (GY, Zhouyu B/2) 1.54

Here we need to explain why *qi* also occurs in front of the NP subject. I propose that *qi* is moved to the left of the subject in order to emphasize the subject, marking it as a contrastive focus in the discourse.

¹⁴⁶ In this example, the main clause is a *hu*-ending yes/no question. However, the discourse function of this question is not to seek information, but to make inference. For example, Legge’s translation of this example is: Tsze Shin (Zi Shen) said: “This is called a north-east wind; it is a prelude of fire. In 7 days, we may presume, the fire will break out.” (Legge 1872, Vol. 5 (2): 671)

¹⁴⁷ According to the commentary given in the *Guoyu* text cited (compiled by Shanghai Shi Da (1978), *shufu* 叔父, “uncle” is a term used by the Zhou kings to address the feudal lords.

The fact that the NP subject in each case of the examples above is the contrastive focus of the sentence can be formally supported by the presence of the word *shi* 實 immediately after the subject in three of five examples, (96), (102) and (106). It is demonstrated in Pulleyblank (1960:42, 1995: 72, 89) that *shi* 實 is a resumptive pronoun used to refer to the subject in order to emphasize it and contrast it with other possible subjects. Examples in which the resumptive pronoun *shi* 實 is used after a subject for emphasizing it are common in the earlier Chinese texts such as the *Zuozhuan*, the *Guoyu*, and the *Shijing*. Below are two of these examples:

- (107) 人實有國，我何愛焉？（左傳·僖 9/6）

rén shí yǒu guó, wǒ hé ài yān?

others/ shí/ have/ State, I / why/ grudge/ yān

It is others who possess the country; why should I grudge anything from it? (ZZ, Xi 9/6) 1. 330

- (108) 雖楚有材，晉實用之。（左傳·襄 26/10）

suī Chǔ yǒu cái, Jìn shí yòng zhī.

though/ Chu/ have / talented person, Jin/ shí/ use/ zhī

Though Chu has men of talent, it is Jin that makes use of them. (ZZ, Xiang 26/10) 3.1120

Of the six examples in which *qi* is used in front of an NP subject, we find that three of them contain the resumptive pronoun *shi* 實 after the NP subject. This supports our analysis that the fronting of *qi* to left of the subject is motivated by the need to emphasize the subject, which may be further reinforced by the presence of *shi*. The fact that the fronting of *qi* is associated with an emphatic subject can be seen more clearly in the following example:

- (109) 若何弔也？其非唯我賀，將天下實賀。（左傳·昭 8/3）

ruò hé diào yě? qí fēi wéi wǒ hè, jiāng tiān xià shí hè.

like/ what/ offer condolences/ yě/, qí/ not/only/ we/ offer congratulations, be about to / all under Heaven; whole world/ shí/ offer congratulation

Why I am going to offer condolences? It is surely not only we who are going offer congratulations; all under Heaven will offer congratulations. (ZZ, Zhao 8/3) 4.1302

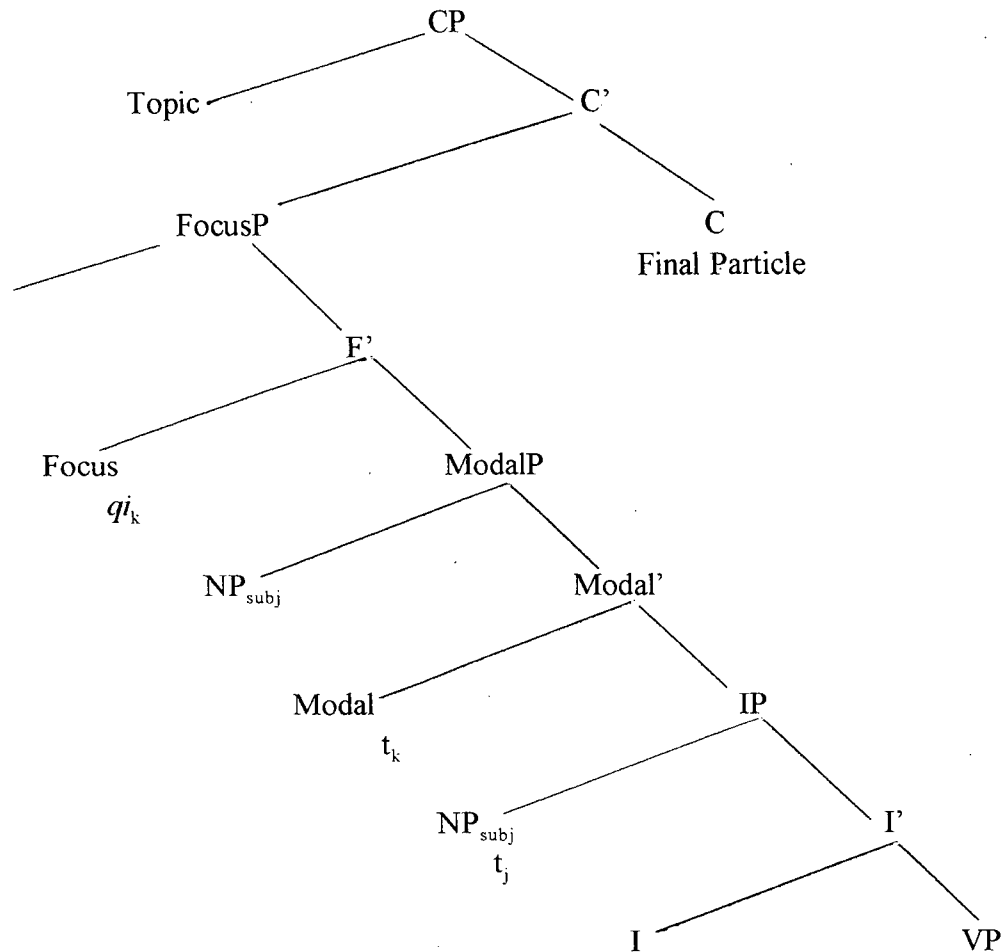
Some important remarks are in order regarding this example (109). First, it is a topical construction; the topic is a question sentence indicated with the topical marker *ye*, and the comment clause

consists of two parallel clauses in which the first one is a *qi*-marked sentence. Second, in the *qi*-marked comment clause, *qi* precedes the subject pronoun *wo* 我, “we.” However, in this case, *qi* is not used immediately in front of the subject *wo*, and between *qi* and *wo* there is the negator *fei* 非 followed by the adverb *wei* 唯, “only.”¹⁴⁸ Third, the word order in the second clause is also inverted, as indicated by the fact that the adverb *jiang* 將, “about to, be going to,” is preposed before the subject *tianxia* 天下, “all under Heaven” which is recapitulated by the resumptive pronoun *shi* 實 “that.” Presumably, the underlying structure would be *fei wei qi he, tianxia jiang he* 非唯我其賀，天下將賀. However, by fronting the particles *qi* and *jiang*, and using the resumptive pronoun *shi* 實, the subject *wo* 我, “we,” in the first clause and the subject *tianxia* 天下, “all under Heaven,” in the second clause are evidently contrastive.

So far, we have put forward an analysis of the main clauses in which *qi* occurs in front of the subject, suggesting the fronting of *qi* is motivated by the pragmatic function of emphasizing the subject. Accordingly, we suggest that the structure of this type of *qi*-marked topical construction can be illustrated in (110). We assume that a *qi*-marked topical construction with Pattern B is a CP headed by a clausal typing particle. The topical constituent is located in the Spec of CP. The head C takes a focus phrase (FocusP) as its complement. FocusP is headed by Focus, which takes a modal phrase (ModalP) as its complement. ModalP is headed by Modal which takes an IP as its complement. There is movement involved in this structure. That is the movement of the particle *qi*, which is originally located in the head of ModalP (in Modal), but in order to emphasize the subject NP, it moves to the head of FocusP (in Focus).

¹⁴⁸ In the *Shijing* and the *Shangshu*, *wei* 唯 (also written as 惟) functions as a copula used to introduce a noun predicate whose negative counterpart is *buwei* 不唯, “it is not.” *Fei* 非 in early Classical Chinese is used to negate a noun predicate. The positive noun predicate is commonly introduced by the final particle *ye* 也. In the *Zuozhuan*, *feiwei* 非唯 means “not only” (see Pulleyblank 1995: 132).

(110)



III. Pattern C: [Constituent₁...], [*Qi* + Predicate + (Final Particle)].

The distinct feature of this *qi*-marked topical construction is that there is no overt subject in the main/comment clause. One point to notice is that there are two types of non-overt subject constructions. In the first, the subject is omitted, but can be inferred from the context, as in examples (111)-(112). We refer to such cases as *qi*-marked main clauses with omitted subject. Structurally, this type of sentence is the same structure as those with Pattern A. As we have mentioned earlier, in early Classical Chinese, and in modern Chinese, the presence of a subject in a sentence is not syntactically necessary, and as long as the subject can be inferred from the context, the speaker may omit it. We can say, in the topic-comment constructions discussed so far, the *qi*-marked main clauses either contain an overt NP or an omitted NP that has a direct semantic relationship (such as a “doing” or “being” relationship) with the main verb expressed there.

- (111) 是夫也，將不唯衛國是敗，其必始於未亡人！（左傳·成14/5）

shì fū yě, jiāng bù wéi Wèi guó shǐ bài, qí bǐ shǐ yú wèi wáng rén!

that/ man/ yě, be about to/ not/ only/ Wei/ State/ this/ ruin, qí/ certainly/ start/ yú/ not
yet/ die/ person

As for that man, he will not only ruin the Wei State, but also must start his crime with
me, the former king's widow. (ZZ, Cheng 14/5) 2.870

- (112) 晉仍無道而鮮冑，其將失之矣。（國語·周語下/2）

Jīn réng wú dào ér xiǎo zhòu, qí jiāng shī zhī yǐ.

Jin/ repeatedly/ not/ right way/ ér/ few/ descendant/, qí/ be about to/ lose/ zhī/ yǐ

(Duke Li of) Jin does not act according to principles of truth and right, and descendants
of the Jin's duke clan are few; he will surely lose his State. (GY, Zhouyu C/2) 1. 100

However, in addition to cases in which the *qi*-marked clause has an omitted subject, there are also
the topic-comment constructions in which the *qi*-marked main/comment clause has only a topic,
but no subject at all (i.e., there is not an NP that can be recovered from the previous context as
the doer of the main verb), as in (113).

- (113) 楚之羸，其誘我也。（左傳·桓6/2）

Chǔ zhī léi, qí yòu wǒ yě.

Chu/ zhī/ weakness, qí/ seduce/ us/ yě

That Chu exhibits weakness is surely intended to seduce us. (ZZ, Huan 6/2) 1.210

In this example, there is no overt or recoverable null NP that has a direct semantic relation with
the main verb *you* 誘, "seduce." Instead, what is expressed in the *qi*-marked main clause is the
speaker's subjective assessment about the situation mentioned in the topic of left-dislocated
clause. In fact, this is simply a topic-comment construction in which the main verb has no
subject, and the semantic relation between the two clause can be rendered as: "As for A, (I think)
it is B." We refer to the *qi*-marked clauses in such typical type of topic-comment construction
as the zero-subject *qi*-marked main clauses. Below are similar examples:

- (114) 鄭有禮，其數世之福也。（左傳·襄31/10）

Zhèng yǒu lǐ, qí shù shǐ zhī fú yě.

Zheng/ have/ propriety, qí/ several/ generation/ zhī/ blessing/ yě

Zheng observes the rules of propriety; this will surely be a blessing (to Zheng) for many generations (or, That Zheng observes the rules of propriety will surely be a blessing (to it) for many generations). (ZZ, Xiang 31/10) 3.1191

In this example, the topic is expressed with a simple sentence which contains a subject, a verb, and an object. However, the following *qi*-marked main clause is a noun predication, which is the speaker's assertion about the situation in the topical clause. In example (115), the left-dislocated verbal phrase functions as the topic of the sentence. The rest of the sentence expresses the speaker's appraisal or evaluation about the situation presented in the topic clause.

(115) 尤而效之，其又甚焉。(襄21/5)

yóu ér xiào zhī, qí yòu shèn yān.

wrong/ ér/ imitate/ zhī/, qí/ further/ excessive/ yān¹⁴⁹

(Knowing someone has done) wrong but still following him is surely worse. (ZZ, Xiang 21/5) 3.1062

Below is the case in which the zero-subject *qi*-marked main clause is a question:

(116) 若壅其口，其與能幾何？(國語·周語上/3)

ruò yōng qí kǒu, qí yú néng jǐhé?

if/ stop; obstruct/ qí/ mouth/, qí/ yú/ can/ how long¹⁵⁰

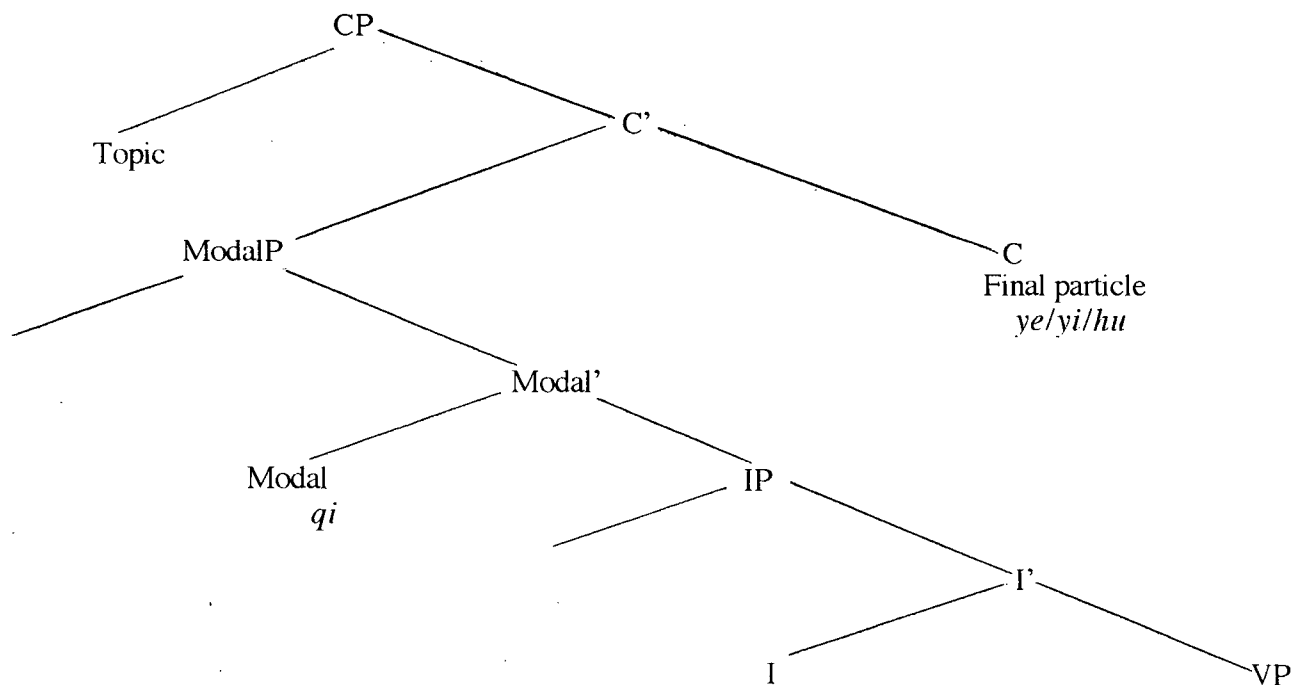
If (a government is trying to) stop people's mouth, how long can it possibly last? (GY, Zhouyu A/3) 1.10

For the topic-comment sentences with on subject as the examples in (113)-(116), we propose the following structure to illustrate them.

¹⁴⁹ Here I interpret the final particle *yan* 焉 as meaning "than it." As we know *yan* is a contracted form of *yuzhi* 於之, whose specific meaning is contextually determined. In most cases, it is used after a verb to stand for the prepositional phrase indicating the object or location of the verb, thus meaning "in it; to it; at it, etc." But here the sentence is a comparative structure. So I think that the *yan* (= *yuzhi* 於之) here is used to introduce the comparative object which refers to the situation stated in the first clause. In other words, the *yu* contained in *yan* is the same as the comparative particle *yu* as the one in the well-known phrase in the *Liji*. *Tangong* 禮記·檀弓, *ke zheng meng yu hu* 苛政猛於虎, "Oppressive government is more fearsome than a tiger."

¹⁵⁰ The function and meaning of the word *yu* 與 in this sentence is a question to be studied further. In *Shanghai shida* (1978, vol. 1: 12), this word is simply noted as follows. *Yu* 與, *ci ye* 辭也, "yu, is a particle."

(117)



5.4.2.3. Summary

In section, we have discussed the syntactic distributions of *qi* in main clauses, paying particular attention to its position in relation to the subject. We have shown that *qi* may occur in two positions in a main clause: One is immediately following the subject. The other is immediately preceding the subject. We propose that the canonical position of *qi* in main clauses is post-subject, arguing that the fronting of *qi* to the preceding subject position is motivated by the desire to mark the subject as the focus of the sentence. Moreover, we also present the typical case of topic-comment construction in which the *qi*-marker clause has no subject but only a topic. Recognizing these structural features of the main/matrix sentences with *qi* is important, because, as will be elucidated in Chapter 6, the semantic interpretation of a *qi*-marked main clause is always sensitive to the subject status of the clause.

Chapter 6

Qi as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences in early Classical Chinese

6.1. Introduction

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that when *qi* is used in a main clause, it has a modal connotation. The aim of this chapter is to provide an account for the modal functions of *qi* in main clauses. Following Palmer (1986: 16), we define modality as the linguistic domain that is concerned with speakers' subjective opinion and attitude about what is communicated. Modality is expressed in language in a variety of ways: morphological, lexical, syntactic, or intonational, and all these means are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A speaker's attitude and opinion about a matter being expressed are inextricably linked to contexts in which the speaker and his addressee interact with each other. Our analysis of the modal functions of *qi* is mainly based on two early classical texts, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and the *Guoyu* 國語,¹⁵¹ which contain rich contexts of speakers' face-to-face communications and make it possible to capture the modal functions of *qi* in the early stages of Chinese. In addition to presenting a synchronic description of the modal functions and meanings of *qi* in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, we will also address the historical connection between the modal use of *qi* in these two texts and in the earlier texts such as the earliest classics, the *Shangshu* 尚書 and *Shijing* 詩經.

This chapter is organized as follows: Section 6.2 provides a literature review of the previous

¹⁵¹ The *Zuozhuan* 左傳 and the *Guoyu* 國語 are both dated to the early-middle Warring States period. According to Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1981: 41), the *Zuozhuan* texts were completed around 403-383 BC. And according to Xu Yuangao 徐元誥 (2002: 601-4), some of the chapters in the *Guoyu*, such as the *Zhouyu* 周語, *Chuyu* 楚語, *Jinyu* 晉語, *Zhengyu* 鄭語, and *Luyu* 魯語, were completed earlier, around the middle Warring States period; but some of the chapters, such as the *Wuyu* 吳語 and the *Yueyu* 越語, were completed in the late Warring States period. There is a rich literature on the relationship between authors and the written periods of the two texts. The view I adopt here is based on the following works: Zhang Yiren 張以仁 (1980), Yang Bojun (1981), and Xu Yuangao (2002). That is, even though the two historical texts have different authors, and differ somewhat in writing style and grammatical features, there are many linguistic similarities between the two texts and we can assume that they were written in the same dialect.

studies of the modal function of *qi*, which serves as a general background for later discussion. Sections 6.3-6 are devoted to proposing and defending the claim that main-clause *qi* is a mark of uncertain outcome in declarative sentences, including the following types of expressions: inferential, imperative, intentional. Section 6.3 sketches our basic assumptions of modal functions of *qi* in early Classical Chinese. Section 6.4 deals with the use of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences with overt subjects. Section 6.5 deals with the use of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences with omitted subjects. Section 6.6 deals with the use of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences without subjects but only topics. Section 6.7 provides a conclusion to the discussion.

6.2. Previous studies of the modal functions of *qi* in classical texts

6.2.1. Traditional interpretation: *Qi* is an adverbial particle with multiple grammatical functions and semantic meanings.

Early studies of *qi* can be seen in the following works: Liu Qi 劉淇 (1711[1992]) *Zhuzhi bianlue* 助字辨略, Wang Yinshi 王引之 (1798 [1966]) *Jingzhuan shici* 經傳釋詞, Wu Changying 吳長瑩 (1873[1992]) *Jingci yanshi* 經詞衍釋, Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1898 [1983]) *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通, Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1927[1978]) *Ciquan* 詞詮, and Pei Xuehai 裴學海 (1934[1962]) *Gushu xuzi jishi* 古書虛字集釋. In all these works, *qi* is treated as a particle with multiple functions and meanings. For example, in the work of Wu Changying (1873[1992]), one finds at least 19 uses of *qi*, and in the work of Pei Xuehai (1934[1962]), one finds at least 34 uses of *qi*. The opinions presented in these works are complex, and they differ greatly in their treatments of particular examples and the general classifications of the functions of *qi*. However, the studies do show agreement on a number of points, thus reflecting some mutual influencing.

A full survey of all these works would constitute a study in itself, and is certainly out of our major area of concern. Interested readers are referred to *Xuci gulin* 虛詞詁林 by Yu Min 俞敏 and Xie Jifeng 謝紀鋒 (1992) where rather complete overviews are given. In what follows, we will only present the interpretations of main-clause *qi* given in two well-accepted modern works on Classical Chinese grammatical particles (i.e., the *xuci* 虛詞, “empty words”), by Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1927 [1978]: 160-163) and He Leshi 何樂士 et al. (1985: 415-17). In these two works,

the most important contributions by earlier scholars to the understanding of this particle have been summarized and organized in a functional approach. According to these two works, the meanings and functions of the main-clause *qi* can be summarized as follows:¹⁵²

(i) *Qi* expresses estimation, conjecture, or dubiety, meaning *dai* 殆, “likely; perhaps; probably; maybe,” as in (1) and (2):

(1) 王室其將卑乎! (國語·周語上/4)

wáng shǐ qí jiāng bēi hū!

king/ court/ qí/ to be about/ decline/ hū

Very likely the power of the royal court is going to decline, isn't it? ¹⁵³

(GY, Zhouyu A/4) 1. 12

(2) 叔向告晉侯曰:“城上有烏,齊師其遁。”(左傳·襄18/3)

Shū Xiàng gào Jīn hóu yuē: “chéng shàng yǒu wū, Qí shī qí dùn.”

Shu Xiang/ report/ Jin/ marquis/ say/, wall/ up/ have/ crow/ Qi/ army/ qí/ retreat/.

Shu Xiang reported to the marquis of Jin, saying: “There are crows on the wall; the army of Qi must have retreated.” (ZZ, Xiang 18/3) 3.1038

(ii) *Qi* expresses futurity, and its meaning in this case is similar to *jiang* 將, “will; to be going to” as below:

(3) 今殷其淪喪。(尚書·微子)

jīn yīn qí lúnsàng.

now/ Yin/ qí/ perish

Now Yin is surely going to perish.

“Now, in Yin, the statutes have been lost.” (SS, Wei zi; Karlgren 1950b: 9/2)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² The following classification of the modal meanings of *qi* is based on Yang Shuda (1927 [1978: 160-163] and He Leshi et al. (1985: 415-17). English translations are supplied based on our understanding of the examples.

¹⁵³ The sentence in this example ends with the final question marker *hu* 乎. Structurally it is an interrogative sentence, however, its discourse function is to express inference, but not to ask for information (see more discussion in Chapter 7).

¹⁵⁴ Karlgren's interpretation of this sentence is quite different from that of Yang Shuda and He Leshi et al., as seen in his translation. He considers that the situation expressed in this sentence has already occurred. But from the context in which this sentence is cited, we believe that Yang Shuda's interpretation is better; namely, what is expressed in this sentence is not something that has already occurred, but something that is still in the speaker's assumption.

- (4) 距今九日，土其俱動。(周語上/6)

jù jīn jiǔ rì, tǔ qí jù dòng!

away from/ present/ nine/ day/, soil/ qí/ all/ move

Nine days from today, the soil will all start to move (i.e., to become loose).

(GY, Zhouyu A/6) 1.17

(iii) *Qi* expresses wishes, commands, meaning *shang* 尚, “wish; if only” or *dang* 當, “should” as below:

- (5) 其雨其雨。杲杲出日。(詩經·伯兮)

qí yǔ qí yǔ. gǎogǎo chū rì.

qí/ rain/ qí/ rain/, brilliant/ come out/ sun

“Oh, if it would rain, if it would rain! Brightly burning is the forth-coming sun” (SJ,

Boxi; Karlgren 1950a: 62/3)

- (6) 帝其念哉!(尚書·皋陶謨)

Dì qí niàn zāi!

Emperor/ qí/ ponder/ zāi

“May the emperor ponder it!” (SS, Gaoyaomo; Karlgren 1950b: 2/17)

- (7) 君其許鄭!(左傳·隱 6/4)

jūn qí xǔ Zhèng!

lord/ qí/ permit/ Zheng

You should grant Zheng’s request! (ZZ, Yin 6/4) 1. 50

(v) *Qi* expresses intentions, desires, or decisions, meaning *yu* 欲, “wish; want,” or *jiang* 將, “will, be going to”:

- (8) 我其為王穆卜!(尚書·金縢)

wǒ qí wèi wáng mù bǔ.

we/ qí/ for king/ solemnly/ divine

“We shall for the king solemnly take tortoise oracle.” (SS, Jingteng; Karlgren 1950b: 12/2)

- (9) 孰殺子產，吾其與之。(左傳·襄 30/13)

shū shā Zǐ Chan, wú qí yǔ zhī.

who/ kill/ Zi Chan/, I/ qí/ join/ zhī

Whoever can kill Zi Chan, I will surely join with him. (ZZ, Xiang 30/13) 3.1182

(vi) *Qí* expresses an interrogative. It can be used in an information-seeking question:

- (10) 趙文子問焉，曰：“延州來季子其果立？”（左傳·襄公 31/9）

Zhào Wénzǐ wèn yān, yuē: “Yan Zhōulái Jǐzǐ qí guǒ lì hū?”

Zhao Wenzǐ/ ask/ yān/, say/, Yan /Zhoulai/ Jǐ Zǐ/ qí/ really/ establis/ hū

Zhao Wenzǐ asked about that and said: “Can Yan Zhoulai Jǐ Zǐ possibly be established (as the ruler of the State) in the end?”¹⁵⁵ (ZZ, Xiang 31/9) 3. 1190

- (11) 文子曰：“君其幾何？”（國語·晉語八/17）

Wén Zǐ yuē: “jūn qí jǐhé?”

Wen Zǐ/ say/, lord/ qí/ how many

Wen Zǐ asked: “How many years of life-span can our lord perhaps have?” (GY, Jinyu 8/17) 2.474

Or it can be used in a rhetorical question:

- (12) 吾其能與許爭乎？（左傳·隱 11/3）

wú qí néng yǔ Xǔ zhēng hū?

I/ qí/ can/ with/ Xu/ compete/ hū

How can I possibly compete with Xu? (ZZ, Yin 11/3) 1.75

- (13) 一國兩君，其誰堪之？（左傳·昭 7/2）

yī guō liǎng jūn, qí shuí kān zhī?

one/ sate/ two/ ruler, qí/ who/ withstand/ zhī

One State with two rulers, who can possibly bear this? (ZZ, Zhao 7/2) 4. 1283

Or, *qí* can be used in an “A or B” question to express selection, similar to *huo* 或, “or”.¹⁵⁶

- (14) 抑刑戮也？其夭札也？（國語·魯語上/11）

yǐ xíng lù yě ? qí yāo zhá yě?

or/ law/ kill/ yě/, qí/ die young/ yě

Is it the case that (he) will be killed by law, or perhaps that (he) will die young?¹⁵⁷

(GY, Luyu A/11) 1. 175

¹⁵⁵ According to Yang Bojun (1981, vol. 3: 1190), Jǐ Zǐ 季子 refers to Prince Jǐ Zhā 季札 of Wu 吳. Since he was first conferred a territory at Yan 延 and later again at Zhoulai 州來, so he was also called Yan Zhoulai Jǐ Zǐ 延州來季子.

¹⁵⁶ As for the *qí* in this type of example, Yang Shuda (1927[1978: 161]) treats it as a conjunction like *yì* 抑, “or.” But He Leshi (1984 [1989: 386]) considers that *qí* here does not simply express disjunction, it also conveys the meaning of conjecture.

¹⁵⁷ *Yao* 夭 means “to die young” and *zha* 札 means “to die from a pestilence” (see Xu Yuangao 2002: 166).

(vi) *Qi* is used to introduce conditional clauses, and its function in these cases is similar to the conditional conjunction *ruo* 若, *ru* 如, “if”.¹⁵⁸

(15) 其濟, 君之靈也; 不濟, 則以死繼之. (左傳·僖 9/4)

qí jì, jūn zhī líng yě; bù qǐ, zé yǐ sǐ jì zhī

qí/ succeed/, your lordship/ zhī/ ingenious/ yě/, not/ succeed, then/ use/ death/ continue/ zhī

Succeeding (i.e., If I succeed), it will be owing to your lordship's influence; if I do not

succeed, my death shall follow my endeavours. (ZZ, Xi 9/4) 1.328

The most unusual feature of *qi* as described in the above summary would seem to be its wide range of functions and meanings, some certainly covering unrelated grammatical categories. The picture of the preverbal *qi* in main clauses as given in the traditional account above is certainly puzzling. It is reasonable to doubt that this is the true picture of the main-clause *qi*, if we believe that this word meant to fill some rationally determinable role in the language.

What grammatical role can be assigned to *qi* as used in this grammatical context? Yang Shuda (1927[1954]) considers that *qi* may function as an adverb or a conjunction in these main clauses. According to He Leshi et al. (1985), *qi* is basically a preverbal adverb conveying different kinds of modal meanings. Even though it seems plausible to treat *qi* in this environment as an adverb, or, in particular, as a modal adverb, it is still unclear why a single adverb would possess so many diverse usages and meanings. Are all these different meanings and functions really contributed by *qi*, or are they just contextually derived meanings and functions? A satisfactory account for the main-clause *qi* will be one that can unify all these contextually disparate meanings and functions under *one basic or focal* meaning/function. The main task of this chapter is to discover a uniform principle by which one can predict the use of the main-clause *qi* in the earlier stages of the Chinese language.

6.2.2. Modern studies of the modal functions of *qi* in early classical texts

Many efforts have been made to integrate and unify the diversity of usages of the preverbal adverb or modal *qi*. Let us start by mentioning two important treatments: Malmqvist (1981),

¹⁵⁸ Yang Shuda (1927 [1978: 162]) considers that *qi* in the conditional clause as in this example is a conditional conjunction, like *ruo* 若, or *ru* 如. But Zhou Fagao (1961: 216), and He Leshi (1984 [1989: 357-376]), consider that *qi* in conditional clauses is a modal particle. We treat the *qi* in the conditional clause as a nominalizing marker. See discussion in the previous chapter.

and He Leshi (1984 [1989]), two works that attempt to provide a linguistic account for the modal meanings and functions of *qi* in the classical text of the *Zuozhuan*.

6.2.2.1. Malmqvist (1982): *Qi* is a modal particle expressing the possibility and the necessity of an event.

According to Malmqvist (1982), in the *Zuozhuan* text, the word *qi* occurs 2569 times, of which 1951 occurrences are pronominal, and 559 are modal (including four examples in which the sentence meaning is unclear. Malmqvist excludes these four unclear examples from his analysis). His major concern is on the modal use of *qi*. He says that the 555 modal examples of *qi* share two things in common: First, they only occur in the main clause of the direct quotation of a speaker's speech; and second, they have a similar meaning, that is, they all express the speaker's assessment about the necessity or possibility of the event being described. In other words, according to Malmqvist, *qi* is a modal particle that has two basic modal functions, one of which is to express necessity, and the other is to express possibility. He refers to the former as Type A Modality (i.e., the necessity of an event), and the latter as Type B Modality (i.e., the possibility of an event). In his view, the modal particle *qi* in the *Zuozhuan* text may express the necessity or possibility of an event/state depending on the contexts they occur. Following F. S. Droste (1968), Malmqvist suggests that the specific meaning of the modal *qi* in Classical Chinese can be identified by one or some interpretants in a certain context.¹⁵⁹ That is, the specific meaning of the modal particle *qi* can be identified by some interpretants such as question-words, final question particle *hu*, the person feature of the subject, or some particular syntactic structures. The table in (16) summarizes the relation between interpretants and the interpretations of the modality expressed by *qi*, as indicated by Malmqvist (1982):

¹⁵⁹ For example, in English a sentence as below has two interpretations:

(i) You must know this.

a. "It is necessary for you to know this." (Type A Modality, Necessity)

b. "It is possible that you already know this." (Type B Modality, Possibility)

But the following sentence can have only one interpretation:

(ii) You must know this by now.

Namely the modality of (ii) can only be of Type B modality. Malmqvist (1982) thinks the phrase "by now" serves as an interpretant which helps to differentiate the modal meaning of "must."

(16) *The meaning of Qi*

Interpretants

Necessity (Type A Modality)	1st Person Subject ¹⁶⁰
Necessity (Type A Modality)	2nd Person Subject
Possibility (Type B Modality)	3rd Person Subject
Possibility (Type B Modality)	Question-words
Possibility (Type B Modality)	Final Particle <i>hu</i>
Possibility (Type B Modality)	Copula Sentence

The main point in Malmqvist (1982) that modal *qi* is restricted to main clauses will be adopted in this study. However, as to the opinion that *qi*'s modal function is to express the necessity or the possibility of an event, we continue to have reservations.

It seems the analysis of the modal functions of the particle *qi* has been based on the traditional framework of propositional modality, in which modality is divided into two main semantic types: epistemic modality and deontic modality. Epistemic modality is concerned with the status of the speaker's understanding or knowledge of a proposition (Palmer 1986: 51). The central function of epistemic modality is to express the degree of the speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition, or to express certainty /possibility in relation to the proposition expressed. Deontic modality is concerned with the speaker's attitudes—such as desirability, preference, intention, ability, obligation with regard to a proposition (Palmer 1986: 96). Therefore, the two fundamental notions in this framework of modality are possibility and necessity. In the familiar languages such as English, such semantic meanings and functions are commonly encoded by the modal auxiliaries such as *shall, should, can, could, may, might, would, must, and will*, and sometimes by adverbs like *possibly, maybe, perhaps, and necessarily*. However, in this study, we will show that the modal distinction marked by the modal device associated with *qi* in early Classical Chinese does not operate so as to express epistemic and deontic modalities, but to mark the distinction between unreality (i.e., Irrealis) and reality (i.e., Realis).¹⁶¹ That is, the absence and presence of *qi* is to make a distinction between utterances that express events or states

¹⁶⁰ Note that Malmqvist (1982) thinks that only in the structures such as N 其 V 之; N 其 V O; N 其 V; Ø 其 V (O), the person of the subject has the function to differentiate the meaning of the modal particle *qi*.

¹⁶¹ See discussion in Section 6.3.

belonging to the domain of objective reality and the utterances that express events or states that are judged not to accord with objective reality, but just ideas belonging to the domain of thoughts or imagination (see Chafe 1995).

That the analysis of *qi* as a modal particle can express both the necessity and the possibility of an event does not yet constitute an adequate explanation for the modal functions of *qi* in the early classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan*, can be seen from the following aspects.

First, in many instances, it is difficult to tell whether the modal meaning of a sentence with *qi* as “necessity” or “possibility” is contributed specifically by *qi* or inferred from some other element of the discourse context. Let us first consider the sentences in which *qi* seems to express the modal meaning of “necessity.” According to Malmqvist (1982:115), in the structures such as “N + *qi* 其 + V + 之,” “N + *qi* 其 + V + Obj,” “N + *qi* 其 + V,” and “Ø + *qi* 其 + V + (Obj),” the person of the subject can be used to identify the modal function of the particle *qi*. And when the subject is a second person, the *qi* in the structure “N + *qi* 其 + V + 之,” as in (17) expresses Type A Modality (i.e., the necessity of a event).

(17) 爾其勉之! (左傳·昭 20/2)

ěr qí miǎn zhī

you/ qí/ strive/ zhī

You must exert yourself to the utmost! (ZZ, Zhao 20/2) 4.1408

It is true that this sentence indeed conveys a sense of “necessity,” namely, what is said is the speaker’s command or request, and is something the speaker considers has to be done. However, we must ask: Is *qi* the source of this “necessity” meaning? This is something hard to decide.

Consider the following sentence from the *Zuozhuan* text:

(18) 吾子忍之! (左傳·成 2/3)

wú zǐ rěn zhī

you; sir/ bear/ zhī

You bear it! (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2. 792

This sentence is quite similar to the sentence cited in (17), in that they both contain a 2nd person subject and the predicate is also a “V + 之” phrase, except it has no *qi*. However, it has an interpretation similar to (17), that is, what is expressed in (18) is also the speaker’s command,

request, or suggestion, or in Malmqvist term, “necessity of an event,” even though it contains no *qi*. Below are similar examples from the *Guoyu* texts:

- (19) 君其必速殺之。(國語・晉語八/8)

jūn qí bǐ sù shā zhī

your lordship; you/ qí/ must/ quick/ kill/ zhī

You must certainly kill him right away. (GY, Jinyu 8/8) 2.462

- (20) 君必殺之。(國語・晉語八/8)

jūn bǐ shā zhī

lord/ must/ kill/ zhī

You must kill him. (GY, Jinyu 8/8) 2.461

The sentences in (19) and (20) occur in the speech of the same speaker in the same paragraph. However, the first sentence has a *qi*, while the second has no *qi*. Here we see that both sentences have the sense of “necessity of an event,” whether with or without the particle *qi*. The examples above show that *qi* is not the source of the modal meaning of “necessity” of a sentence with a 2nd person subject.

Similarly, the contrast between the examples in (21) and (22) below shows that *qi* is not the source of the modal meaning of “necessity” under the condition of first person subject:

- (21) 《鄭詩》之言，吾其從之。(國語・晉語四/2)

Zhèng shī zhī yán, wú qí cóng zhī

Zheng/ poem/ zhī/ words, I/ qí/ follow/ zhī

As for the words in the *Zhengshi*, I will surely follow them. (GY, Jinyu 4/2) 2.342

- (22) 小旻之卒章善矣，吾從之。(左傳・昭 1/1)

Xiǎomín zhī zú zhāng shàn yǐ, wú cóng zhī

Xiaomin/ zhī/ last/chapter/ yǐ, I/ follow/ zhī

The last chapter of Xiaomin is beautiful; I will follow it. (ZZ, Zhao1/1) 4. 1204

The three pairs of examples above show that *qi* need not be the source of “necessity” in sentences with a second person or a first person subject. We shall show in the next section that the deontic modality of “necessity” in these sentences is not produced by the *qi* used there; rather, it is produced by the construction “1st person/ 2nd person + non-past verb.” The use of *qi* in the above expressions is to mark that the events or states expressed as uncertain outcomes;

namely, they are not the things that have actually occurred, but just ideas that are still in the speakers' thoughts.

Now let us return to the case in which *qi* is assumed to express Type B modality meaning by Malmqvist (1982). According to Malmqvist, in the contexts of content questions or *hu*-ending yes-no or rhetorical questions, *qi* expresses "the possibility of an event." Malmqvist cites 14 examples to support this view, among which are the two examples in (23) and (24).

(23) 縱弗能死，其又奚言？（左傳·莊公14/3）

zòng fú néng sǐ, qí yòu xī yán?

even though/ not/ can/ die/, qí/ again/ what/ say

A: Even though (I) could not die, what else could I say?¹⁶²

B: Even though I could not die, what else could I possibly say? (ZZ, Zhuang 14/3) 1. 199

The translation in (A) shows the common understanding of the sentence (e.g., as given in the *Zuozhuan yiwen* by Shen Yucheng (1981: 50), in which no specific meaning of *qi* is given. Malmqvist does not explicitly provide his interpretation of this sentence. But following his main idea that *qi* in this instance expresses Type B Modality (the possibility of an event), this sentence would be translated into English as in (B).

It seems that the interpretation of *qi* as expressing the possibility of an event yields a contextually reasonable sense here. However, the problem with this analysis is that it is hard to tell whether this modal meaning is really contributed by the particle *qi* or by the question context itself, because the uncertain meanings such as "probably, possibly, may, perhaps" are inherently built in to the question context. In a question where the *qi* is not present, this "probably" meaning can still be applied:

(24) 余髮如此種種，余奚能為？（左傳·昭 3/10）

yú fà rú cǐ zhǒngzhǒng, yú xī néng wéi?

I/ hair/ like/ this/ short and sparse/, I/ what/ can/ do

A: My hair is so short and sparse (i.e., I am an old man); what can I do?¹⁶³

B: My hair is so short and sparse; what can I possibly do? (ZZ, Zhao 3/10) 4. 1242

¹⁶² Note that the word *zong* is originally used a verb meaning 'to release, let go, allow,' but it can also be used to introduce a concessive clause, more or less like "even though" (see Pulleyblank 1995: 158; Schuessler 1987: 867).

¹⁶³ According to Yang Bojun (1981: 1242), the expression *zhongzhong* 種種 in this sentence refers to the way one's short and thin hair looks, and the implicit meaning of it is "old, aged." The underlying meaning of the sentence is "As my hair is so short (i.e., I am already old), so I cannot do any harm."

Even though there is no presence of *qi* here, one can still feel that a meaning of “possible, likely” is contained in the sentence. In other words, the meaning of possibility is compatible with a question. For example, we can interpret the sentence in (24) by adding the word “possibly” as in (B). Examples in (23)-(24) show that the modal meaning of “possible, likely” inherently fits a question context quite well, regardless of with or without the presence of *qi*. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether the modal meaning of possibility in a question is contributed by the *qi* itself or is inherently implied in the question context, since by asking a question, one is actually presupposing a kind of possibility.

Similarly, according to Malmqvist, *qi* expresses Type B Modality (the possibility of an event) in the sentences ending with the particle *hu* (which either signals a true question or a rhetorical question). In other words, *hu* can serve as an interpretant to identify the specific modal function of *qi*. However, this is also something hard to decide. For instance:

(25) 王曰：“諸侯其來乎？”(子產)對曰：“必來。”(左傳·昭 4/1)

Wáng yuē: “zhūhóu qí lái hū?” duì yuē: “bì lái.”

king/ say/ feudal lords/ qí/ come/ hū/, reply/ say/, certainly/ come

The king asked: “Will the feudal lords possibly come?” (Zi Chan) replied: “They will certainly come.” (ZZ, Zhao 4/1) 4.1248

For a reason similar to the questions discussed above, we are not sure whether the meaning of “possibility” contained in (25) is contributed by *qi* or by the yes-no question itself. Therefore, question words or the final question marker *hu* cannot be taken as interpretants that help us identify the modal meaning of *qi* as expressing “possibility.” In other words, it could be argued that the sense of “possibility” contained in a question is not signalled by *qi*, but by the other elements such as question-words or the question particles.

Different from Malmqvist, some scholars treat *qi* in questions as an adverbial particle that conveys a *yiwen yuqi* 疑問語氣, “interrogative mood” (e.g., He Leshi (1984[1989])).¹⁶⁴ Other scholars treat *qi* as an interrogative marker (e.g., Guan Xiechu 1953; Fan Yuzhou 1989, among others). Whether these analyses are tenable is a question to be explored. The reason we mention

¹⁶⁴ The concept of *yuqi* 語氣 is quite complex in the field of Chinese linguistics. It seems that it is a concept that covers two semantic domains: the modality and the discourse feature of a sentence. In this case the term of *yiwen yuqi* 疑問語氣 seems to be used on the level of discourse feature (e.g., indicative, interrogative, imperative, optative, etc.).

this analysis is to show that *qi* in interrogative sentences is not necessarily to be interpreted as a modal particle expressing “possibility.”

The above discussion indicates that the analysis of *qi* as a modal particle expressing both the modal meaning of “necessity” and that of “possibility” is problematic, because it is difficult to determine whether the modal meanings of the sentences with *qi* in the above examples are contributed by *qi* or they are just contextually inferred meanings.

Another inadequate aspect of Malmqvist’s analysis is as follows. It does not explain why *qi*’s Type A or Type B modal meaning has a “person-effect,” that is, that the Type A modality of *qi* is always associated with a first or second person subject, and the Type B modality is usually associated with a third person subject. Why? To put it differently, even though we can agree that the *qi* in the early Classical Chinese classics can express two modal meanings — “necessity of an event” or “possibility of an event,” — in different contexts, we still need to explain why *qi*’s modal meaning as expressing possibility or expressing necessity in a sentence is determined by the person of the sentence subject. This is something quite different from the English modal auxiliaries such as *must* and *may*, that we know do not have the “person-effect.” Therefore, a question arises: How to explain the interaction between the person of the subject and the modal meaning of *qi*? Any adequate theory about *qi* must be able to account for the correlation between the meaning of a *qi*-marked sentence and the person of the subject of that sentence.

6. 2. 2. 2. He Leshi (1984[1989]): *Qi* is a modal adverb with a basic function to express conjecture and judgment.

He Leshi (1984, reprinted in 1989, hereafter 1984[1989]) is another important work that makes an effort to identify the meanings and functions of *qi* in the *Zuozhuan*.

First of all, He Leshi separates two *qis*: a modal *qi* and a pronoun *qi*, treating the modal *qi* as a *yuqifuci* 語氣副詞 “modal adverb.” The modal *qi* is probably defined as such because of the fact that it is used preverbally, different from the *yuqici* 語氣詞, “mood-particles” which are used in the end of sentences. Different from traditional scholars who treated *qi* as a particle that has multiple functions, He Leshi tries to provide a linguistic account of the modal uses of *qi*,

considering that a general usage, or core meaning of this “modal adverb” is to signal a *twice yuqi* 推測語氣, “conjectural, deductional, or inferential mood,” and a *panduan yuqi* 判斷語氣 “judgmental mood.”¹⁶⁵

If we were to describe the modal meaning suggested by He Leshi in term of propositional modality, *qi* would be taken as a modal particle whose main function is to express epistemic modality (possibility). This is one of the major differences between Malmqvist (1982) and He Leshi (1984[1989]). In this point, our opinion that *qi* is an uncertain outcome marker (see discussion in next section) is closer to He Leshi’s hypothesis of *qi* as essentially a modal particle that deals with epistemic modality.

He Leshi’s main conclusion is this: *Qi* is mainly used to express “conjecture and judgment” in the *Zuozhuan* text. But depending on different contexts, *qi* is also used to express decisions, wishes, commands, suggestion, imperatives, rhetorical questions, information-seeking questions, and conditionals,¹⁶⁶ claiming that sometimes the specific meaning of *qi* in a particular context is determined by the person of the subject pronouns (or noun) summarized as follows:

(26) <i>The meanings of qi</i>	<i>Subject person</i>
conjectures, judgements, interrogatives	3rd person
suggestions, commands, requests	2nd person
desires, wishes, decision, judgement, interrogatives, rhetorical questions	1st person

Similar to Malmqvist (1982), He Leshi (1984[1989]) also points out that the interpretation of a *qi*-marked sentence is affected by the person of the subject. However, similar to Malmqvist (1982), He Leshi (1984[1989]) does not offer an account for this “person-effect” of *qi* either. The generalization in (26) may seem unclear, that is, why, under the same person, can *qi* have so many different meanings, and how can we determine the specific meaning under a particular subject person? For instance, when the subject of the sentence is a first person pronoun, according to He Leshi (1984[1989]), *qi* may express the following different meanings:¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ See He Leshi (1984[1989: 369]).

¹⁶⁶ See He Leshi (1984[1989: 369]).

¹⁶⁷ The examples below are cited from He Leshi (1984 [1989: 358]).

(i) Intention:

- (27) 孰殺子產，吾其與之！(左傳·襄 30/13)

shú shā Zǐ Chǎn, wú qí yù zhī

who/ kill/ Zi Chan/, I/ qí/ join/ zhī

Whoever kills Zi Chan, I will surely join with him. (ZZ, Xiang 30/13) 3.1182

(ii) Judgment:

- (28) 微禹，吾其魚乎？(左傳·昭 1/1)

wéi yǔ, wú qí yú hū

if it were not for/ Yu/, we/ qí/ fish/ hū

If there had not been Yu, would we have been fish? (i.e., We would have been fish.)

(ZZ, Zhao 1/1) 4.1210

(iii) Information question:

- (29) 問於卜偃曰：“吾其濟乎？”(左傳·僖公 5/8)

Wèn yú Bǔ Yàn yuē: “wú qí jǐ hū?”

ask/ yú/ Bu Yan/ say/, I/ qí/ successful/ hū

(Jin Hou) asked Bu Yan: “Can I perhaps be successful?” (ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1. 310

(iv) Rhetorical question:

- (30) 一之謂甚，其可再乎？(左傳·僖 5/8)

yī zhī wèi shèn, qí kě zài hū?

one/ it/ call/ excessive/, qí/ can/ twice/ hū

(To do it) one time has been more than enough; can (it be done) a second time? (ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1. 307

He Leshi (1989[1984]) does not explain why *qi* can express so many different meanings under the same person subject. Does *qi* itself express the meanings such as intention, judgement, and question in these sentences? Take the last two sentences (29) and (30), in which *qi* is assumed to express interrogative mood. But how can we be sure that the interrogative mood comes from *qi*, and not from the final question particle *hu*?

The second unsatisfactory aspect of He Leshi (1984[1989]) is that, as she claims, the basic meaning of *qi* is to express *twice* 推測, “conjecture” or *panduan* 判斷, “judgment,” but how is this meaning of “conjecture” or “judgment” applied to the expressions here such as intention, or

interrogatives? He Leshi (1984[1989]) does not explain this point. Thus, one may be more confused by the difference between *qi* in examples (28)-(30). That is, given the fact that they have similar grammatical structures— all of them end with the final question marker *hu*, and have the first person subject—why does *qi* in (28) express judgment, in (29) it express information question, and in (30) it express a rhetorical question? In this sense, it seems that He Leshi's understanding of *qi* makes no difference from the early traditional Chinese scholars' view, that is, that *qi* is a particle with multiple functions whose specific meaning is contextually determined.

6.2.2.3. Egerod (1989): *Qi* is not a modal particle at all.

One of the most interesting points made by Egerod (1989) is the denial of the existence of the modal function of *qi*. His focus is on the use of *qi* in the earliest Chinese classical text, the *Shangshu*. He doubts that there is any single modality that could fit all sentences in which the so-called modal *qi* is used in the *Shangshu*.¹⁶⁸ According to Egerod, the basic function of the particle *qi* in the *Shu Jing* (i.e., *Shangshu*) is as a possessive pronoun, and the most common function of so-called modal *qi* (i.e., the preverbal *qi* in main clauses) is to refer to the agent. He claims that there is nothing surprising in this, because there is a close connection between possession and agency in a number of languages including Tibeto-Berman and Indo-European (Egerod 1989: 436).

It can be argued that so-called modal *qi* can be viewed as a pronoun referring to the agent of the verb in a sentence. However, this analysis is unconvincing, because it gives rise to the following question: What is the motivation to use a “pronoun” *qi* in this position, when the sentence already has an overt subject referring to the agent?

Moreover, in Egerod's view, the *qi* occurring between the subject and the main verb, which most scholars treat as modal *qi*, in most cases is as a pronoun referring to the agent/subject, but in some cases, is a preposed object, as in the following example:

(31) 我其試哉。(尚書·堯典)

wǒ qí shì zāi

I/ qí/ try/ zāi. (SS, Yaodian)

¹⁶⁸ See the examples cited in Egerod (1989: 435-6).

Egerod's interpretation of this sentence is: "By me will be his trial, I shall try him." But Karlgren's translation is "I will try him" (Karlgren 1950b: 1/12), and Qu Wanli's 屈萬里 understanding is "我來試試吧, Let me have a try" (Qu Wangli 1973: 9). In our view, there is a lack of linguistic evidence to consider *qi* in this case as a preposed object, since in early Chinese texts, *qi* as a pronoun never appears in an ordinary post-verbal position as an object. Although from the context we can infer that the verb *shi*, "try" could have a pronoun as an object referring to Shun 舜 whom Si Yue 四岳, recommends to the emperor Yao 堯 as the person to succeed Yao, the grammatical function of *qi* (that it is never used as a direct object after a verb) does not support this interpretation. Therefore, we do not think that a pronominal analysis can account for the main-clause *qi*, or the so-called modal use of *qi*.

6.2.2.4. Pulleyblank (1992b, 1995): *Qi* qualifies a statement as possible or probable rather than a matter of known fact.

Pulleyblank (1992b) provides a short critique of the studies of *qi* done by some experts working on the OBI *qi*. There are three points worth noticing in Pulleyblank's (1992) critique. (i) The graph *qi* in Classical Chinese stands for at least three words: the pronominal *qi* 其, the modal *qi* 其; and the noun *qi* 期.¹⁶⁹ These words are phonologically related to each other, therefore, they might be related in etymology. (ii) As far as the relation between the pronominal *qi* and the modal *qi* is concerned, Pulleyblank (1992) suggests that if one had developed from the other, then it should be assumed that the modal *qi* developed out of the pronominal *qi* through its resumptive use. The reverse development from modal particle to pronoun is much more difficult to justify. (iii) As for the modal function and meaning of *qi*, Pulleyblank (1992) suggests that the idea that *qi* weakens a prediction is a quite acceptable. This view is consistent with the view in Pulleyblank (1995: Chapter 12), in which he pays particular attention to the modal function of *qi*, suggesting that *qi* qualifies a statement as possible or probable rather than a matter of known fact in

¹⁶⁹ According to Pulleyblank, the graph *qi* 其 is also found at the end of a sentence, apparently used as a question particle. We think here he refers to the *qi* as in the *Shijing* example:

(i) 子曰何其?

zǐ yuē hé qí

you/say/what/qí

"What do you say?" (Karlgren: The Book of Odes: 109/1)

The function of *qi* used in this environment, as in this example, is still open to question.

Classical Chinese (Pulleyblank 1995: 123). This insight of the basic modal function of *qi* is compatible with our view that *qi* is a mark of uncertain outcome or Irrealis marker (see discussion later).

6.2.3. Summary

From the above literature review, we have seen that the interpretation of questions in relation to *qi* is a difficult task in the study of the grammar of the early Chinese language. Much effort has been made to discover a uniform modal function of *qi* which can fit all the contexts listed above by scholars working on the early Classical Chinese languages. But there is still no general agreement among scholars on the modal uses of *qi* in the early classical periods. And the following comment given in Egerod (1989: 436) seems quite discouraging for anyone still wanting to make such an effort: “There is no single modality that could fit all sentences. You cannot talk of uncertainty in willful statements about the future or in commands. Neither ‘certainty’ nor ‘uncertainty,’ neither ‘desirability’ nor ‘undesirability,’ can be generally injected into all main sentences with 其.”

It is true that *qi* can be used in a wide range of semantic contexts, and its modal functions seem not merely to express notion such as (un)certainty or (un)desirability. Nonetheless we do not think that the modal functions of *qi* in main clauses is chaotic and cannot be captured by a uniform principle. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to developing an analysis by which the semantic range and modal functions of *qi* in the grammatical environment of main clauses can be consistently accounted for.

6.3. The proposal: *Qi* is an uncertain outcome marker in early Classical Chinese

6.3.1. Epistemic and interactive nature of *qi*'s modal function

Here we propose that the basic function of *qi* in main clauses is that of an uncertain outcome marker (or Irrealis marker). By uncertain outcome, we refer to the type of utterance that contains a proposition whose status/truth value is not certain or not yet verified by the speaker at the moment of speaking. We use this term in the sense of the three-way classification of propositions proposed in Giannakidou (1998, 1999): (i) veridical propositions, referring to the

propositions whose factual status/truth value is true; (ii) antiveridical propositions, referring to the propositions whose factual status/truth value is false; and (iii) nonveridical propositions, referring to the propositions whose factual status/truth value is not certain, which are also called "uncertain outcomes" or "nonveridical contexts."¹⁷⁰

We find that as a mark of uncertain outcomes, *qi*'s modal function features in the following two aspects. The first is that the modality of *qi* deals with the speaker's degree of certainty about a proposition in terms of reality or unreality (rather than in terms of possibility or necessity). Usually, the absence or presence of *qi* manifests a contrast between Realis (the events or states that are already in existence) and Irrealis (the events or states that are possible or desirable).¹⁷¹ Namely, the contexts associated with *qi* share the common semantic feature of epistemic uncertainty. It is reasonable to assume that the use of *qi* in these contexts has to do with the speaker's less-than-full certainty about the factual status of the proposition expressed. It is for this that we call *qi* an uncertain outcome marker. Thus, *qi*'s modal function is basically an epistemic one.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Thanks to Rose-Marie Déchaine (personal communication) for introducing these concepts to me.

¹⁷¹ In the study of modality, the term Irrealis, often contrasted with "Realis," refers to a very broad conceptual category that covers a wide range of non-assertive modal meanings and receives formal expressions in certain languages (see Bybee 1995: 9-10). The grammatical categories that receive Irrealis marking in languages operating with such modal distinction are usually the following: futures, necessities, possibilities, imperatives, prohibitions, conditions, negations, and questions. However, it should be noted that the grammatical categories referred to by the term are far from uniform cross-linguistically. Each language that operates with this modal category seems to make its own determination as to which notional categories and grammatical categories will be considered Irrealis, and construction types marked as Irrealis in one language may be marked as Realis in the next (see Bybee 1995: 9-10). Nonetheless, the distribution of the modal category Irrealis across grammatical contexts is far from chaotic, and is largely predictable, as pointed out by Givón (1994). According to Givón, the common denominator of the Irrealis contexts is the feature of epistemic uncertainty (see also Chafe 1995, Mithun 1995).

¹⁷² To my knowledge, the only scholar who also uses the term "Irrealis" to describe the modal function of *qi* is Wei Peiquan (1999). Unfortunately, because the major concern of this article is the syntactic positions of some grammatical operators such as question pronouns, modal adverbs, and quantifiers in pre-Qin Chinese, we see only a few sentences in which Wei discusses *qi*'s modal functions, cited below:

「其」主要的功能是表示「非真實」(Irrealis)。大抵用於一二人稱主語時表示祈使(如例 1, 2)，也可表對事件的揣測(如例 1, 2)；用於第三稱時多表示對事件的揣測(例 5)。可用於特指問(即含有疑問代詞的句子，如例 6)和非特指問。

"The major function of *qi* is to express 'Unreal' (Irrealis). In general, when used with 1st person or 2nd person subject, *qi* expresses imperatives (as in examples 1 and 2). *Qi* also expresses conjecture of an event (as in examples 3, 4); when used with third person subject, *qi* mostly expresses conjecture (as in example 5). It can be used in special questions (i.e., the questions with question words as in 6) and in non-special questions (i.e., yes-no question)." (Wei Peiquan 1999: 261).

There is one distinction worth noting between Wei's definition of *qi*'s modal function as expressing "Irrealis" and our understanding of *qi*'s modal function as an uncertain outcome marker (or Irrealis marker). That is, we do not think that *qi* itself expresses the meanings such as "imperatives," "conjectures," or "questions" and which meaning it expresses depends on what person the subject is, as stated by Wei. Instead, we consider *qi* as a grammatical device used to specify events or states that the speaker portrays as purely within the realm of thought. In other words, the meanings such as "imperatives," "conjectures," or "questions" of the contexts in which *qi* occurs are not contributed by *qi*. Instead, these semantic contents are contributed by other elements of the contexts. The presence

The second is that *qi*'s modal function is an interpersonal one. Namely, the use of *qi* does not merely indicate the speaker's lack of certainty about the truth of what he says, but also signals the speaker's attempt to arouse his addressee's concern about the uncertainty of the thing being said. In other words, whether or not a speaker uses *qi* to mark uncertainty is also determined by the interaction between the speaker and the addressee, and depends on how the speaker attempts to influence the mental state or behavior of his addressee by the uncertainty being expressed.¹⁷³ Thus the use of *qi* can carry a range of subtle nuances that weave the notions such as (un)certainity, (un)reality, possibility, necessity, futurity, (un)desirability into the fabric of speaker-addressee interaction.

6. 3. 2. The basic characteristics of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker

The claim that *qi* is a mark of uncertain outcome can be supported by the following characteristics of *qi*:

(i) *Qi* only occurs in expressions in which the information communicated is not the direct perception of current states and events, or the remembering of previously experienced states and events, but just knowledge or ideas of events and states that are in the speaker's imagination or thoughts. Specifically, *qi* is commonly associated with the following expressions: (1) inferential expressions that convey the speaker's inference, conjecture, or assessment of the possibility of an event or state; (2) imperative expressions that indicate the speaker's suggestions, requests, or commands for his addressee to actualize an event or state; (3) intentional expressions that declare the speaker's intentions, desires, or wishes for himself to actualize an event or a state; and (4) expressions of questions in which the speaker queries an event or state. These expressions demonstrate a general semantic property as uncertain outcomes, thus constituting a kind of

of *qi* in these kinds of expressions is determined by the epistemic uncertainty of these expressions; that is, the events/states expressed in them are not things that are judged to accord with objective reality, but just things that are still in the speaker's thoughts.

¹⁷³ Thanks to E. Pulleyblank (personal communication) for inspiring me to notice the interactive characteristic of *qi*'s modal functions. According to Pulleyblank, the presence of *qi* in a speaker's utterance does not simply indicate uncertainty. Rather, it also implies that the uncertainty is a matter of concern. The interactive or discourse functions of modality has attracted linguists' much attention. For example, it is pointed out by Bybee and Fleischman (1995: 8-9) that many modal functions "typically depend not just on a monologic speaker (the narrator in a narrative discourse), but on a dialogic (explicitly or by implication) speaker-addressee interaction." See also Guo Jiansheng (1995), which is a recent work that investigates how communicative function helps structure the semantic content and influences the semantic change of the modal auxiliary *neng* 能, "can" in Mandarin.

epistemic context with uncertainty.

(ii) The interpretation of *qi*-marked clauses has a striking “person-effect.” That is, what particular “uncertain outcome” a *qi*-marked sentence expresses depends on whose action/state the speaker is talking about. Specifically, depending on the person value of the subject, a declarative sentence with *qi* may have different interpretations of “uncertain outcomes” as below:

Factual status of propositions	Person value of the subject
conjecture, inference, prediction	3rd person
command, suggestion, request (conjecture, inference, prediction) ¹⁷⁴	2nd person
intention, desire, wish, decision	1st person

Generally speaking, this person-effect is reflected in the following ways: In the case of third person subjects, the uncertain outcome expressed is the speaker’s inference of the true picture of the current event/state, or the speaker’s inference or prediction of a future event/state. In the case of second person subject, the uncertain outcome expressed is the speaker’s command, request, or suggestion regarding an event/state. In the case of first person subjects, the uncertain outcome expressed is the speaker’s intention, desire, or plan regarding an event/state. This “person-effect” undoubtedly sheds lights on the nature of the particle *qi* as a mark of “uncertain outcome.”¹⁷⁵ One distinction worth noting regarding this “person-effect” is that the assessment of an “uncertain outcome” is determined from the actual speaker’s point of view, and it is not determined from the point of view of the subject of the main verb. This explains why the modal function of *qi* is only associated with main clauses, not subordinate or dependent clauses. As we know, in English, a modal auxiliary such as *may* can occur in a main clause as well a subordinate clause, as in (32):

- (32) a. John may come.
b. Mary thinks that John might come.

But the modal function of *qi* in early Classical Chinese does not operate in a subordinate clause

¹⁷⁴ The parentheses indicate that the interpretations are not common.

¹⁷⁵ See Section 6.5.4 for a detailed discussion about the person-effects of the *qi*-marked sentences.

like *may* in (32b).

The difference between (32a) and (32b) is that (32a) indicates the attitude and opinion of the actual speaker, while (32b) does not. That is, in (32b), the actual speaker just reports the attitude or opinion of the subject of the main verb (i.e., Mary) toward the truth of the proposition in the complement clause. We will show that the modal function of *qi* does not exist in any kind of subordinate/dependent clause. This indicates that the use of *qi* in main clauses operates on the principle that it specifies the actual speaker's commitment, which is less-than-full to the truth of what he, and no one else is saying.

(iii) Another striking feature of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is that its modal functions typically work only in face-to-face interactive discourse (i.e., the dialogic context), not in the narrative discourse, as mentioned earlier. If we understand *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker, then it is not difficult to explain why the modal function of *qi* is only associated with this particular discourse genre. Because the role of a speaker in narrative discourse is as narrator or storyteller, he is in fact talking about what he knows to be true (or false) about the past; this means that the narrator should be clear on the outcome of the story from the outset. This blocks the use of *qi* in the narrative context. Moreover, when telling a story, the narrator has a certain authority, and he would want to establish this authority in order to make his story credible; thus, for the narrator to mark a sentence with the uncertain outcome marker *qi* would certainly not be compatible with his role. In other words, the use of this linguistic form does not match the intention of the speech act of telling a story.

(iv) The pragmatic or discourse function of *qi* also suggests that *qi* is a mark of uncertain outcome in the language. That is, even though uncertain outcome expressions condition the use of *qi*, these contexts are not necessarily marked with *qi* all the time. A speaker may choose whether or not to use *qi* depending on the interaction between him and the addressee, and to establish his degree of uncertainty and his attitude about the truth of what he is saying. We will show that in many cases, the use or omission of *qi* in a main clause of a speaker's direct speech is determined by the social interaction between the speaker and his addressee. In terms of pragmatics, in early Classical Chinese, *qi* is something like a hedging marker. When used in inferential expressions, it functions as an epistemic downtoner to signal that the speaker is less certain or lacks confidence

or commitment to the truth of what he is saying, conveying approximately the meaning “perhaps, probably, maybe,” or “it must be...,” or “surely.”¹⁷⁶ When used in imperatives or intentional expressions, it functions as a politeness marker to tone down a command, a request, or a willful statement. But it is also possible for the speaker to purposely drop *qi* from his inference, command or intentional expression to indicate his strong expectation of the reality or actualization of what he is saying. Thus, the use or omission of *qi* in a main clause is a strategic linguistic tool for expressing social interaction between speaker and addressee.

Concepts such as possibility and necessity have a central importance in the speaker’s mind as to the truth of what he is saying; thus, they receive formal marking in many other languages. As we will see, however, the distinction between information that is in accord with objective reality (Realis) and information that is judged not to accord with objective reality (Irrealis) is of fundamental importance in the early Chinese language; thus, it receives formal marking by the absence or presence of the particle *qi*.

A thorough understanding of the modal functions and meanings of *qi* requires an examination of its occurrence in actual discourse. Our analysis proposed above is based on such evidence. In what follows, we will present data to demonstrate the nature of main-clause *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker. *Qi* is used in both declarative sentences and interrogative sentences; our investigation will start with declaratives. In order to capture the interaction between the uncertain outcome expressed in a *qi*-marked sentence and the person of the subject, our interpretation of the modal functions and meanings in declarative sentences will be organized as follows: First, in 6.4, we will discuss the use of *qi* in declarative sentences with overt subjects. Second, in 6.5, we will discuss the use of *qi* in declarative sentences with omitted subjects. Third, in 6.6, we will discuss the use of *qi* in the declarative sentences without subjects but only topics.

¹⁷⁶ There are two points to be noted here: First, the selection of the English modal verb “must” or “surely” to interpret the modal force of *qi* in the cited examples in the discussions below does not contradict the proposed analysis of *qi* as a marker of uncertain outcome. As pointed out in Pulleyblank’s 1992 note: “Even adding a word like *certainly* to a prediction in effect admits the possibility of doubt. If I say, ‘He will come tomorrow,’ without modification, it ordinarily implies that I have no reason to doubt the truth of the statement. If I say, ‘He will certainly come tomorrow,’ it seems to imply that a doubt has been expressed or might be expressed by someone. ‘Surely he will come tomorrow,’ is still weaker. It can be an attempt to reassure oneself or someone else about something one feels ought to occur but has begun to feel may not occur.” Second, to say *qi* has a general effect to lessen the certainty of the truth of a proposition does not mean that the use of *qi* always denotes the speaker’s low degree of certainty or commitment to the validity of his knowledge. There are also some extra-linguistic and pragmatic factors such as showing politeness or modesty that motivate the use of the epistemic downtoner *qi* (see discussion below).

6.4. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences with overt subject

Qi is associated with main clauses in the following contexts:

- (i) Expressions of non-future inferences, namely the contexts that express the speaker's conjecture, inference, or assumption about a perfective or a current state or event.¹⁷⁷
- (ii) Expressions of future-inferences (or, predictions), namely the contexts that express the speaker's conjecture, inference, or estimation about the occurrence of a future state or event.
- (iii) Expressions of imperatives, namely the contexts that express the speaker's suggestions, commands, or requests, and describe the events or states which the speaker wants the hearer to carry out in the future.
- (iv) Expressions of intentions, namely the contexts that express the speaker's intentions, desires, or plans about the events or states which he himself aims to carry out in the future.

Obviously, what is expressed in (i) and (ii) are the kinds of information or ideas that stem from imagination rather than direct perception and can be regarded as kinds of epistemic contexts expressing uncertainty. What is expressed in (iii) and (iv) are things that are desired but not yet in existence; thus, they can also be regarded as kinds of contexts with epistemic uncertainty.

6.4.1. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with third person subjects—expressions of inferences

The most striking semantic feature of the *qi*-marked main clauses with third person subjects is that these sentences usually express events or states that the speaker portrays as purely within the realm of thought. Such constructions convey ideas known through inference and are based on available evidence or normal experience, rather than on direct perception or memory.¹⁷⁸

An inference can be about a perfective, current, or future event or state. Since the inferential

¹⁷⁷ Here it seems not quite appropriate to use the term "outcome" to refer to a perfective event or state, since "outcome" usually refers to the consequence, or result of an expected future event or state. However, we consider that an inference about a perfective event or state can also be viewed as a kind of outcome, in the sense that its factual status or final result is not yet certain or clear for the speaker at the moment of speaking. In other words, an inference about a perfective event or state is something whose true outcome to be verified, or something whose true outcome can only be known in the future. Thanks to Hotze Rullmann (personal communication) for bringing these points to me.

¹⁷⁸ The *qi*-marked sentences that convey such meaning are more pervasive in interrogatives, as in the following examples:

(i) 其陳桓公之謂乎? (左傳·隱 6/4) 1.50

qí chén Huán gōng zhī wèi hū?

qí/ Chen/ Huan/ duke/ it/ call/ hū

This perhaps refers to (the case of) duke Huan of Chen, doesn't it? (ZZ, Yin 6/4) 1.50

We refer to this type of interrogative sentence as an "inference question" (see 6. 7.).

expressions about a perfective or ongoing event or state are usually accompanied with the adverbs such as *huo* 或, or *huozhe* 或者, “maybe, probably, possibly,” and the inferences about future events or states are usually associated with the use of the particle of futurity *jiang* 將, “about to be going to,” we separate the inferences into two categories: non-future inferences, and future inferences.

(i) Non-future inferences

A *qi*-marked sentence can express inferences about a perfective situation, as in (33), or an ongoing action as in (34), or an ongoing situation as in (35):

- (33) 叔向告晉侯曰：“城上有鳥，齊師其遁。”（左傳·襄18/3）

Shū Xiàng gào Jīn hóu yuē: “chéng shàng yǒu wū, Qí shī qí dùn.”

Shu Xiang/ report/ Jin/ marquis/ say/, wall/ up/ have/ crow/, Qi/ army/ qí/ retreat/.

Shu Xiang reported to the marquis of Jin, saying: “There are crows on the wall. The army of Qi must have retreated.” (ZZ, Xiang 18/3) 3.1038

- (34) 嬰曰：“崔、慶其追我。”（左傳·襄 25/2）

Yīng yuē: “Cuī, Qīng qí zhuī wǒ.”

Yīng/ say/, Cui/ Qing/ qí/ chase after/ us

Ying said: “Cui and Qing must be chasing after us.” (ZZ, 25/2) 3.1100

- (35) 積叔、桃子曰：“我實使狄，狄其怨我。”（左傳·僖 24/2）

Tuī Shū, Táo Zǐ yuē: “wǒ shí shǐ Dí, [Dí qí yuàn wǒ].”

Tui Shu/ Tao Zi/ say/ we/ actually/ make/ Di/, Di/ qí/ resent/ us

Tui Shu and the officer Tao said: “It was we who produced the employment of Di. Di would surely have resentment toward us.” (ZZ, Xi 24/2) 1.425

The above *qi*-marked sentences share several features in common. First, they are all the direct speech of a particular speaker.¹⁷⁹ Second, *qi* occurs in the position that is after the subject and in front of the main verb. Third, all the subjects are proper nouns referring to a third person. Fourth, all these sentences contain an inferential sense, that is, all the events or states expressed are not things that the speaker knows from direct perception, but are things that the speaker senses through imagination, or inference, or deduction (based either on available evidence or normal experiences). *Qi* is also used in the similar expressions in the earlier texts such as the

¹⁷⁹ For convenience, the speaker of a sentence is not always cited in the examples.

Shangshu and the *Shijing*, for example:

(36) 公曰：“體。王其罔害。”(尚書·金縢)

gōng yuē: “tǐ. wáng qí wǎng hài.”

duke/ say/, crack/, king/ qí/ not/ harm

Duke (Zhou) said: “According to the cracks of the shell, the king perhaps will have no disaster.” (SS, Jin teng)¹⁸⁰

“The prince said (to the king): According to the (configurations=) content (of the oracles), the king will suffer no harm.” (Karlgren 12/10)

What we are interested in here is the inferential sense shared by these sentences, and the correlation between *qi* and these inferential expressions. In order to determine whether or not the presence of *qi* has to do with the fact that what are expressed are inferences, we need to examine the real discourse in which these *qi*-marked sentences occur in detail. Let us take the *qi*-marked sentence in (33) as an example; it is given in a fuller context in (37):

(37) 齊侯登巫山以望晉師。晉人使司馬斥山澤之險，雖所不至，必旆而疏陳之。使乘車者左實右偽，以旆先，輿曳柴而從之。齊侯見之，畏其衆也，乃脫歸。丙寅晦，齊師夜遁。師曠告晉侯曰：“鳥鳥之聲樂，齊師其遁。”邢伯告中行伯曰：“有班馬之聲，齊師其遁。”叔向告晉侯曰：“城上有鳥，齊師其遁。”(左傳·襄18/3)

The marquis of Qi ascended Mount Wu to look at the army of Jin. (The commanders of) Jin had sent the Sima (i.e., marshals) to remove all the difficult places in the hills and marshes, and set up flags in them at some distance from one another, even in the places where the troops would not get to. They also arranged a real man on the left and set up a figure on the right, and guided their chariots with flags. These were followed by carts, dragging branches after them. When the marquis of Qi saw all this, he was awed by the multitude of the Jin army, and returned, with all his insignia taken down. On bingyin day, there was no moon, and the army of Qi withdrew during the night. Shi Kuang said to the marquis of Jin: “The crows are cawing joyfully. The army of Qi must have retreated.” Xing Bo told Zhong-hang Bo: “There are the sounds of horses retreating. The army of Qi must have retreated.” Shuxiang said to the marquis: “There are crows on the wall. The army of Qi must have retreated.”¹⁸¹ (ZZ, Xiang 18/3) 3.1038

¹⁸⁰ The interpretation of this sentence is based on Qu Wanli (1973: 86). According to Qu, *qi* here is a *jiang ran zhi ci* 將然之詞, “a word expressing futurity.” But in Wang Yinzhì (1798 [1966]: 115), *qi* in this sentence is considered to be the same as *dai* 殆, “perhaps, maybe,” which is an adverb expressing possibility. Karlgren did not take note of *qi*, as seen in his translation cited above. In our view, since what is expressed in the sentence is the speaker’s assessment about the king’s state of health based on the oracle, the use of *qi* here seems to be motivated by the attempt to downgrade the certainty of the oracle. Thanks to Pulleyblank (personal communication) for pointing out this for me.

¹⁸¹ The translation of this passage is based on the commentary given in Yang Bojun (1981: v. 3: 1038), and the Modern Chinese translation given in Shen Yucheng (1981: 299).

The content of passage can be divided into two parts: In the first, not underlined, the author describes how the commanders of the Jin army made a trick battle array to frighten their enemy, the army of Qi, and how the marquis of Qi was tricked by the battle array and decided to withdraw his army. The second part, is underlined. The first sentence describes the fact that the army of Qi retreated during the night on the day of *bingyin*. And the following sentences indicate how the Jin commanders noticed that the Qi army had retreated. Interestingly, the author only expresses Jin's perception of Qi's withdrawal through the speech of three Jin commanders. And more interestingly, each of the commanders says *Qi shi qi dun* 齊師其遁, "The army of Qi must have retreated." From the context, we know that none of the three speakers had directly seen the relevant event, Qi's withdrawal. Each speaker was just making an inference about it from the evidence available to him as described in the preceding clause. In other words, the idea expressed in the *qi*-marked sentence *Qi shi qi dun* 齊師其遁, "The army of Qi must have retreated" is just the inference or conjecture of the speakers about the relevant event, rather than a directly perceived known fact. The implication of this *qi*-marked sentence as conjecture or inference can be seen more clearly if we compare it with the un-*qi*-marked sentence occurring in the beginning of the second part of the above passage, repeated in (38):

(38) 齊師夜遁。(左傳·襄18/3)

Qí shī yè dùn.

Qi/ army/ night/ withdraw

The army of Qi had withdrew during the night. (ZZ, Xiang 18/3) 3.1038

This sentence and the sentence in (33) are quite similar in lexical content and basic syntactic structure; they are only different in that (33) has *qi* but (38) does not. In (38) the word occurring immediately in front of the main verb *dun* 遁, "retreat, withdraw" is *ye* 夜, "night," which functions as a time adverbial indicating the specific time at which the relevant event happened; while in (33), the element immediately preceding the verb *dun* is the particle *qi* 其. It is clear that the two sentences are the same in propositional content. Both identify *Qi shi* 齊師, "the army of Qi" as the agent/subject, and *dun* 遁, "retreat, withdraw" as the predicate expressed an intransitive event. But the difference in the preverbal position encodes the difference in the modal meaning—the sentence without *qi* expresses a real event, while the sentence with *qi* expresses an inferential

event whose factual status is not yet known by the speaker at the moment of speaking.

The above contextual analysis indicates that the presence of *qi* in a main clause is indeed motivated by the fact that what is expressed is the kind of event or state of whose factual status the speaker is uncertain.

Qi-marked sentences may end with different final particles. We should point out that even though the *qi*-marked clauses with and without final particles may differ in other grammatical areas such as aspect and discourse features, under the condition of third person subject, the *qi*-marked sentences with or without final particles all express imagined events or states. Consider the following examples:

- (39) 楚人謂夫旌子重之麾也，彼其子重也。（左傳·成 16/5）

Chú rén wèi fū jīng Zǐ Chóng zhī huī yě, bǐ qí Zǐ Chóng yě

Chu/ people/ say/ that/ flag/ Zi Chong/ zhǐ/ signal flag/ yě/, that/ qí/ Zi Chong/ yě

The people of Chu say that flag is the signal flag of Zi Chong. That then must be Zi Chong. (ZZ, Cheng16/5) 2.889

- (40) 臣從君還軫，巡於天下，怨其多矣！（國語·晉語四/12）

chén cóng jūn hán zhěn, xún yú tiānxià, yuàn qí duō yǐ !

servant, I/ follow/ your lordship/ turn/ carriage/, travel/ yú/ the world/, resentment/ qí/ many/ yǐ.

I have been following your lordship to turn carriages and travel around the world (experiencing all kinds of difficulties). The resentment (you have toward me) must be quite a lot! (GY, Jinyu 4/12) 2. 365

- (41) 棄禮違命，楚其危哉！（左傳·昭 13/3）

Qì lǐ wéi mìng, Chǔ qí wēi zāi

abandon/ proper law/ resist/ command/, Chu/ qí/ danger/ zāi

By abandoning proper law and resisting command, Chu is surely in danger!

(ZZ, Zhao 13/3) 4.1350

Different from examples (33)-(36), the *qi*-marked clauses in examples (39)-(41) all end with particles such as *ye* 也, *yi* 矣, or *zai* 哉.¹⁸² However, similar to the sentences without final

¹⁸² The final particle *ye*, as in (39), is a mark of noun predicate, and it can also be used as an aspectual marker to indicate continuing state. The central function of the final particle *yi*, as in (40) is to mark perfect aspect. *Zai*, as in (41) is an exclamation particle.

particles, the events or states expressed in these sentences are also not directly perceived facts or known facts, but are inferred or estimated by the speaker as possible or probable.

In most cases, *qi* is used in clauses expressing inferences about current (including ongoing and perfective) events or states that the speaker portrays as purely within the realm of thought, rather than known fact or direct perception. But sometimes, *qi* is also used in the inference about events or states that happened or existed in the past, though such examples are not common:

(42) 詩云：“上帝臨女，無貳爾心。”先王其知之矣，貳將可乎？（國語·晉語四/2）

Shī yún: “Shàngdì lín nǚ, wú èr ěr xīn.” xián wáng qí zhī zhī yǐ, ér jiāng kě hū?

Shi/ say/, God/ descend/ you/, not / double/ your/ mind/, former/ king/ qí/ know/ zhī/,
double/ be about to/ possible/ hū

The *Shi* says: “God on High comes down on you; don’t make double your heart (i.e., don’t be double-minded).” The former king (i.e., King Wu of the Zhou dynasty) must have known that (i.e., the mandate of Heaven). If he had ever been double-minded about it, would (his achievements) have been possible? (GY, Jinyu 4/2) 2. 341

This example is cited from a conversation between Chong Er 重耳, the dethroned prince of Jin 晉, and his wife Qi Jiang 齊姜. The cited sentences were uttered by Qi Jiang. She was persuading Chong Er to not seek ease at home, but to leave the country to seek support in recovering his throne. Qi Jiang persuaded her husband by using a line from the seventh stanza of the Daming 大明 (i.e., poem 236) in the *Shijing*, which talks about the Zhou King Wu’s conquest of the Shang. Qi Jiang wishes that her husband not be double-minded and pursue his political undertakings. It is clear that the sentence with *qi*, i.e. 先王其知之矣, is about a past event, and the use of *qi* here is certainly motivated by the fact that what is said was not directly perceived by the speaker, but just the inferential kind of knowledge.

Traditionally, *qi* used in inferential expressions as discussed above is considered an adverb similar to *dai* 殆, meaning “perhaps; probably” (Wang Yinzhī’s 王引之 1798[1966]: 114-5; Yang Shu da 楊樹達 1927[1978]); or *huo* 或, meaning “perhaps; maybe; probably” (Pei Xue Hai 裴學海 1934[196: 377-8]), or *dagai* 大概, *keneng* 可能, *huoxu* 或許, or *huozhe* 或者, meaning “perhaps; probably; maybe” (He Leshi et al. 1985: 415). All these adverbs express the epistemic

meaning of uncertainty and possibility, and applying such meanings to the examples cited above indeed yields a contextually compatible meaning. However, we do not consider that *qi* is an adverb which has a similar nature to these adverbs. In our view, the meaning of possibility and uncertainty implied the inferential context is not contributed by *qi*, but is derived from the inferential context itself. In other words, *qi* does not lexically express uncertainty or possibility, like other adverbs with epistemic meaning. We propose that *qi* is a grammatical means used to signal the unreal/uncertain nature of the propositions being expressed, marking the factual status of what is said is an uncertain outcome. Example (43) shows that *qi* is not an adverb-like word of the same nature as the adverbs of possibility, such as *dai*, *huozhe*, *dagai*, *keneng*, etc.:

(43) 天其或者欲使衛討邢乎? (左傳·僖 19/5)

Tiān qí huòzhě yù shǐ Wèi tǎo Xíng hū?

Heaven/ qí/ perhaps/ want/ make/ Wei/ punish/ Xíng/ hū

Perhaps Heaven wants to make Wei punish Xing, doesn't it? (ZZ, Xi 19/5)

The sentence in (43) is an inference-questions. What is interesting here is that *qi* co-occurs with the adverb *huozhe* 或者, "perhaps; probably; maybe." Interpreting *qi* as meaning *huozhe* is obviously not tenable, because it cannot explain why a second element with the same grammatical function and semantic meaning is necessary, assuming that each element in an utterance should have a particular function in encoding or specifying a particular meaning. Moreover, the syntactic position of *qi*, preceding all other grammatical particles such as the adverbs *huozhe* 或者, "perhaps, probably, maybe," and the auxiliary verb *yu* 欲, "want, wish," indicates that *qi* should not be treated as a VP-modifying adverb. Rather, we propose that it should be considered the grammatical device marking the unreal or uncertain nature of the inferential expression.

(ii) Future inferences (predictions)

We have discussed the use of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in the contexts in which the speaker is making a subjective conjecture or inference about current or past events or states of which he has no direct perception. Now we will look at expressions in which the speaker is making an inference, conjecture, or assessment about a future event or state.

(44) 是君也死, 疆其少安. (左傳·襄 25/12)

shì jūn yě sǐ, jiāng qí shǎo ān

this/ ruler/ yě/ die, boundary/ qí/ little/ safe

If this ruler dies, our boundaries will surely be a little safe and steady. (ZZ, Xiang 25/12)
3.1108

- (45) 不更厥貞，大命其傾。(國語·晉語三/2)

bù gēng jué zhēn, dà mìng qí qīng.

not/ chang/ his/ correct (position)/ great/ mandate/ qí/ collapse¹⁸³

If (Jin) does not change to its correct position, the great mandate (of Heaven)
will be in danger of collapse! (GY, Jinyu 3/2) 1. 316

Here we see that the sentence with *qi* expresses the speaker's prediction of a future event or state. The *qi*-marked sentences here are similar in two ways to those discussed in the last section: First, the sentences with *qi* here also express inferential ideas or knowledge rather than direct perceptions. Second, the subjects of these sentences are also noun phrases referring to third persons or things. But different from those in last section, the inferences or conjectures here are all about future, rather than current or past events or states.

The correlation between *qi* and the expressions of prediction is not surprising if we consider that *qi* is a mark of expressions with uncertain factual status or truth condition. *Qi* is associated with the expression of predictions, as in (44) and (45), because a prediction carries an inherent sense of futurity and implies a lack of certainty as to whether the event or state will actually occur. In other words, it is a case of uncertain outcome, thus is marked with the uncertain outcome marker *qi*. Below are more examples in which *qi* is used in inferences about future events or states:

- (46) 火中成軍，虢公其奔。(國語·晉語二/5)

huǒ zhōng chéng jūn, Guó gōng qí bēn

the star Huo/ culminate/ success/ army/, Guo/ duke/ qí/ flee

With the star Huo shining high above the sky and the army celebrating triumph, the duke of Guo will surely flee.¹⁸⁴ (GY, Jinyu 2/5) 1. 299

¹⁸³ According to the commentary given in Shanghai Shida (1978: 317), the word *zhen* 貞 means *zheng* 正, "correct" in this sentence. What is expressed in this sentence is the current political situation in the State of Jin 晉. That is, at the time, Jin was ruled by Duke Hui 惠, who was not the throned prince but was made king by his father. The people of Jin resented this political situation, making a song to criticize the royal court. The sentence *bu geng jue zhen, da ming qi qing* in the song warns that if the State of Jin does not change to its correct position (i.e., to correct the present throne), the mandate of Heaven will put the Jin State in danger of collapse.

¹⁸⁴ This sentence also occurs in the *Zuo zhuan* (Duke Xi 5th year /8), which Legge translated as:

- (47) 自今至于初吉，陽氣俱蒸，土膏其動。(國語·周語上/6)

zì jīn zhīyú chūjí, yángqì jù zhēng, tǔgāo qí dòng

from/ present time/ yú/ the first day of a month/ masculine power/ all/ rise/ moist
soil/ qí/ move

From now to the first day (of the following month), the masculine/positive power (i.e., the male elements in the nature) will all rise, and the soil being moist will surely be loose.¹⁸⁵ (GY, Zhouyu A/6) 1.16

- (48) 喪田不懲，禍亂其興。(國語·晉語三/1)

sàng tián bù chéng, huò luàn qí xīng.

lose/ land/ not/ punish/, disaster/ disorder/ qí/ arise

If one loses land but has no punishment, disaster and disorder will surely arise.

(GY, Jinyu 3/1) 1.315

In earlier texts such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, we also see that *qi* is used the similar expressions:

- (49) 天其永我命于茲新邑。(尚書·盤庚)

tiān qí yǒng wǒ mǐng yú zī xīn yǐ.

Heaven/ qí/ prolong/ we/ mandate/ yú/ this/ new/ city

"Heaven will prolong our mandate in this new city." (SS, Pang geng; Karlgren 6/4)

- (50) 我友敬矣，讒言其興。(詩經·蟋蟀)

wǒ yǒu jìng yǐ, chán yán qí xīng.

my/ friend/ be careful/ yǐ/, slanderous/ words/ qí/ rise

"Oh, you friends of mine, be careful; slanderous words may be rising." (SJ, Xi shuai;

Karlgren 1950a: 183/3)

¹⁸⁵ "When Ho culminates, the enterprise will be completed, and the duke of Kwoh will flee." (Legge 1872 Vol. 1: 146).

But according to Xu Yuangao (2002: 285), *cheng jun* 成軍 means *jun you chenggong ye* 軍有成功也, "the army wins a success or a victory in a battle," and we have followed him in our translation.

There are two possible interpretations for the term *chuji* here. It is noted in Shanghai Shida (1978:17), *chujī, eryue shuori ye* 初吉，二月朔日也, "*chujī* refers to the first day of the second month." This interpretation is based on the commentary given by the Han scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127- 200 AD) in his *Maohi jian* 毛詩箋 to the sentence 二月初吉 in the *xiaoming* chapter of *Shijing*. Zheng interpreted *chujī* as *shuori* 朔日, "the first day of a month." But according to Chen Huan's 陳奂 *Shi maoshi zhuan* 詩毛氏傳疏, as cited in Jin Qihua (1984: 523), *shuori* does not necessarily refer to the first day of a month, it could mean the period from the first day to the tenth day of a month. Takashima (person communication) suggests a more accurate English translation for the first sentence cited here should be: "between now and the first day (of the following month)."

Below are sentences with third person subject in which *qi* co-occurs with a final particle. These *qi*-marked sentences are predictions of future events/states, and they all contain the same epistemic connotation of uncertainty, as above:

- (51) 我亡，吾二昆其憂哉。(左傳·成5/1) 2.821

Wǒ wáng, wú èr kūn qí yōu zāi.

I/ disappear, my/ two/ brother/ qí/ suffering/ zāi

If I am not here, perhaps my two brothers will surely have suffering and misery. (ZZ, Cheng 5/1) 2.821

- (52) 天其殃之也。(左傳·襄 28/9)

Tiān qí yāng zhī yě

Heaven/ qí/ ruin/ zhī/ yě

Heaven will surely bring him to ruin. (ZZ, Xiang 28/9) 3.1149

The above sentences express the speaker's predictions or inferential ideas about the relevant events or states in the future. It is clear that the use of *qi* here also marks these expressions as lacking certainty or reliability in their truth conditions. Below is an example in which the predicate is a noun phrase marked by the final particle *ye*, which identifies a possible situation in the future, and is also marked with *qi*:

- (53) 鄭之罕，宋之樂，其後亡者也。(左傳·襄 29/7)

Zhèng zhī Hǎn, Sòng zhī Yuè, qí hòu wáng zhě yě.

Zheng/ zhī/ Han/, Song/ zhī/ Yue/, qí/ last/ perish/ zhě/ yě

The Han in Zheng and the Yue in Song are probably the families that will perish last.

(ZZ, Xiang 29/7) 3.1157

In (53), the noun predicate, *hou wang zhe* 後亡者 is a noun phrase consisting of the relative clause *hou wang* “perish last” headed by *zhe* 者, “that which; the one who,” which is a pronominal substitute used to replace the head noun (in this case, “the family”).

Different from our interpretation, most previous studies consider *qi* used in expressions of prediction as in examples (44)-(53) as a particle expressing futurity similar to the adverb *jiang* 將, “about to, be going to, intend to” (Wang Yinzhi 1798 [1966: 115]; Pei Xuehai 1934[1962]: 378; Yang Shuda 1927 [1978]: 160; He Leshi et al. 1985: 415). But we do not consider *qi* as a particle designated to express futurity; rather, we maintain that the interpretation of *qi* as expressing

futurity in these sentences is a contextually derived meaning. *Qi*'s function here is still to mark what is communicated is an uncertain outcome rather than to mark futurity. In other words, the presence of *qi* in the above sentences expressing future events or states is not surprising: futurity contains an inherent feature of uncertain outcome. Below are examples that give preliminary support to this view:

- (54) 君其將以為戮! (左傳·僖 28/4)

jūn qí jiāng yǐ wéi lù!

ruler/ qí/ be about to/ take/ as/ slaughter

Surely our ruler is about to put you to death! (ZZ, Xi 28/4) 1.468

- (55) 子產其將知政矣。 (左傳·襄 26/4) 3. 1114

Zi Chan qí jiāng zhī zhèng yǐ.

Zi Chan/ qí/ be about to/ know/ government/ yǐ.

Zi Chan is surely going to administer the government. (ZZ, Xiang 26/4) 3. 1114

In (54) and (55), *qi* co-occurs with the adverb *jiang* 將 of futurity and occupies a higher syntactic position than *jiang*. These two examples show that the understanding of *qi* as a VP-modifying adverb of futurity like *jiang* is untenable, because it is hard to explain the functional redundancy of *qi* and *jiang* in expressing futurity. It would be more reasonable to understand *qi* in this case as the element that signals that what is said is something whose factual status is an uncertain outcome, while, *jiang* which immediately precedes the main verb, is an adverb indicating futurity. In other words, the use of *qi* in these sentences is motivated by the speaker's relative uncertainty of the truth of future events/states predicated, and is not motivated by the purpose of indicating the futurity of these events or states.

6.4.2. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with second person subjects—expressions of imperatives

In the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, *qi* is also often used in imperative sentences that express commands, requests, suggestions, or prohibitions (i.e., negative imperatives).¹⁸⁶ One point to be noted is

¹⁸⁶ The notion of imperatives can be functional one or syntactic. In Palmer (1986: 23, 29), imperatives are defined as a particular syntactic construction that expresses "commands." The corresponding categories are declaratives that express "statements," and interrogatives that express "questions." Palmer points out that most languages have a form that is typically used to express commands. In English, an imperative sentence usually refers to sentence form that has only a verb but no subject, such as "Go away." However, "imperatives" can be a functional notion,

that only a second person subject allows interpretations such as commands, requests, or suggestions. The second person subject can be expressed with a second person pronoun such as *er* 爾, *ru* 女, “you,” or by nouns referring to the person addressed in the honorific forms such as *zi* 子, “master, sir,” *wuzi* 吾子, “you, sir,” *jun* 君, “ruler, lord,” *wang* 王, “Your Majesty,” *gong* 公, “lord,” or *gongzi* 公子, “prince.” In examples (56)-(62), *qi* co-occurs with a second person subject, and all of them express the speaker’s suggestion, request, or command regarding the action that he wishes his addressee to carry out.¹⁸⁷

- (56) 父不可棄，名不可廢，爾其勉之！(左傳·昭 20/2)

fù bù kě qì, míng bù kě fèi, ěr qí miǎn zhī!

father/ not/ can/ abandon, name/ not/ can/ abolish/, you/ qí/ strive/ zhī

Our father cannot be abandoned; our name cannot be allowed to perish. You must exert yourself to the utmost! (ZZ, Zhao 20/2) 4.1408

- (57) 趙孟欲一獻，子其從之！(左傳·昭 1/4)

Zhào Mèng yù yī xiàn, zǐ qí cóng zhī!

Zhao Meng/ wish/ one-cup ceremony, you/ qí/ follow/ zhī

Zhao Meng wishes to have the one-cup ceremony. You should follow him in this.¹⁸⁸

(ZZ, Zhao 1/4) 4.1208

- (58) 有晉國者，非子而誰？子其勉之！(國語·晉語四/2)

yǒu Jīn guó zhě, fēi zǐ ér shuí, zǐ qí miǎn zhī!

have/ Jin/ State/ the one who, not/ you/ ér/ who, you/ qí/ strive/ zhī

As for the person who will possess the State of Jin, if it is not you, who else could it be?

You must try your utmost for it! (GY, Jinyu 4/2) 2.341

that is, it can refer to any utterance that has to do with the speaker’s command, suggestion, request, or prohibition to actualize an action or a state. Namely, a command can be given in an interrogative form like “Can you go?” or as a statement like “You go!” Our definition of imperatives is functional. We take imperatives as the sentences that the speaker presents to his addressee for performing an action or actualizing a situation.

¹⁸⁷ Sometimes it is hard to make a distinction among notions such as suggestion, request, and command. Here we simply treat them as similar categories in the sense that they all imply expectation of compliance, requiring an action in the near future. Moreover, it is hard to decide which word among the English modal auxiliaries such as *should* or *must* is appropriate for the translation a suggestion, request, or command. We make the following distinction: *should* is used for cases in which there is conditionality for the occurrence of the expected action; *must* is used for cases in which the speaker involves himself in the actualization of the expected action; that is, when he obliges someone to perform an action, he himself strongly wishes the action to be carried out.

¹⁸⁸ As cited in Yang Bojun (1981), according to the Han scholar Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 commentary of the chapter *Yueji* 樂記 in the *Liji* 禮記, *yixain* 一獻 refers to the drinking ceremony in which the master only offers his guests one cup of wine.

- (59) 目夷長且仁，君其立之！(左傳·僖 8/5)

Mù Yí zhǎng qǐ rén, jūn qí lì zhī!

Mu Yi/ old/ and/ virtuous, lord/ qí/ establish/ zhī

Mu Yi is older and virtuous. Your lordship must surely establish him (as your successor)!

(ZZ, Xi 8/5) 1.323

- (60) 親仁善鄰，國之寶也，君其許鄭！(左傳·隱 6/4)

qīn rén shàn lín, guó zhī bǎo yě. jūn qí xǔ Zhèng!

intimacy/ virtuous/ be good/ neighbour/, State/ zhī/ jewel/ yě/, lord/ qí/ permit/ Zheng

Intimacy with the virtuous and friendship with its neighbours are the jewels of a state.

You should surely grant Zheng's request! (ZZ, Yin 6/4) 1.50

- (62) 時不可失，喪不可久，公子其圖之！(國語·晉語二/8)

shí bù kě shī, sāng bù kě jiǔ, gōngzǐ qí tú zhī!

opportunity/ not/ can/ lose, funeral/ not/ can/ long, prince/ qí/ plan/ zhī

This opportunity cannot be lost, and the funeral (of duke Xian) cannot last long. Prince,

you must surely plan for it! (GY, Jinyu 2/8) 1.310

Sometimes a sentence expressing a command, request, or suggestion can occur with a final particles such as *ye* 也 or *yi* 矣, as in (63)-(65). As in the sentences without final particles, (56)-(62), these *qi*-marked sentences with second person subject also express requests, suggestions, commands, or prohibitions.

- (63) 吾子其奉許叔以撫柔此民也。(左傳·隱 11/3)

wú zǐ qí fèng Xǔshū yǐ fǔ róu cǐ mǐn yě.

you, sir/ qí/ assist/ Xu Shu/ therewith/ soothe/ comfort/ this/people/ yě

You, Sir, please assist Xu Shu to soothe and comfort the people of Xu. (ZZ, Yin 11/3)

1.74

There are several points to be noted about the interpretation of this example. First, the word *feng* 奉 in this sentence means *fuzhu* 輔助, "to assist."¹⁸⁹ Second, as for the word *ruo* 柔, Yang Bojun (1981: 74) notes that *ruo* 柔 means *he* 和, "harmonize" and *an* 安, "peacify"; thus, *furou* 撫柔 means *fuan* 撫安 "to soothe and comfort." Third, the final particle *ye* 也, is often used to mark a

¹⁸⁹ This meaning is given in the dictionary *Ciyuan* 辭源 under the sixth meaning of the character 奉, and the example to illustrate this meaning is this: 鄭伯使許大夫百里奉許叔以居許東偏, "The earl of Zheng sent Xu's great officer Bai Li to assist Xu Shu to settle in eastern part of Xu." This is the beginning sentence in the same passage in which the *Zuo* example (63) occurs.

noun predicate. It is also used after a verbal predicate as a particle opposite to *yi* 矣, indicating opening up or continuation of a situation, and this is what it means in (63) (see Pulleyblank 1995: 20, 119, and 114). Below is another example ending with *ye*:

(64) 日云莫矣，寡君須矣，吾子其入也! (左傳·成 12/4)

rǐ yún mò yǐ, guǎ jūn xū yǐ, wú zǐ qí rù yě!

sun/ yún/ late/ yǐ, our lord/ wait/ yǐ/, you; sir/ qí/ enter/ yě

The day is getting late; our lord is waiting; Sir, (please to) enter!

(ZZ, Cheng 12/4) 2.857

According to Yang Bojun (1981: 857), the word *yun* 云 is a particle without lexical meaning. As for the word *mo* 莫, Yang notes that it is not used in its original meaning, *mu* 暮, “dust,” rather it means *momo*, “brightly shining,” referring to the time period when the sun is right in the middle of the sky. Yang comments that by saying *ri yun mu yi* 日云莫矣, literally, “the sun has been up in the middle of the sky,” the speaker means that “the time is not early and it is getting late.” However, we consider that *yun* 云 should be taken as a “prospective” aspect particle indicating “prospective” aspect (see Graham 1983; Pulleyblank 1991c). As for *xu* 須, according to Yang Bojun (1981: 857), it means *dengdai* 等待, “to wait for.”

(65) 子其行矣，我姑待死 (國語·晉語三/4)

zǐ qí xíng yǐ, wǒ gū dài sǐ.

you/ qí/ go/ yǐ/, I/ for a while/ wait/ die

You should go; I will just stay here and die. (GY, Jinyu 3/4) 1. 321

In this example, the *qi*-marked sentence ending with the final particle *yi*, a mark of perfective aspect. It should be noted that although *yi* is more commonly employed after a verbal predicate referring to an action in the past, indicating completion of action or change of state; but it is not necessarily bound with actions or events that happen in the past. The time reference can be past, present, or future.¹⁹⁰ It is often seen that *yi* is used with a predicate referring to future

¹⁹⁰ See Pulleyblank (1994b) for more discussion of this final particle. Below is an example in which *yi* is used in a sentence that expresses future situation:

[i] 晉仍無道而鮮胄，其將失之矣! (國語·周語下/2) 1. 100

Jīn réng wú dào ér xiǎn zhòu, qí jiāng shī zhī yǐ!

Jin/ frequently/ not have/ principle/ ér/ rare/ descendant/, qí/ to be going to/ lose/ it/ yǐ

(The duke of) Jin does not behave in accordance with what should be (i.e., without principles of truth and right) and has few descendants; (he) will surely lose his State. (GY, Zhouyu C/2) 1. 100

Yi 矣 here co-occurs with future time, similar to the *yi* in the first clause in (65). Note the interpretation of the word *reng* here is based on the commentary given in Shanghai Shida (1978 v. 1: 101, n.12), in which it is

action or state which the speaker expects to be completed or realized, as in (65).¹⁹¹ What is important for us here is that the examples above show *qi* can be used in sentences that express imperatives, and all these *qi*-marked imperative sentences share one feature in common, that is, they all have second person subjects.

Qi may also occur in prohibitions, as in the following examples:

- (66) 吾子其不可以不戒 (左傳·昭1/1)

wú zǐ qí bù kěyǐ bù jiè.

you; sir/ qí/ not / is possible/ not/ prepare

Sir, you must not neglect to take precautions. (ZZ, Zhao1/1) 4.1201

- (67) 君其不行. (左傳·昭7/3)

jūn qí bù xíng.

Your Majesty/ qí / not/ go

Your lordship should not go. (ZZ, Zhao 7/3) 4.1287

- (68) 王其無疑! (國語·吳語/6)

wáng qí wú yí!

Your Majesty/ qí/ not/ doubt

Your Majesty please do not doubt (my suggestion)! (GY, Wuyu/6) 2.606

- (69) 王其不可以棄之. (國語·周語中/1)

wáng qí bù kěyǐ qì zhī.

Your Majesty/ qí/ not/ is possible/ abandon/ zhī

Your Majesty should not abandon it! (GY, Zhouyu B/1) 1.45

One point to notice is that in these sentences, *qi* precedes negative word such as *wu* 無 or *bu* 不.

In the inferential context, *qi* is also used in front of the negator, as in the following example.¹⁹²

- (70) 衛侯其不得入矣. (左傳·襄14/4)

Wèi hóu qí bù dé rù yǐ.

Wei/ marquis/ qí/ not/ get to; be able to/ enter/ yǐ

The marquis of Wei will surely be not able to return (to Wei). (ZZ, Xiang 14/4) 3.1015

In earlier texts such as the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing*, we also see that the *qi*-marked sentences

interpreted as *shu ye* 數也 “many; often, frequently.”

¹⁹¹ This reminds us of Serruys' (1991: 89) proposal that best explanation of *yi* is to take *yi* as a final marker of imperative, optative, exhortative sentences.

¹⁹² See Chapter 5, Section 5.4.1.1.

with a second-person subject also have the interpretation of suggestions, commands, as in (71).

(71) 汝其敬識百辟享。(尚書·洛誥)

rǔ qí jǐng shì bǎi bì xiǎng

you/ qí/ careful/ record/ hundred; many/ the authorities/ offerings¹⁹³

“You should carefully record (which of) the many princes bring offerings” (SS, Luo gao; Karlgren 1950b: 18/12)

The examples above demonstrate the correlation between *qi* and expressions of imperatives. In previous studies, scholars consider *qi* in imperatives as the element responsible for the interpretation of the sentences as imperatives. For example, Yang Shuda (1927 [1978]: 161) states: *qi*, *mingling fuci* 其，命令副詞，“*qi* is an adverb to express commands.” And He Leshi (1984 [1989]: 358) indicates that when *qi* occurs in sentences with a second-person subject, it mostly expresses advice, suggestions, commands, or imperatives. In other words, these scholars treat the *qi* in the above sentences as an adverb lexically expressing commands, suggestions, prohibitions, etc. Also, for some scholars such as Malmqvist (1982: 114-116), *qi* in this context is a modal particle expressing deontic modality, that is, “the necessity of an event.”

We consider that this correlation can be accounted for by the analysis of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker. That is, the correlation between *qi* and imperatives is evident if we understand *qi* as a mark of uncertain outcome, since commands, suggestions, or requests can easily be conceived of as expressing ideas or thoughts of actions, rather than describing actual actions. Obviously, a speaker cannot be sure or certain that his ideas of action can be actualized by his hearer.

It must be determined whether *qi* is the source of the imperative meaning in each of these sentences. We suggest that *qi* is not the source. If *qi* is not the source of the meaning of commands, requests, or suggestions, then where does this meaning come from? We propose that the semantic features such as imperatives, commands, and suggestions of the above sentences are in fact contributed by the construction “Second person + non-past Verb” itself. To put it differently, it is the combination of a second person subject and a non-past verb that gives this imperative force to the sentences.

¹⁹³ *Bi* 辟, according to Schuessler (1987: 28), means anyone who has the authority corrective measures and to give orders, i.e., the king, feudal lords, governing officials: sovereign, governing official, the authorities.

That imperatives are generally restricted to sentences with second person subject is a common phenomenon across languages. This is not surprising given that normally, a speaker can give a command/suggestion to a second person (the hearer) for action, but not to himself or a third person.¹⁹⁴ And when a speaker utters a sentence with a structure such as “2nd-person subject + Verb” in a non-past tense context, it is naturally understood as giving a command or advice to the addressee. For example, let us consider the following examples in Mandarin:

- (72) 你吃.
nǐ chī.

You / eat.
Please eat it/ Eat it!

- (73) 你走.
nǐ zǒu.

You / go
You must go / You please go/ Go away.¹⁹⁵

In Classical texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* we see that a command, request or suggestion can be expressed simply by the construction “2nd-person subject + VP,” as in the following examples:

- (74) 子與之! (左傳·僖 28/3)
zǐ yǔ zhī!
you/ give/ zhī

You grant him! (ZZ, Xi 28/3) 1.457

- (75) 吾子忍之! (左傳·成2/3)
wú zǐ rěn zhī!
you; sir/ bear/ zhī

You bear it! (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2. 792

- (76) 女勉之! (國語·晉語五/3)
nǚ miǎn zhī!
you/ strive/ zhī

You try your utmost! (GY, Jinyu 5/3) 2. 396

¹⁹⁴ It is generally assumed that the imperative will have only second person forms (Palmer 1986:111; Lyons 1977: 747). Nevertheless, there are forms of third person imperatives in Greek and Latin (See Palmer 1986: 109-111).

¹⁹⁵ In English, we also see similar expressions, but different from Chinese, these are normally given by just saying the verb to the hearer:

[i] Go.

And if an overt second-person pronoun is used, then it expresses a stronger command or imperative:

[ii] You go!

A command, request, or suggestion can also be expressed by a single VP construction:

- (77) 來! 姜戎氏! (左傳·襄 14/1)

lái !Jiāng Róng shǐ!

come/ Jiang Rong/ *shǐ*¹⁹⁶

Come, the chief of the Jiang Rong! (ZZ, Xiang 14/1) 3.1005

Sometimes a command or request may be expressed by the construction “2nd-person subject + VP” plus *wei* 唯, as below:

- (78) 寡君將率諸侯以見于城下, 唯君圖之. (左傳·襄 8/7)

guá jūn jiāng shuài zhūhóu yǐ jiàn yú chéng xià, wéi jūn tú zhī.

our lord/ be about to/ lead/ feudal lords/ thereby/ meet/ yú/ city-wall/beneath, only (or be)/ Your Majesty/ plan/ *zhī*¹⁹⁷

Our ruler will lead on the feudal princes to meet your lord beneath your city wall; only your lord (should) consider this! It is Your Majesty who (should) do so. (ZZ, Xiang 8/7) 3. 959

These examples show that a request, suggestion, or command can be expressed without *qi*, indicating that *qi* is not the source of the imperative force of the sentences in which *qi* is used. Then what is the difference between the imperatives with *qi* and those without *qi*? We propose that normally, imperative sentences should be marked with the uncertain outcome marker *qi*, because they express thoughts or ideas of actions rather than the actualization of them. But the presence and absence of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in imperatives may be pragmatically motivated by the need to show different expectations of actualization of a command. We believe that the presence of *qi* implies a rather low degree of certainty or expectation with respect to the actualization of the idea presented, while the absence of *qi* indicates a strong certainty or a high degree of expectation of the actualization of the idea presented. This is easy to understand, because to present an suggestion, request, or command for the hearer to act in a not sure or an uncertain way implies a reasonable expectation of compliance. Contrary to this, the absence of

¹⁹⁶ Here, Jiang Rong Shi 姜戎氏 refers to Juzhi 駒支, who was Rong Zi 戎子, “the viscount of the Rong.” *Shi* 氏, according to Schuessler (1987: 557), is an honorific suffixed to place names, kinship terms, feudal and official titles.

¹⁹⁷ According to Takashima (personal communication), the word *wei* in this example, which in the classical period commonly means “only,” should be taken as a copula meaning “to be.” And it is shown in Takashima (1997) that the meaning of “only” is a later development from the copula *wei*, and in the Zhongshan Wang Cuo bronze inscriptions, composed around 310 BC, there are examples which clearly show that *wei* is used as a copula.

the uncertain outcome marker *qi* implies a strong certainty of performance of a command. We might call the imperatives with *qi* weak or polite imperatives, and those without *qi* strong imperatives. Consider the following example:

(79) 病未及死，吾子勉之！(左傳·成 2/3) 2. 792

bǐng wèi jí sǐ, wú zǐ miǎn zhī !

suffer/ not yet/ reach/ death, my sir/ strive/ zhī

Your illness is not yet fatal, you, sir, should strive against it! (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2. 792

“You are not in pain to death;—strive to combat with it.” (Legge Vol. 1: 345)

This sentence appears in a passage that depicts a battle between the two states Qi 齊 and Jin 晉 in the place of An 鞍. It was uttered by the Jin military leader Xie Zhang 解張, who was charioteer to Xi Ke 郤克, the commander in chief of Jin. At the very beginning of the battle, Xi Ke was wounded by an arrow and the blood ran down to his shoes, but he never let the sound of the drum cease. At last, he could not stand it and told Xie Zhang that he was in pain and wanted to give up. But Xie Zhang replied the sentence in (79) which is contained in the following context:

(80) 若之何其以病敗君之大事也？擐甲執兵，固即死也。病及未死，吾子勉之。(左傳·成 2/3)

ruòzhīhé qí yǐ bǐng bài jūn zhī dà shì yě? huán jiǎ zhí bīng, gù jí sǐ yě. bǐng jí wèi sǐ, wú zǐ miǎn zhī.

what is one to do about it / qí/ for/ wound/ fail/ lord/ zhī/ great/ enterprise/ yě/, wear/ armor/ carry/ weapon/, resolutely/ approach/ die/ yě/, suffer/ not yet/ reach/ death, my sir/ strive/ zhī¹⁹⁸

What is to be done about your causing the failure of our lord's great enterprise because of your pain? When one wears his armor and takes his weapon, it is to go in the way of death. Your illness is not yet fatal, you, sir, should strive against it! (ZZ, Cheng 2/3) 2.

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From this context, we see that what Xie Zhang said to Xi Ke was a strong imperative, and Xi Ke had no other choice but to take it. For such a strong imperative, the use of *qi* is certainly not

¹⁹⁸ Following Pulleyblank (1995: 34), we take *ruo zhi he* 若之何 as an idiomatic double object construction in which the second object is the interrogative pronoun *he*. Literally it means “what is one to do about it?” Here *zhi* refers to the situation expressed in the sentence 其以病敗君之大事. We consider that *qi* in this sentence is a nominalizing marker.

compatible, since *qi*'s basic function is to signal some sorts of possibilities or uncertainties and implies that Xi Ke could still have a choice not to follow the request. Thus, there is no reason for *qi* to occur here. Below is another example of a strong imperative sentence cited from the *Guoyu*:

(81) 殺身以成志，仁也。死不忘君，敬也。孺子勉之！（國語·晉語二 /1）

shā shēn yǐ chéng zhǐ, rén yě. sǐ bù wàng jūn, jǐng yě. rú zǐ miǎn zhī !

kill/ body/ thereby/ accomplish/ integrity/, humanity/ yě, die/ not/ forget/ lord/, reverence/
yě, my child/ strive/ zhī

To sacrifice one's life in order to accomplish his integrity is *ren* (humanity). Not to forget one's lord even when one is faced with death (=reveals) (the true characteristic of what) *jing* (reverence) is. You, my lad, do your utmost! ¹⁹⁹ (GY, Jinyu 2/1) 1.290

This story is about how Liji 驪姬, the concubine of the Jin's king, put Prince Shensheng 申生 to death. Shensheng was a son from the King's first wife. Liji 驪姬 started her evil plan by first killing Du Yuankuan 杜原款, who was the great officer of Jin 晉 and the teacher of Prince Shensheng. The moment Du Yuankuan knew that he was going to be killed, he worried that the same situation would happen to Prince Shensheng. So he spoke the above words to Shensheng, telling him not to be afraid of death and not to flee from Jin. His speech ended with the sentence 孺子勉之! Clearly, in this context, the request given by Du Yuankuan to Prince Shensheng is a strong imperative. And this explains why the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is omitted here, because the speaker has high degree of expectation for the hearer to carry out what he said. Now compare sentence (82) with the one in (81) above:

(82) 子其勉之，吾不復見子矣。（左傳·成 16/5）2. 881

zǐ qí miǎn zhī, wú bù fù jiàn zǐ yǐ.

you/ qí/ strive/ zhī, I/ not/ again/ see/ you/ yǐ

You should do your utmost, but I shall not see you again. (ZZ, Cheng 16/5) 2. 881

This sentence was spoken by Chu's 楚 great officer of Shen Shushi 申叔時 to Chu's general Zi Fan 子反 before he went to a war with the State of Jin 晉. In their conversation, Zi Fan 子反 asked Shen Shushi 申叔時 for his advice and opinion about a war which Shen Shushi thought that Chu should not be involved in. Zi Fan was told that the Chu army would be defeated by the Jin army, and Zifan himself would be killed in the war. The suggestion made in the sentence in

¹⁹⁹ Thanks to Takashima (personal communication) for modifying the translation of this sentence for me.

(82) was the last sentence spoken by Shen. The presence of *qi* in Shen Shushi's speech is significant, expressing to Zi Fan Shen Shushi's feeling that the situation could not be helped.

Examples (79)-(82) show that a speaker might exploit the option of using or omitting *qi*. The absence of *qi* implies a strong expectation of immediate actualization or performance of a command, while the presence of *qi* indicates a weaker expectation of immediate actualization or performance of a command, allowing the listener to choose whether or not to act.

6.4.3. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with first person subjects—expressions of intentions

Another context in which *qi* is found is the type of expression that conveys the speaker's intention, wish, or decision. Such expressions are restricted to the first person. Below are some examples:

- (83) 孰殺子產，吾其與之。(左傳·襄30/13)

shú shā Zǐ Chǎn, wú qí yù zhī.

who/ kill/ Zǐ Chan, I/ qí/ join/ zhī

Whoever kills Zǐ Chan, I will surely join with him. (ZZ, Xiang 30/13) 3.1182

- (84) 君不可忍，惠不可棄，吾其從王。(左傳·昭13/2)

jūn bù kě rěn, huì bù kě qì, wú qí cóng wáng.

lord/ not/ be possible/ callous, kindness/ not/ be possible/ abandon, I/ qí/ follow/ king

As for the king, I cannot bear to see his misery, and as for his kindness, I cannot forget it;

I must follow him. (ZZ, Zhao 13/2) 4.1347

- (85) 寡人其達王於甬句東。(國語·吳語/9)

guǎrén qí dá wáng yú Yǒnggōu dōng.

I/ qí/ reach/ Your Majesty/ yú/ Yonggou/ east

I will surely send Your Majesty to the east of Yonggou to settle.²⁰⁰

(GY, Wuyu/9) 2. 627

An intentional expression may also end with a sentence-final particle, and in most cases, it is the final particle *ye*:

²⁰⁰ This sentence was spoken by the king of Yue 越 to the king of Wu 吳, when Yue defeated Wu. Here the king of Yue refers to himself as *guaren* 寡人, a humble self designation for a ruler, and he used the term *wang* 王, "king, Your majesty" to refer to the king of Wu.

- (86) 有人而校，罪莫大焉。吾其奔也。（左傳·僖 23/6）

yǒu rén ér jiào, zuì mò dà yān. wú qí bēn yě.

have/ people/ ér/ revolt, crime/ none/ big/ yān/, I/ qí/ flee/ yě

To have people and to use them to revolt, there is no crime that is greater than this. I had better flee. (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1.404

- (87) 以亂易整，不武。吾其還也。（左傳·僖 30/3）

yǐ luàn yǐ zhěng, bù wǔ. wú qí huán yě.

with/ disorder/ exchange/ order/, not/ martial/, I/ qí/ withdraw/ yě.

To exchange the orderly array for one of disorder shows I lack martial skill. I had better withdraw. (ZZ, Xi 30/3) 1.482

- (88) 我不佞，雖不識義，亦不阿惑，吾其靜也。（國語·晉語一/4）

wǒ bù nǐng, suī bù shí yì, yì bù ē huò, wú qí jìng yě.

I/ not/ talent/, though/ not/ understand/ righteousness/, also/ not/ parrot/ bewildered/, I/ qí/ silent/ yě.

I am not clever. Though I do not understand what should be the right conduct (between a ruler and a servant), I will not parrot other's view and follow blindly. I had better keep silent. (GY, Jinyu 1/4) 1.264

The above examples show that the sentences with *qi* under the condition of first person subject yield the interpretation of intention, desire, or wish. In traditional understanding, the *qi* in these sentences is considered an adverb that lexically expresses intention, wish, or desire, the same as the word *jiang* 將, "will" (Wang Yinzhi 1798 [1966:115]; Yang Shuda 1954[1927]: 160; He Leshi (1984[1989: 358]) or *shang* 尚, "hope, may" (Wang Yinzhi 1798 [1966:115]). However, we do not consider that *qi* itself contains the meaning of intention, will, or desire. Instead, we propose that the use of *qi* is motivated by the unreal or uncertain nature implied in the proposition expressed. Namely, similar to expressions of inferences and imperatives, expressions of intention, wish, or desire are also easily interpreted as contexts of epistemic uncertainty, because events or situations expressed are not things that already happened, but are just things that the speaker wishes to carry out in the near future. In other words, the basic function of *qi* in this type of intentional expression is to indicate that what is communicated is not an actualized matter, but

just a desired action or state whose truth is not yet certain. Following this analysis, we expect that all expressions of intentions should be marked with *qi*. However, this is not the case in the actual use of language, as shown in examples (89) and (90) below.

- (89) 《小旻》之卒章善矣，吾從之。（左傳·昭 1/1）

Xiǎomín zhī zú zhāng shàn yǐ, wú cóng zhī.

Xiaomin/ zhī/ last/ chapter/ good/ yǐ, I/ follow/ zhī

The last chapter of Xiaomin is beautiful. I do (now and in the future) follow what it says. (ZZ, Zhao 1/1) 4. 1204

- (90) 《鄭詩》之言，吾其從之。（國語·晉語四/2）

Zhèng shī zhī yán, wú qí cóng zhī.

Zheng/ poem/ zhī/ word/, I/ qí/ follow/ it

AS for the words in the *Zhengshi*, I should follow them. (GY, Jinyu 4/2) 2.342

Both (89) and (90) express the speaker's intention, however, the intention in (89) is not marked with *qi* and the one in (90) is marked with *qi*. The contrast between the two examples show that *qi* is not the source of intention, wish or desire, and that an intention is not necessarily expressed by *qi*. We suggest that the absence and presence of *qi* in the expression of intention, decision, or plan, wish, etc. can be explained as follows. Intention can vary in its probability and expectation of actualization. Speakers might use *qi* or omit *qi* to mark the degree to which they expect their intention, wish, or decision to be achieved. The presence of *qi* in an intentional expression indicates that the speaker has a rather lower degree of expectation for the actualization of what he said. The absence of *qi* in an intentional expression indicates that the speaker has a higher degree of expectation for the actualization of what he said.²⁰¹

A second possible explanation can be as follows: The use of *qi* in this context might be also

²⁰¹ However, one point should be noted. That is, there are means, other than the absence of *qi*, by which to specify a higher degree for expectation of the actualization of an action in the language:

[i] 宣子曰：“我欲得齊。”（左傳·昭 3/6）

Xuān Zǐ yuē: “wǒ yù dé Qí.”

Xuan Zi/ say/, I/ want/ get/ Qi.

Xuan Zi said: “I want to get the State of Qi.” (ZZ, Zhao 3/6) 4.1242

In this example, the speaker Xuan Zi used the auxiliary *yu*, “to want, wish” (which can be a noun meaning “desire”) to express his intention. More commonly, a strong intentional expression is qualified with the adverb *jiang*, meaning “to intend to, going to do, will,” as below:

[ii] 公曰：“吾將略地焉。”（左傳·隱 5/1）1. 44

Gōng yuē: “Wú jiāng lüè dǐ yān.”

duke/ say/ I/ will/ walk over/ land/ yān

The Duke said: “I will walk over the country.” (ZZ, Yin 5/1) 1. 44

motivated by the pragmatic purpose to express politeness. To insert the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in a statement of will has the effect of softening or weakening the speaker's statement, allowing the hearer the option of agreeing or disagreeing with him, and thus conveying politeness. In other words, using *qi* in an intentional expression is a polite way of expressing one's intention, decision, or desire.

In this section, we discussed the use of *qi* in declaratives with overt subjects, showing *qi*'s basic property as an uncertain outcome marker. The correlation between *qi* and expressions such as inferences, predictions, imperatives, and intentions is determined by the fact that these expressions are contexts of epistemic uncertainty, namely, the events or states portrayed in them are things that are still within the realm of thought, rather than things that have already actualized and can be judged to accord with objective reality. The function of *qi* in these expressions can be uniformly accounted for as a mark of uncertain outcome, indicating uncertainty on the part of the speaker about the factual status of what he is saying. We also showed that the interpretation of *qi*-marked sentences as expressions of uncertain outcome is sensitive to the subject person of the sentence. That is, the interpretation of a *qi*-marked sentence as an inference is associated with a third person subject, the interpretation of a *qi*-marked sentence as an imperative is associated with a second person subject, and the interpretation of a *qi*-marked sentence as an intention is associated with a first person subject. Moreover, the use of *qi* is also pragmatically motivated by the face-to-face interaction between the speaker and the addressee.

6.5. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences with omitted subjects

In this section, we will discuss cases in which *qi*-marked sentences have no overt subject, which can be represented by the pattern " \emptyset + *qi* + Predicate + (*ye/yi/zai*).” Syntactically, this *qi*-marked construction often co-occurs with a left-dislocated constituent (i.e., topical clause), showing the basic pattern below:

[Constituent], [\emptyset + *qi* + predicate + (final particle)]

[Constituent] stands for the clauses occurring before the construction " \emptyset + *qi* + Predicate +

(Final Particle).” The symbol \emptyset indicates a null subject. Usually there is only one left-dislocated clause preceding the *qi*-marked clause with no overt subject, but sometimes there may be two or more such clauses. Given the nature of final particles, *qi*-marked clauses with non-overt subjects can be declaratives or interrogatives. In this section, we will focus on the interpretation of the semantic functions and meanings of *qi* in constructions with declarative type clauses.

One important point to note is that the null subjects can be of two types: For the first type, the subject of the *qi*-marked clause is omitted, but can be recovered from the previous context; for the second type, the *qi*-marked clause has no subject at all, and it takes the left-dislocated constituent as its topic. This type of *qi*-marked construction is a typical zero subject topic-comment structure, which will be discussed in next section. In this section, our focus is the cases with omitted but recoverable subjects.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the semantic feature of the “ $\emptyset + qi +$ Predicate + (*ye/yi/zai*)” construction also show a general property of “uncertain outcome,” and that depending on the person of the omitted subject, the interpretations of the *qi*-marked construction also generally show the person-effects. An explanation as to why the interpretations of the declarative *qi*-marked constructions show a sensitivity to the subject person will be given in the summary of this section.

6.5.1. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with omitted third person subjects—expressions of inferences

Not only do *qi*-marked sentences with overt third person subjects have the interpretation as inference, but also *qi*-marked sentences with omitted or null third person subjects have similar implications. Namely, when the subject of a *qi*-marked clause is an null NP co-referential with an antecedent subject NP referring to a third person, the clause has an interpretation as an inference.

(i) Expressions of non-future inferences

Examples (91) is a complex sentence consisting of a series of clauses, the last clause of which is marked by *qi*. The *qi*-marked clause lacks an overt subject. But from the previous clauses, we can identify the omitted subject as a null NP co-referential to the antecedent Zhengren 鄭人, “the Zheng people,” which appears in the beginning of the first clause. What is expressed in this *qi*-

marked clause is the speaker's inference regarding a possible situation affecting the Zheng people. The function of *qi* here is to mark that what is said is a hypothetical event whose factual status is not yet certain for the speaker.

- (91) 鄭人懼於郟之役，而欲求媚於晉，其必許之。（左傳·成2/6）

Zhèng rén jù yú Bǐ zhī yǐ, ér yù qiú mèi yú Jìn, qí bǐ xǔ zhī

Zheng/ people/ afraid/ yú / Bi/ zhi1/ battle, ér/ want/ seek/ favour/ yú/ Jin, qí/
certainly/ permit/ zhī

The people of Zheng are afraid (of Jin) because of the battle in Bi, and they are anxious to curry Jin's favour, so (they) would certainly agree with it. (ZZ, Cheng 2/6) 2.804

There seems to be another possible analysis for the function of the *qi* here. That is, *qi* may be taken as a third person pronoun which serves as the subject of the clause in which it occurs, namely *qi* is a pronominal subject rather than a modality marker. Even though this interpretation yields a contextually compatible meaning, we do not think that this analysis is tenable. This analysis does not tally with the grammatical facts of Classical Chinese in the following aspects. First, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter, Classical Chinese allows a sentence to have no subject in the overt syntax, there is no need to have a third person pronoun in the subject position. Second, there is no general third person pronoun equivalent to modern *ta* in Classical Chinese, as pointed out in Pulleyblank (1995: 78). Therefore, we maintain that *qi* in this example should be understood as a modal marker that signals the speaker's uncertainty in the truth of what is said. Consider the following example:

- (92) 彼其髮短而心長，其或寢處我矣。（左傳·昭3/10）

bǐ qí fà duǎn ér xīn cháng, qí huò qǐn chù wǒ yǐ.

that/ qí/ hair/ short/ ér/ heart/ long, qí/ perhaps/ sleep/ stay/ us/ yǐ

A: As for that person, his hair may be short, but his heart is long; perhaps (he)
will make our skins his beds.

B: As for that person, having short hair but a long heart, perhaps (he) will make our
skins his beds. (ZZ, Zhao 3/10) 4.1242

Both clauses in this example contain the particle *qi*. Let us first discuss the *qi* in the second clause. According to Yang Bojun (1981 v. 4: 1242), this *qi* is an adverb expressing uncertainty.

We agree with him in taking it as non-pronominal *qi*. But instead of taking it as an adverb of epistemic meaning, we consider it an uncertain outcome marker. The second clause in this example is a *qi*-marked clause with no overt subject. But from the context, we know that the demonstrative pronoun *bi* 彼, “that,” in the first clause, which is used to refer to the person Lu Pubi 盧蒲嫫, can be assumed as the underlying subject of this clause. What is expressed in this clause is the speaker’s assumption about a possible situation of the person Lu Pubi 盧蒲嫫. It is clear that this is something of which the speaker has no direct perception, and is certainly an expression of epistemic uncertainty. Clearly, the use of *qi* in this clause is to encode the situation as unverified and uncertain, indicating that the speaker is not fully committed to its truth.

Let us now consider the function of *qi* in the first clause, *bi qi fa duan er xin chang* 彼其髮短而心甚長. For the phrase *bi qi* 彼其, Yang Bojun (1981: 1242-3) provides the following two possible interpretations: In the first, *bi* 彼 is a demonstrative pronoun referring to Lu Pubi 盧蒲嫫 as the topic of the sentence, and *qi* is a possessive pronoun used to modify the following noun *fa* “hair.” Namely 彼其髮短 is a clause with the structure “Topic + Subject + Predicate,” meaning “As for that person, his hair is short.” Yang does not comment on the relation between this clause and the following part 心甚長. Presumably, he would punctuate the sentence as: *bi, qi fa duan er xin chang* 彼, 其髮短而心甚長, “As for that person, his hair is short, but (his) heart is long.” Note that in this interpretation—in which *qi* before the word *fa* 髮 is taken as a third person possessive. To maintain this analysis, one may assume that a *qi* as the possessor of the noun *xin* 心, “heart,” is an abbreviated form of 其心甚長, “his heart is long,” because *er* 而 is a conjunction that specifies a coordinating relation, and the constituents linked by it must be structurally similar or parallel. Translation A shows this understanding. Yang offers a second interpretation as follows: *Bi* 彼 is a demonstrative pronoun which serves as the subject referring to the person Lu Pubi 盧蒲嫫; *qi* is a nominalizing marker similar to *zhi*, whose function here is to nominalize the predicate 髮短而心甚長. Namely, the sentence *bi qi fa duan er xin chang* 彼其髮短而心甚長 is a nominalized clause formed by inserting the nominalized marker *qi* in between the subject and the predicate. Yang Bojun (1981: 1242-3) suggests that the second analysis is correct. We also agree with this analysis. Translation B shows this understanding.

(ii) Expressions of future inferences

Just as with overt third person subjects, when the omitted subject is a third person, the sentence marked by *qi* may also imply prediction, as in the following examples:

- (93) 是夫也，將不唯衛國是敗，其必始於未亡人！（左傳·成14/5）

shì fū yě, jiāng bù wéi Wèi guó shǐ bài, qí bǐ shǐ yú wèi wáng rén!

that/ man/ yě, be about to/ not/ only/ Wei/ State/ this/ ruin/, qí/ certainly/ start/ yú/ not yet/ die/ person²⁰²

As for that man, he will not only ruin the Wei State, but also must start his crime with me, the former king's widow. (ZZ, Cheng 14/5) 2.870

- (94) 鄭伯效尤，其亦將有咎。（左傳·莊21/1）

Zhèng bó xiào yóu, qí yǐ jiāng yǒu jiù.

Zheng/ earl/ imitate/ bad example/, qí/ also/ be about to/ have/ calamity²⁰³

The earl of Zheng is following bad examples; he will also surely meet with calamity.

(ZZ, Zhuang 21/1) 1. 217

- (95) 晉仍無道而鮮冑，其將失之矣。（國語·周語下/2）

Jīn réng wú dàoér xiǎo zhòu, qí jiāng shī zhī yǐ.

Jin/ repeatedly/ not/ right way/ ér/ few/ descendant/, qí/ be about to/ lose/ it/ yǐ

(Duke Li of) Jin does not act according to principles of truth and right, and descendants of the Jin's duke clan are few; he will surely lose his State. (GY, Zhouyu C/2) 1. 100

In examples (93)-(95), the *qi*-marked clause lacks an overt subject, but the antecedent can be recovered from the preceding clause as an NP referring to a third person. The antecedent of the omitted subject of the *qi*-marked clause in (93) is the NP *shì fū* 是夫, "this man", the antecedent in (94) is Zheng Bo 鄭伯, "the earl of Zheng", and the antecedent in (95) is Jin 晉. And all three examples express the speaker's prediction of a future situation. As for the use of *qi* in this

²⁰²The particle *ye* occurring after the NP *shì fū* 是夫, "that man" is a topic marker. And the following sentence is an inverted object construction in which the object NP *Wei guo*, "the State of Wei" is preposed in front of the verb *bai* 敗, "to ruin," and *shì* 是 is used as a resumptive pronoun to refer to the preposed object.

According to Yang Bojun (1981: 870), *wei wang ren* 未亡人, "not-yet-die-person" is a self-addressing term used by a widow, here referring to the speaker Jiang Shi 姜氏, who was the wife of duke Ding 定 of Wei 衛.

²⁰³It is noted in Yang Bojun (1981:217) that based on the interpretation given in the *Shuowen* 說文, the meaning of the word *jiu* 咎 is *zai* 災 or *yang* 殃, "calamity." The following example also shows that *jiu* 咎 is used to express this meaning:

[i] 在大猶有咎，而況小乎？（左傳·襄4/2）

zài dà yóu yǒu jiù, érkuàng xiǎo hū?

at/big/ still/ have/ calamity/, how much less/ small/ hū

Even for a big State, it is a calamity, how much less for a small State? (ZZ, Xiang 4/2) 3.932

environment, two points should be noted: One is that just as with future inferences with overt third person subject, most scholars interpret *qi* in this context as an adverb similar to *jiang* 將, a particle of futurity, indicating future events or states. Along similar lines, we do not think that *qi* is a particle that expresses futurity, and its co-occurrence with *jiang* 將 in examples (94) and (95) supports this interpretation. We assume that the use of *qi* in these sentences is motivated by the implication of uncertain outcome in the predictions.

Another important point to be noted is that *qi* as used in the above three examples should not be understood as a third person pronoun, although this interpretation seems to work in terms of the contextual meaning. This treatment is against the basic grammatical role of personal pronouns in Classical Chinese, as mentioned before. Below is an example that shows that *qi* in this type of construction cannot be equated to a third person subject. There are four clauses in the example (96) in which the first clause is the topic, and the following are comment clauses. We see that there is no pronoun subject referring to Jiang 絳 in the second and the third clauses. Given this fact, there is no reason to say the *qi* in the last sentence is a pronominal subject. Namely, all three comment clauses are null subject clauses. Interestingly, in the last three clauses, only the last one is marked with *qi*. It is easy to explain this if one has the view that *qi* is an uncertain outcome marker. That is, obviously, what is expressed in the first two un-*qi*-marked sentences is a matter of known fact, which the speaker knows from his remembering of previously experiences. Thus, *qi* is not present in them. But what is expressed in the last clause is the speaker's assessment about a possible future event (i.e., whether or not "Jiang will come to confess"). The occurrence of *qi* in the speaker's assessment is not surprising, because what is said is not a real but a hypothetical event.

(96) 臣聞絳之志，有事不避難，有罪不避刑，其將來辭。（國語·晉語七/3）

chén wén Jiàng zhī zhì, yǒu shì bù bì nán, yǒu zuǐ bù bì xíng, qí jiāng lái cí.

I/ know/ Jiang/ zhī/ natural disposition, have/ matter/ not/ avoid/ difficulty, have/ crime/ not avoid/ punishment/, qí/ be about to/ come/ confess

I know about Jiang's natural disposition—when dealing with matters, he never tries to avoid difficulty, when it is his crime, he never tries to evade punishment, (thus he) will surely come to confess (what he did). (GY, Jinyu 7/3) 2.438

Example (96) well demonstrates that when the speaker is presenting the information as fact, not possibility, inference, or prediction, *qi* is not used, but when the speaker is presenting information that belongs to ideas in the speaker's thoughts or imagination, *qi* is used.

6.5.2. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with omitted second person subjects— expressions of imperatives

Just as with an overt second person subject, when the non-overt subject in a *qi*-marked main clause takes an NP referring to a second person as its antecedent, it yields an imperative interpretation. In the following three examples from the *Zuozhuan* text, the *qi*-led clauses all lack an overt subject. However, the subject is recoverable from previous discourse as an NP referring to a second person, and what is expressed in each case is the speaker's suggestion, request, or command.

- (97) 公使辭於二子，曰：“...大夫無辱，其復職位！”（左傳·成 17/10）

gōng shǐ cí yú èr zǐ, yuē: “...dàfū wú rǔ, [qí fù zhí wèi!”

duke/ send/ bid farewell/ yú/ two/ officer/, say/, great officer/ not/ disgrace/, qí/ resume/ office/ position

The duke then sent someone to bid farewell to the two officers, saying: “You two great officers, don’t regard (this) as a disgrace, and please resume your offices and places!”

(ZZ, Cheng 17/10) 2.903

- (98) 子家子曰：“有求於人，而即其安，人孰矜之？其造於竟。”（左傳·昭 28/1）

Zi Jiāzǐ yuē: “yǒu jiù yú rén, ér jí qí ān, rén shú jīn zhī? qí zào yú jìng.”

Zi Jiazi/ say/, have/ request/ yú/ (a certain) person/, e2r/ approach/ ease, person/ who/ pity/ zhī/, qí/ reach/ at /border

Zi Jiazi said to him: “When one has a request from another, and at once proceeds to where he would be at ease, who will have any pity for him? (You) should go only to the borders (at first).” (ZZ, Zhao 28/1) 4. 1491

- (99) 將會，衛子行敬子言於靈公曰：“會同難，嘖有煩言，莫之治也。其使祝佗從！”
（左傳·定 4/1）

jiāng huì, Wèi Zǐháng Jìngzǐ yán yú Líng gōng yuē: “huì tóng nán, zé yǒu fán yán, mò zhī zhì yě. qí shǐ zhù Tuó cóng!”

will/ meeting/, Wei/ Zihang Jingzi/ say/ yú/ Ling/ duke/ say/, meeting/ agreement/
difficult/, angrily/ have/ controversy/ words/, none/ zhī/ handle/ yě/. qí/ make/ invoker/
Tuo/ follow²⁰⁴

In prospect of the meeting, the great officer Zihang Jingzi of Wei had said to duke Ling:
“It may be difficult to get an agreement of opinion at the meeting, and if there are
troublesome speeches, then no one can decide it. (You) should make the invoker Tuo go
with you.” (ZZ, Ding 4/1) 4.1535

Although this type of omitted second person subject in an imperative sentence is not commonly
seen in the *Guoyu*, we do find one similar example:

(100) 王親命之曰:“我有大事,子有眩瞶之疾,其歸若已。”(國語·吳語 /9)

Wáng jīn mǐng zhī yuē: “wǒ yǒu dà shǐ, zǐ yǒu xuàn mào zhī jí, qí guī ruò yǐ.”

king/ in person/ command/ them/ say/, we/ have/ great/ event/, you/ have dim-sighted/
zhī/ sickness/, qí/ return/ ruòyǐ

The king of Yue gave orders to (his soldiers) in person, saying: “We will have a great
event (i.e., to attack the State of Wu), if any of you have the sickness of dim-sightedness,
please return home and that is all.” (GY, Wuyu /9) 2.625

We must comment on the last two words in (100), the particles *ruo* 若 and *yi* 已. According to
the traditional commentaries cited in Xu (2002: 559-560), *ruo* 若 is a second person pronoun
similar to *ru* 汝, “you,” and *yi* 已 is a verb meaning *zhi* 止, “to stop.” In this understanding, the
sentence 其歸若已 is taken as equivalent to 若其歸已, and is interpreted as 汝其休止而歸也,
“You please have a rest and return” by Xu Yuangao. Although this interpretation is compatible
with the contextual meaning, it is untenable in terms of grammar. It is not easy to explain why
ruo, if it is a second person pronoun subject has to occur between the main verb *gui* 歸 and the
final particle *yi* 已. It is possible to understand *ruo* 若 and *yi* 已 here as a cluster of final
particles, whose function is similar to the commonly seen final cluster *eryi* 而已, “only, that is
all.” This interpretation can be supported by the fact that *ruo* 若 and *er* 而 are words that are
phonologically related to each other, that is, they might be a case of phonetic loan.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ According to Yang Bojun (1981: 1535), who based his opinions on the commentary given by the Western Jin 晉
scholar Du Yu 杜預 (A. D. 222-284), Zihang Jingzi 子行敬子 was a great officer of Wei 衛; the word *zhu* 祝
refers to the leader of liturgy, i.e., the invoker who is in charge of the prayer ritual; and Tuo 佗 here refers to the
Wei's great invoker Tuo 佗.

²⁰⁵ Thanks to Takashima (personal communication) for clarifying these points for me.

6.5.3. The *qi*-marked declarative sentences with omitted first person subjects— expressions of intentions

When the omitted subject has an NP antecedent in the previous context referring to a first person, the *qi*-marked sentence yields an interpretation as the speaker's intention, desire, or plan, just as the *qi*-marked sentences with overt first person subjects, as in (101).

(101) 君無懼矣，其有勤也！(國語·晉二/6)

jūn wú jù yǐ, qí yǒu qín yě!

lord/ not/ fear/ yǐ/, qí/ have/ toil, labor/ yě

You please don't fear. (I) would surely take myself to the trouble (of going there)!

(GY, Jinyu 2/6) 1.300

From the context where this example is cited, we know this non-overt subject *qi*-marked sentence is spoken by Zai Kong 宰孔, who is dissuading Duke Xian 獻 of Jin 晉 from going to the meeting of feudal princes, and is expressing his intention to volunteer to Duke Xian for the task.

Now consider examples (102)-(103). (103) is the continuation of (102). They were the response given by Chong Er 重耳, the prince of Jin, to the king of Chu 楚, when Chong Er was asked the question: *Gongzi ruo fan Jin guo, ze he yi bao bugu* 公子若反晉國，則何以報不穀?, "What will you repay to me if you return back to Jin?" From this discourse, we know the omitted subject of the two *qi*-led sentences should be a first person pronoun such as *wu* 吾 referring to the speaker himself, (Chong Er). Structurally, these examples are conditional constructions, or topical constructions, in which the two *qi*-led sentences are both main clauses. Here we see the use of *qi* can be explained as being motivated by the implication of uncertain outcome in the speaker's intention, which is presumed to be possible under the framework set up in the conditional clause.

(102) 若以君之靈，得反晉國。晉楚治兵，會於中原，其辟君三舍。(左傳·僖 23/6)

ruò yǐ jūn zhī líng, dé fǎn Jīn guó. Jīn Chǔ zhì bīng, huì yú Zhōngyuán. qí bǐ jūn sān shè.

if/ thereby/ your lordship/ zhī/ power/, get/ be back/ Jin/ State/, Jin/ Chu/ use/ weapon/, meet/ yú/ Middle Land/, qí/ avoid/ your lordship/ three/ stages,

If by your lordship's powerful influence I shall recover the State of Jin, should Chu and Jin go to war and meet in the plain of the Middle Land, I will surely withdraw from your lordship three stages (each of 30 *li*). (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1.409

- (103) 若不獲命，其左執鞭、弭，右屬、鞬，以與君周旋。（左傳·僖 23/6）

ruò bù huò mǐng, qí zuǒ zhí biān ěr, yòu zhǔ tuò, jiàng, yǐ jūn zhōu xuán.

if/ not/ get/ command/, qí/left/ carry/ whip/ bow/, right/ attach/ quiver/ bow-case/, thereby/
with/ your lordship/ maneuver

If then I do not receive your commands to cease from hostilities, I will surely carry my whip and my bow in my left hand, and my quiver and my bow-case on my right, so as to maneuver with your lordship. (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1.409

Below are similar examples in which the non-overt subject can be recovered as a first person subject:

- (104) 君若不施大惠，寡人不佞，其不能以諸侯退矣。（左傳·成13/3） 2.865

jūn ruò bù shī dà huì, guǎ rén bù nǐng, qí bù néng yǐ zhūhóu tuì yǐ.

your lordship/ if / not bestow/ great/ kindness/, I/ not/ talent (or eloquence)/, qí/ not/ can/
with/ feudal lords/ withdraw/ yǐ

If you will not bestow on us your great kindness, I am a man of plain speech; (I) can surely not withdraw with the feudal lords. (ZZ, Cheng13/3) 2.865

In this example, the non-overt subject in the main predicate clauses with *qi* can be identified as *guaren* 寡人, “bereft person,” a humble self-designation for a ruler. And what is expressed in the *qi*-marked clause is the speaker’s intention. The use of *qi* is also motivated by the fact that expressions of intention are in fact an epistemic context of uncertainty.

- (105) 子毋勤，姑歸。不穀有事，其告子也。（左傳·昭13/2）

zǐ wú qín, gū guī. bùgù yǒu shì, qí gào zǐ yě.

you/ not/ trouble/, for the time being/ return/, I/ have/ matter/, qí/ tell/ you/ yě

You don’t put yourself to the trouble, and in the moment withdraw. If I have something (that needs your help), (I) will surely tell you. (ZZ, Zhao 13/2) 4. 1349

Let us pay attention to last two clauses which constitute a conditional construction. The non-overt subject *qi*-marked main clause is the main clause. The non-overt subject can be recovered as the antecedent NP *bugu* 不穀, “unworthy = I,” a term of a self-deprecatory nature used by a ruler. This sentence expresses the speaker’s plan or decision which is a context of epistemic uncertainty, and thus it is marked with uncertainty marker *qi*.

The following example shows that a non-overt first person subject *qi*-led clause may also appear as the main clause in a concessive construction.²⁰⁶

(106) 雖遇執事，其弗敢違，其竭力致死。（左傳·成 3/4）

sūi yù zhíshì, qí fú gǎn wéi, qí jié lì zhǐ sǐ.

although/ meet/ official/, qí/ not/ dare/ avoid/, qí/ exhaust/ strength/ devote/ death

Although I meet with your officers, I will not presume to avoid them, I will do my utmost, even to death. (ZZ, Cheng 3/4) 2.814

6.5.4. Uncertain outcomes and person-effects

In the last two sections, we discussed *qi*-marked sentences with overt and omitted subjects, showing that they all possess the general semantic property of uncertain outcome. Here, we want to pay particular attention to the interaction between the interpretation of *qi*-marked sentences and person.

In traditional interpretation, *qi* is assumed to express different meanings under different persons. In our analysis, *qi* is not an adverbial particle with different lexical meanings in different contexts, rather, we assume that *qi* is a grammatical means to mark what is said as an uncertain outcome. Then, how can we explain the interaction between a particular type of uncertain outcome and a particular person? Our analysis of this person-effect can be refined as follows: When we suggest that what the speaker is saying is an uncertain outcome, we in fact mean that the speaker's knowledge about the situation in relation to the person being talked has not yet been factually ascertained or verified at the moment of speaking. Since a person's action or situation is portrayed from the speaker's point view, thus, what is judged as an uncertain outcome is affected by whose event or state the speaker is talking about. In what follows, we will explain why a certain kind of uncertain outcome will arise under a particular person.

(i) First person subjects and expressions of uncertain outcome

When the subject is in first person, the speaker is talking about himself. And what is considered as an uncertain outcome in such a context must be the speaker's intention, wish, or desire that

²⁰⁶ According to Pulleyblank (1995: 156), a conditional clause (commonly marked by *ruo* 若) states a condition under which a proposition is true and implies that it is not or may not be true under other conditions, but a concessive clause (usually marked by *sui* 雖 or *long* 縱) asserts that a given condition does not affect the truth of the proposition stated in the main clause.

describes events or states which he himself aims to carry out in the future. It is not surprising that this is also regarded as a kind of context with uncertainty, because the speaker cannot be certain that what he wants or wishes to do can really be achieved in the future. And the thing that has already happened or is happening to the speaker would not be judged as an uncertain outcome, because if that were so, the speaker would be certain about it, and so it would not be regarded as a case of uncertain outcome. That is why a sentence with a first person subject and a non-past verb expressing the speaker's intention, wish, or desire, and it is often marked with *qi*. It is worth noting that this interpretation of intention is usually limited to sentences with verbal phrases expressing controllable actions. Namely, only when the predicate in the sentence is a verbal phrase that expresses a controllable action or event, can the *qi*-marked first person sentence have the uncertain outcome interpretation as the speaker's "intention."

What happens when the predicate is a verbal phrase that expresses an uncontrollable action or situation? Logically, a *qi*-marked first person sentence with a predicate expressing an uncontrollable action or state would have the interpretation of inference. Indeed, there is the case in which the uncertain outcome expressed in the *qi*-marked sentence with first person subject is the speaker's inference about his own future situation. But formally, this kind of "first person inference" is only expressed in question form, as in the following example in which the sentence ends with the final question marker *hu*:

- (107) 穆公疾，曰：“蘭死，吾其死乎！”（左傳·宣 3/6）

Mù gōng jí, yuē: “lán sǐ, wú qí sǐ hū!”

Mu/ duke/ sick, say/ orchid/ die, I / qí/ die/ hū

Duke Mu was sick, (and he) said: “When the *lan*-plant dies, I will surely die!” (Lit. Will I surely die?) (ZZ, Xuan 3/6) 2. 675

- (108) 微禹，吾其魚乎？（左傳·昭 1/3）

wéi Yǔ, wú qí yú hū?

if it were not for/ Yu/, we/ qí/ fish/ hū

If it had not been for Yu, would we surely have been fish? (ZZ, Zhao 1/3) 4.1210.

In these two examples, the *qi*-marked clause has a first person subject and a predicate that expresses an uncontrollable action or state. They both end with the question marker *hu* 乎.

However, the discourse function of these two questions is not to ask for information, but to express a conjecture or an assumption about the speaker himself. We do not see “first person inference” expressed in declarative form.

(ii) Second person subjects and expressions of uncertain outcome

What will the uncertain outcome be when the subject is second person? When talking about a second person's (i.e., the addressee) action or state, what the speaker cannot be certain about must be two things: The first is a command, suggestion, or request made to the hearer, because he cannot be certain whether it will be carried out by his hearer in the near or distant future. That is exactly the interpretation of *qi*-marked sentences yielded by second person subjects. The second is his inference, conjecture, or assumption about the hearer's action or state. Interestingly, with second person subject, examples of inferential expressions are not as common as examples of imperative expressions; this may have to do with cultural etiquette. That is, it may be culturally inappropriate to make a conjecture about another person face-to-face. When it is necessary to do so, an interrogative form is used to lessen the impoliteness, as in the following examples:

- (109) (吳公子札) 謂穆子曰: “子其不得死乎!” (左傳·襄 29/13)

(Wú gōngzǐ Zhá) wèi Mù Zǐ yuē: “zǐ qí bù dé sǐ hū!”

Wu/ prince/ Zha/ asy/ Mu Zi/ say /, you/ qí/ not get/ die/ hū

(Prince Zha of Wu) spoke to Mu Zi, saying: “You will surely not die a natural death!”

(Lit. Will you surely not die a natural death?) (ZZ, Xiang 29/13) 3.1161

Or in an exclamatory statement:

- (110) 楚國若有大事，子其危哉! (左傳·昭 27/6)

Chǔ guó ruò yǒu dà shì, zǐ qí wēi zāi!

Chu/ State/ if/ have/ great affair/, you/ qí/ danger/ zāi

If warfare breaks out in the State of Chu, you will surely be in danger!

(ZZ, Zhao 27/6) 4.1488

Examples (109) and (110) show that similar to the case of first person subjects, it is possible that uncertain outcome with a second person subject is the speaker's inference or conjecture about the hearer's future event or state. This kind of interpretation is also limited to contexts in which the predicate of the sentence is a verbal phrase expressing an uncontrollable event or situation;

moreover, this type of *qi*-marked-second-person-subject sentence is often marked with the final question marker *hu* 乎 or an exclamation marker *zai* 哉, as in examples (109) and (110).

In addition to the above two kinds of uncertain outcomes, under the condition of a second-person subject, the uncertain outcome can also be something that the hearer has done or is doing, but the speaker has no direct perception of it, namely, the inferential kind of uncertain outcome, as in example (111) below. Here we see that the *qi*-marked-second-person subject sentence with controllable verbs in which the speaker seems to express an inference about a perfective situation, rather than a command or request:

(111) 臣謂君之入也, 其知之矣. (左傳·僖 24/1)

chén wèi jūn zhī rù yě, qí zhī zhī yǐ.

I/ say/ your lordship/ zhī/ enter/ yě/, qí/ know/ that/ yǐ

I thought since you had entered the State, surely you must have known the situation. (ZZ, Xi 24/1)1.414

There are two possible analyses for the structure of this sentence: One is to take the *qi*-marked clause together with the preceding clause as the embedded object clause of the main verb *wei*, “to say, to think.” Within the embedded clause, *jun zhi ru ye* 君之入也 is the topic clause, and the *qi*-marked clause 其知之矣 is the main clause in which the omitted subject can be identified as *jun* 君, “your lordship, you,” referring to the hearer. If this analysis is tenable, then this is the only example in which *qi* is used in a subordinate clause, or more specifically, in the main clause of the subordinate clause. However, there is a second analysis, that is, to take the left-located clause 臣謂君之入也 as a topic clause, and the *qi* marked clause as a main clause. We prefer this second analysis. In this analysis, the phrase *chen wei* 臣謂, “I think, I say,” can be taken as a parenthetical element whose function is to emphasize the topical clause 君之入也, “Your lordship’s entering.”²⁰⁷

Now let us consider the uncertain outcome of this sentence. Obviously, it cannot be interpreted as a command or suggestion, as usual, but rather as an inference or guess. We think that this interpretation is due to fact that the verb in the *qi*-marked clause in this example is a verb referring to a perfective state. A contextual examination indicates that the speaker of this

²⁰⁷By parenthetical elements, we refer to the elements that are syntactically external to the main clause.

sentence is Pi 披, a former great officer of Jin, and the hearer is Jin's prince Chong Er 重耳, who had just returned to Jin to be the king after more than 20 years' exile. The story is about Pi 披, who knew that the former ruling families of Jin, the Lü 呂 and Xi 郤, were planning to kill Chong Er in his palace by fire. Pi wanted to see Chong Er to warn him. The phrase *zhi zhi* 知之, "to know that" referred to this matter. Thus, what the speaker is talking about is a situation that he assumes that his addressee had already known. In other words, *zhi zhi* 知之 is a perfective situation.²⁰⁸ The occurrence of the perfective aspect particle *yi* also supports this understanding. This example shows that—different from the combination of a second person subject and a non-past verb, which usually yields a meaning of command, request, or suggestion, a common phenomenon in many languages—the combination of a second person subject and a verb expressing a perfective situation yields a interpretation of inference.

As for *qi*-marked sentences with second person subjects, the following example should be noted:

(112) (呂甥)對曰:“以德為怨,君其不然?” (國語·晉語三 /7)

(Lǚ Shēng) duì yuē: "...yǐ dé wéi yuàn, jūn qí bù rán."

(Lu Shen)/ reply/ say/ take/ virtue/ as/ hatred/, your lordship/ qí/ not/ be so

(Lu Sheng) replied, saying "... to take virtue (i.e., goodness/upright conduct) as hatred, you, sir, would not be like that, would you?" (GY, Jinyu 3/7) 1. 331

Apparently, this second-person-subject sentence has a interpretation of conjecture or estimation. But a careful examination tells us that what the speaker really expressed here is still a polite suggestion. Namely, there is a wish on the part of the speaker about the hearer's behaviour, but instead of saying "you should not do such...", the speaker says: "(I guess) you would surely not do something like what I mention here..." In other words, the sentence can be interpreted as something like "Would that Your lordship be like so!"

To sum up, when the subject is a second person, the uncertain outcomes are mostly commands, requests, or suggestions. The second-person-inferences are rare to see. Maybe this has to do with etiquette of the culture. That is, it might be considered discourtesy to make an inference or assumption about other's action or situation face-to-face.

²⁰⁸ Another possibility is that Pi wanted Chong Er to be in the perfected state of knowing the plan. Thanks to Takashima (personal communication) for pointing out this point for me.

(iii) Third person subjects and expressions of uncertain outcome

Compared to clauses with first and second person subjects, the third person subject *qi*-marked sentences expressing uncertain outcomes are simpler— They are only inferential expressions. This correlation between inference and third person is easily explained. When the subject is a third person, the speaker is talking with the hearer about a third person. And the things that the speaker is not certain about must be things he cannot directly perceive or things that have not yet happened to the third person (i.e., future events or states). Thus, the speaker can only provide some kind of guess or inference, and this is exactly the interpretation of the uncertain outcome which we get under third person subjects.

The correlation between *qi* and different kinds of uncertain outcomes under different subjects indicates that *qi* is an uncertain outcome marker in nature. In other words, *qi* is the formal marker that is used to unite expressions of uncertain outcomes (unreal events/states) and oppose them to expressions of certain outcomes (real events/states).

6.6. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in declarative sentences with no subject but only a topic

In this section, our major concern is the semantic interpretations of the *qi*-marked clauses that have no subject but only a topic. We refer to this type of construction as *qi*-marked zero-subject-topic-comment construction. There are two main reasons for us to pay particular attention to this typical type of *qi*-marked structures. First, as shown in previous sections, the interpretation of a *qi*-marked sentence as an uncertain outcome depends on the person of the sentence subject, so we should see how this works in environments in which the *qi*-marked sentence has no subject at all. The uncertain outcomes expressed in such sentences are, as expected, not the same as those in sentences with subjects. But what type of uncertain outcome do they express? The task here is to answer that question. We will show that they do not express commands or intentions. Instead, they generally express inferential knowledge or ideas in this context.

6.6.1. Semantic interpretations of *qi*-marked zero-subject clauses

The semantic relation between the left-dislocated constituent and the non-overt subject *qi*-marked

clause may be of the following types:

(i) The *qi*-marked sentence expresses the speaker's assessment about the true picture of the situation referred to in the topic.

(113) 楚之羸，其誘我也。(左傳·桓 6/2)

Chǔ zhī léi, qí yòu wǒ yě.

Chu/ zhī/ weakness/, qí/ seduce/ us/ yě

That Chu exhibits weakness is surely intended to seduce us. (ZZ, Huan 6/2)1.210

In this example, the left-dislocated clause *Chu zhi lei* 楚之羸, a nominalized construction formed by inserting the genitive marker *zhi* between the subject and the predicate, is the topic of the sentence,²⁰⁹ the second clause 其誘我也 is the comment of the sentence. Different from cases in which the *qi*-marked sentence has subject, where the speaker is either talking about a third person, or his hearer, or himself, here the speaker is talking about the matter referred to in the topic. What is the motivation for the use of *qi* here? This sentence is about a war between Sui 隨 and Chu 楚. The army of Chu was approaching to invade Sui, and the marquis of Sui 隨 was hesitant whether Sui should attack Chu 楚. Before making a decision, he sent his military officer Dong Cheng 董成 to collect intelligence on the Chu army. But the well-prepared Chu army tricked Dong Cheng 董成 by feigning weakness. Seeing this, Dong suggested to the marquis of Sui that they should attack Chu. However, another military officer, Ji Liang 季梁, who spoke the sentence cited in (111), did not agree with Dong and advised the marquis of Sui not to attack the Chu army. In Dong's assessment, "Chu exhibits weakness" is just a false front, and the true reason for this is "to seduce us." The use of *qi* in this assessment is not surprising, because what is said is not a matter of known fact of which the speaker had direct perception, but just an inference based on the speaker's reasoning or experience.

(ii) The *qi*-marked sentence expresses the speaker's inference of the reason or cause that gives rise to the situation referred to in the topic.

Sometimes the situation referred to in the left-dislocated topic clause is a matter of known fact, and what is expressed in the *qi*-led right clause is the speaker's explanation of the cause that gave

²⁰⁹ In the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, we see that the left-dislocated constituents cover a variety of syntactic structures such as noun phrases, verbal phrases, nominalized constructions, simple declarative clauses, simple interrogative clauses, and conditional clauses marked by *ruo* 若, "if," *ru* 如, "if," *jin* 今, "now," etc. The examples discussed below will illustrate these diverse topic clauses.

rise to that situation. For example:

- (114) 民親而事有序，其天所啟也。(左傳·襄31/9)

mín qīn ér shì yǒu xù, qí tiān suǒ qǐ yě.

people/ be on intimate with/ ér/ affair/ have/ order/, qí/ Heaven/ suǒ/ open/ $q\epsilon 3$ ²¹⁰

That the people are attached to him and the affairs are in good order is surely what
Heaven has opened up for him. (ZZ, Xiang 31/9) 3.1190

- (115) 今旱而聽於君，其天道也。(國語·晉語三/5)

jīn hàn ér tīng yú jūn, qí tiān dào yě.

now/ dry/ ér/ listen/ yú/ your lordship, qí/ Heaven/ way/ yě

Now (Jin) has a drought and has to listen to you; surely this must be the way of Heaven.

(GY, Jinyu 3/5) 1.323

In each of these examples, the situation described in the topic clause is a known fact that has occurred. The *qi*-marked main clause is the speaker's inference about the reason for the occurrence of the situation, which is an idea stemming from the speaker's imagination and thus is marked with *qi* to indicate that speaker is not fully certain about or fully committed to the validity of what he said.

Sometimes such a fact-cause relationship may be expressed in a topic-comment construction in which the topic is a question and the comment is an answer. Consider the following example:

- (116) 今周其興乎？其有單子也。(國語·周語下/4)

jīn Zhōu qí xīng hū? qí yǒu Shàn Zǐ yě.

now/ Zhou/ qí/ flourish/, qí/ have/ Shan Zi/ yě

Now Zhou is surely going to flourish, isn't it? It is surely because it has Shan Zi.

(GY, Zhouyu C/ 4) 1. 114

In this example, *qi* occurs in both the topic and the comment components. What is interesting is that the topic is expressed in a question marked by *hu*, and the comment part is an answer ending with *ye*. This example is reminiscent of the parallel relationship between questions, topics, and conditionals in Chinese, as pointed out in Chao (1968: 81-2). According to Chao, in Chinese, topic and answer are formally equivalent to question and answer; topics, questions, and conditionals receive similar marking in Chinese. For example, the pause particles used to mark topics and

²¹⁰ *Suo* 所, "that which; what" is a relative pronoun standing for the object of the verb in the relative clause.

conditionals are the same particles used to mark questions (1968: 81-2). A similar phenomenon is also seen in many other languages.²¹¹ So it is not surprising to see a question occurring as the topic of a topic-comment structure, as in (116). However, it is important to note that the purpose of the speaker to ask the question in this context is not to obtain information, but to obtain his listener's assent to the validity of the proposition expressed in the declarative counterpart (i.e., the positive answer of the question). That is, the question the speaker asked actually implied the positive answer, and the speaker was soliciting assent from his listener. This is why the question can be established as a topic. With this understanding of the question device, whereby the speaker seeks agreement from his hearer in a topic, it is not difficult to explain why the uncertain marker *qi* is used in both the topic and the comment of the sentence. That is, what is expressed in the question is also an assumption of uncertain factual status at the moment of speech, thus it is marked with *qi*. This seems to be a special use of *qi* in a non-main clause. What is expressed in the main clause is the reason given by the speaker to support his assumption stated in the topic, which obviously is also something whose factual status is not verified yet and thus marked by *qi*.

(iii) The *qi*-marked clause expresses the speaker's assessment or appraisal of the possibility of a situation arising, based on the fact or the condition established in the left-dislocated topical constituent. Consider the following example:

(117) 晉侯登有莘之虛以觀師，曰：“少長有禮，其可用也。”（左傳·僖 28/3）1.461

Jin hóu dēng Yǒuxīn zhī xū yǐ guān shī, yuē: “shào zhǎng yǒu lǐ, qí kě yòng yě.”

Jin/ marquis/ ascend/ Youxin/ zhī/ ruin/ thereby/ survey/ army/, say/, young/ old/ have/ deportment/, qí/ can/ use/ yě

The marquis of Jin ascended to the old site of Youxin to survey the army, saying: “The young and the old all have proper deportment; (they) are surely ready to be employed.”

(ZZ, Xi 28/3) 1.461

²¹¹ That the conditional protases resemble questions formally has been observed by many linguists working on different languages (see Haiman (1978) and the references cited there). English also has a similar topic/conditional construction, as in the following examples:

[i] Will he come? I will stay. = If he will come, then I will stay.

[ii] Do you have a ticket? Tell him to let you in. = If you have a ticket, then tell him to let you in.

[iii] Where is John? I did not see him. = John, I did not see him.

[iv] Do you see the picture? My daughter drew it. = As for the picture, my daughter drew it.

Here we focus on the sentence in quotation marks in (117), which is the direct speech of Jin Hou, “the marquis of Jin” mentioned in the first clause. This is also a topic-comment structure. The main clause marked with *qi* contains an adjective *ke* 可, “to be possible” which takes the verb *yong* 用, “to use,” as its complement. What is expressed in the main clause is the speaker’s assessment or judgment of a situation, based on the fact stated in the topical clause. The use of *qi* in this case is also motivated by the unreal or uncertain nature of the information being expressed. Namely, the statement *qi ke yong ye* 可用也, “(they) are surely ready to be employed” is a subjective estimation reached by the speaker, which is not yet verified and thus is marked with the “uncertain outcome” marker *qi*. Note that the use of the third person pronoun “they” in the English translation does not mean that the original Chinese sentence has the same structure as this English sentence; it does not suggest that *qi* can be understood as a third person pronoun here. Below is a similar example in which the *qi*-marked zero subject clause expresses the speaker’s assessment of a situation based on the evidence given in the topical clause:

(118) 趙孟謂叔向曰：“令尹自以為王矣，何如？”對曰：“王弱，令尹強，其可哉！”（左傳·昭1）

Zhào Mèng wèi Shū Xiàng yuē: “Lǐng Yīn zì yǐ wáng yǐ, hé rú?” duì yuē: “wáng ruò, Lǐng Yīn qiáng, qí kě zāi !”

Zhao Meng/ say / Shu Xiang/ say/, Ling Yin/ self/ consider/ be/ king/ yǐ, what/ be like/, reply/ say/, king/ weak/, Ling Yin/ strong/, qí/ be possible/ zāi

Zhao Meng said to Shuxiang: “The chief minister looks upon himself as king already.

How will it be? (i.e., Will he be able to be king in the future?)” (Shuxiang) replied: “The king is weak, and the chief minister is strong; (it will be) surely possible!”²¹² (ZZ, Zhao

1/3) 4.1208

The sentence *wang ruo, Ling Yin qiang, qi ke zai* 王弱，令尹強，其可哉！ is a topic-comment structure. *Qi ke zai* 其可哉 is the main clause without a subject, and it expresses the speaker’s assessment about whether or not the chief minister Ling Yin’s ambition of being king can be gratified. Based on the fact given in the topic clause, 王弱，令尹強, “the king is weak, and the chief minister is strong,” the speaker’s estimation is that *qi ke zai* 其可哉, “(it is) surely

²¹² Note that even though we use the expletive pronoun *it* in the translation (as require in English grammar), this does not mean that the *qi* in the example functions the same as the dummy pronoun or expletive pronoun *it* in the subject position in English, as in the sentence “It worries Marry that John has said that.”

possible.” Obviously, the use of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in this sentence is to signal the speaker’s lack of certainty or commitment to the factual status of his estimation or assessment. Example (119) below is another example in which *qi* is used in the speaker’s assessment about a possible situation:

(119) 簾門閭竇之人而皆陵其上，其難為上矣。(左傳·襄 10/12)

bǐmén guāndòu zhī rén ér jiē líng qí shàng, qí nán wéi shàng yǐ.

wicker door/ small window/ zhī/ people/ ér/ all/ encroach upon/ their/ superior/, qí/ hard/ to be/ superior/ yǐ.²¹³

When people who live in the places with wicker doors and small windows all encroach upon their superiors, (it) is surely hard to be a man of superior rank. (ZZ, Xiang 10/12) 3.983

In this example, the left-dislocated topic clause states a situation which the speaker assumes the hearer will agree with, setting the frame of reference for the assessment expressed in the main clause. It is obvious that the information conveyed in the main clause is not a situation that actually occurred, but only has its source in the speaker’s imagination. The use of *qi* is motivated by the unreal nature of the expressions, indicating the speaker’s lack of certainty or commitment to the truth of his assessment. Below are examples of conditional constructions in which *qi* is used in the zero-subject main clause:

²¹³ *Er* 而 as a conjunction is commonly used between two verbal phrases (usually, between the last two verbal phrase) in a serial verb construction to express a coordinating relationship, meaning “and,” a connective relationship, meaning “then,” or a backward linking relation, meaning “but” (see Pulleyblank (1995: 45-46). However, *er* 而 in this example functions differently. It is used between the subject phrase and the predicate phrase to link the subject and the predicate. Examples in which *er* is used in this way are common. Below are two examples:

(i) 王室而既卑矣，周之子孫日失其序。(左傳·隱 11/3)

wáng shǐ ér jǐ bēi yǐ, Zhōu zhī zǐsūn rì shī qí xù.

royal court/ ér/ already/ decline/ yǐ, Zhou/ zhī/ descendant/ daily/ lose/ qí/ patrimonies

Even the royal court house has been declining, and the descendants of Zhou are losing their patrimonies day by day. (ZZ, Yin 11/3) 1.75

(ii) 子產而死，誰其嗣之？(左傳·襄 30/13)

Zǐ Chǎn er sǐ, shuí qí sǐ zhī

Zi Chan/ ér/ die/, who/ qí/ succeed/ zhī

(If) indeed Zi Chan dies, who is likely to succeed him? (ZZ, Xiang 30/13) 3.1182

The interpretation of the function of *er* in such cases needs to be explored. Some scholars such as Liu Jingnong (1994: 312) take it as a particle indicating emphasis. But some scholars such as Yang Bojun (1981:1182) consider the *er* in (ii) as a conjunction meaning “if.” There is good reasons to support the second view. As pointed out in Pulleyblank (1995: 150-151), *er* 而 is etymologically related to *ruo* 若 and *ru* 如 which are two common conjunctions used to introduce “if” clauses. So we take the *er* used between a subject and a predicate as a conditional conjunction.

- (120) 子若以君命賜之，其已。(左傳·昭 13/3) 4.1354

zǐ ruò yǐ jūn mìng cǐ zhī, qí yǐ.

you/ if/ use/ ruler/ command/ grant/ *zhī*/, *qí*/ stop

If you give him (these silks) with your ruler's order, it (i.e., the trouble) will surely stop.

(ZZ, Zhao 13/3) 4.1354

- (121) 今若休憂於狄，以觀晉國，且以監諸侯之為，其無不成。(國語·晉語二/2)

jīn ruò xiū yōu yú Dī, yǐ guān Jīn guó, qiě yǐ jiàn zhūhóu zhī wéi, qí wú bù chéng.

now/ if/ rest/ sorrow/ *yú*/ *Dī*/, thereby/ observe/ Jin/ State/, moreover/ thereby/ watch/ feudal States/ *zhī*/ behavior/, *qí*/ there is no/ not/ succeed

Now if you rest and share our sorrows with Di, so as to observe what is going on in Jin, and keep watch on the movements of the feudal States, then surely everything will

succeed.²¹⁴ (GY, Jinyu 2/2) 1. 293

- (122) 君若使有司求諸故府，其可得也。(國語·魯語下/19)

jūn ruò shǐ yǒusī qiú zhū gù fǔ, qí kě dé yě.

your lordship/ if/ send/ civil authorities—those who have office/ search/ *zhū*/ old/ government place/, *qí*/ be possible/ obtain/ *yě*

If you send someone in charge of the matter to go and look for it at the old government office, it can surely be found. (GY, Luyu B/19) 1. 215

In each of the examples above, the conditional clause is introduced by the conditional marker *ruo* 若, “if,” and provides a provisional agreement or a temporary framework with respect to which the main clause is applied. What is expressed in the *qi*-marked sentence is also the speaker's estimation or assessment of a possible situation. The use of *qi* here is to mark what is said as an uncertain outcome.

The conditional constructions here raise two questions: (i) Given the generally hypothetical nature of conditional constructions (i.e., things said in both components of a conditional construction

²¹⁴ How to interpret the word *xiu* 休 is still a question to be explored. There are three possibilities: (i) to rest; (ii) joy; and (iii) grace. Based on the content of the passage, we choose interpretation (i). It is about the story that the Jin's prince Chong Er was forced to leave his native country by his father, Duke Xian of Jin. When that happened, Chong Er hesitated whether he should go to Qi or Chu, and wanted to conduct a divination to decide. But his uncle, who is the speaker of the sentence cited, advised Chong Er not to make a choice between these two States by divination, and just go to Jin's hostile State, Di. The speaker considered that one of the good reasons for Chong Er to go to Di is that Di's resentment toward Jin would make them support Chong Er because they thought that Chong Er could share their sorrows. Following this contextual meaning, it seems reasonable to assume that the sentence 今若休憂於狄 means “now if you rest (i.e., stay) in Di and share their sorrows.”

are hypothetical, thus lack certainty), it should be a logical prediction that both parts of a conditional construction should be marked by the uncertainty marker *qi*. But this is not case in the language; why this is so? (ii) Why are some main clauses of conditional constructions are marked by *qi*, but some are not?

As for question (i), our explanation is as follows: Indeed, conditionals manifest the unreal or hypothetical nature of the statement, and in the languages that have formal markers to distinguish between Realis and Irrealis, conditionals are usually considered as irrealis contexts and are marked with the Irrealis marker.²¹⁵ If we consider that the presence and absence of *qi* have a similar function to mark the modal distinction between Irrealis and Realis, then we would expect to see *qi* used in conditionals as an Irrealis marker, or as an uncertain outcome marker. But usually we do not see that conditionals are marked with the uncertain outcome marker (or irrealis marker) *qi*, as in (118)-(120). In our opinion, the fact that the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is not used in conditionals might have to do with its historical origins. Namely we propose that the uncertain outcome marker *qi* might have come from the genitive/nominalizing marker *qi* by way of de-subordination (see discussion in Chapter 8). Maybe it is for this historical reason that *qi*'s modal function does not work on dependent clauses, but only on main clauses. Sometimes we do see *qi* is used in a conditional clause, as have shown in Chapter 5. We suggest that when used in dependent clauses, including topics/conditional clauses, *qi* is a nominalizing marker, rather than a modal marker. This is so because *qi*'s modal function as a mark of uncertain outcomes is a later development of its genitive and nominalizing functions (see 8.5 in Chapter 8).

As for the second question, which asks why not all main clauses in conditional construction are marked with *qi*, our explanation is that this has to do with the pragmatic applications of the uncertain outcome or irrealis marker. Namely, as we have mentioned before, a speaker might choose one of the options of *qi* for expressive purposes (see more discussion in the following section).

6. 6. 2. The pragmatic use of uncertain outcome marker *qi*

We have mentioned that the use and omission of *qi* could involve the speaker's exploitation of

²¹⁵ See Roberts (1990), Chafe (1995), and Mithun (1995).

this linguistic device for some expressive purposes. Here let us present some data to illustrate this fact, with the aim to understand the communicative/interactive functions of this modal marker.

The pragmatic use of *qi* is reflected in the following aspects:

- (i) A speaker may choose to use *qi* in his statement purposely, even though he is fully certain about factual status of the information being conveyed. This may be a result of social factors, such as the rules of etiquette of the culture.

Consider the following example:

- (123) 姬以告王。王問諸屈巫。對曰：“其信。”(成2/6) 2.804

Jī yǐ gào wáng. wáng wèn zhū Qū Wū. duì yuē: “qí xìn.”

Ji/ with it/ report/ king/, king/ ask/ *zhu*/ Qu Wu, reply/ say, qí/ true

Xia Ji reported it to the king. The king asked Qu Wu about it. Qu Wu replied: “It may be true.”

[Hea] Ke (i.e., Xia Ji) informed the king of this message, who asked K’eah Woo (i.e., Qu Wu) about it. [K’eah Woo](i.e., Qu Wu) replied: “The thing is true.” (Legge Vol. 5:1: 347)

Here we will look at the underlined text, the *qi*-marked zero subject sentence *qi xin* 其信, which occurs independently without a left-dislocated topic clause. This type of *qi*-marked clause is not commonly seen in the *Zuozhuan* or the *Guoyu*. What is the grammatical role of *qi* in this sentence? There is no reason to take it as a subject pronoun. We have pointed out that to take *qi* in a preverbal position as a third person subject pronoun is problematic, because the grammar of early Classical Chinese does not require a third person pronoun in the subject position.

In our opinion, the *qi* here is still the uncertain outcome marker. Different from the case in which the zero-subject *qi*-marked clause has a left-dislocated constituent as its topic, this zero-subject *qi*-marked sentence takes the information introduced in the previous discourse as its topic. Specifically, the topic of this *qi*-marked sentence is the thing that Xia Ji 夏姬 reported to the king of Chu 楚. And from the context, we know the matter Xia Ji 夏姬 reported to the king of Chu 楚 is as follows: Xia Ji’s 夏姬 husband Xiang Lao 襄老 a great officer of Chu, died in a war. The State of Zheng 鄭 was willing to return his corpse to Chu 楚, but they wanted Xia Ji

夏姬 to go to Zheng 鄭 to receive the corpse in person. When the king of Chu heard Xia Ji's report of this, he doubted its truth. So he asked his minister Qu Wu 屈巫 about it, to which Qu Wu replied: *Qi xin* 其信, "(It) may be true." In fact, Qu Wu 屈巫 knew that what Xia Ji reported was not true, because he was the one who planned the plot, as follows. Xia Ji 夏姬 was an extremely beautiful woman at that time. And when Qu Wu 屈巫 knew that her husband Xiang Lao 襄老 had died in the war, he decided to marry Xia Ji 夏姬. But Xia Ji 夏姬 had no reason to leave Chu 楚. In order to pursue his plan, Qu Wu sent a messenger from Zheng to tell Xia Ji 夏姬 to use receiving Xiang Lao's corpse as an excuse to go back to her original State of Zheng and he would go there to marry her.

From this scenario, we see the use of *qi*, a mark of uncertain outcome, is significant both in a linguistic sense and a non-linguistic sense. As we see, even though the speaker Qu Wu 屈巫 wished that the king of Chu 楚 would believe what Xia Ji 夏姬 said, and would let her go, he still used *qi* to qualify his answer as something whose outcome is uncertain. The reason for him to do so is to indicate to the king that he did not fully commit to the truth of what he said, leaving the king himself to judge for himself.

This example shows that *qi* can be used as a strategic linguistic tool, by which the speaker drops a hint to his addressee that what he is saying is not guaranteed as a fact (as in exchanges of information).²¹⁶ If this analysis is correct, then we see that Legge's translation as "The thing is true," does not convey the modal nuance of the sentence. Below is another example in which the use of the uncertain outcome *qi* is also pragmatically motivated:

(124) (華元) 見叔牂, 曰: "子之馬然也。" 對曰: "非馬也, 其人也。" (左傳·宣 2/1)

(Huá Yuán) jiàng Shū Zāng, yuē: "zǐ zhī mǎ rán yě." duì yuē: "fēi mǎ yě, qí rén yě."

Hua Yuan/ see/ Shu Zang/, say/ you/ zhī/ horse/ be so/ yě/, reply/ say/, not/ horse/ yě/,
qí/ man/ yě

Hua Yuan saw Shu Zang and said to him: "It was your horses that did so." (Shu Zang) replied: "(It) was not because of the horses; (it) was surely because of the person (i.e., me)." (ZZ, Xuan 2/1) 2.653

²¹⁶ When imposing obligations, the use of *qi* indicates that the hearer is not necessary to follow the orders. And when expressing intentions, the use of *qi* indicates that the speaker does not fully commit himself to carrying out what he is saying.

This is a conversation between Hua Yuan 華元 and Shu Zang 叔牂, who were the two military commanders of the State of Song 宋. The sentences *fei ma ye, qi ren ye* 非馬也，其人也 spoken by Shu Zang 叔牂 are two structurally parallel copula-type sentences. The first one is negative and the second is affirmative, and both have non-overt subjects and have a noun predicate indicated by the final particle *ye* 也. Moreover, both of them take what was introduced in the previous context as their topics. In this context, the two speakers were finding out why the State of Song 宋 was defeated by the State of Zheng 鄭. In the story, it was Shu Zang's 叔牂 fault that Song failed in the war, because Shu Zang 叔牂 did not obey Hua Yuan's 華元 command in the battle. But Hua Yuan did not blame Shu Zang, instead, he wanted to give Shu Zang an excuse by laying the blame on Shu Zang's 叔牂 horses. Shu Zang 叔牂, however, did not want to accept Hua Yuan's forgiveness and replied to him with the sentence: 非馬也，其人也, "It was not because of the horses; it was surely because of the person (i.e., myself)."

Here it seems the use of *qi* is not motivated by uncertainty, since the speaker knew what he said was true. Rather, the use of *qi* is motivated by the interaction between the two speakers: The speaker wanted to weaken his statement, because what he said was an unpleasant fact for the hearer. He expressed it as an "uncertain outcome," which had the effect to soften or weaken the statement, thus showing politeness to the hearer.

(ii) Sometimes, a speaker may choose not to use *qi* in his inferential expression, to reinforce his certainty and confidence in the truth of what he is saying.

Consider the following example:

(125) 幣重而言甘，誘我也。(左傳·僖 10/3) 1.336

bì zhòng ér yán gān, yòu wǒ yě.

gift/ great/ ér/ word/ sweet/, seduce/ us/ yě

That his gifts are great and his words are sweet is intended to seduce us. (ZZ, Xi 10/3)

1.336

The basic structure of this sentence is quite similar to the following example:

(126) 楚之羸, 其誘我也. (左傳·桓 6/2)

Chǔ zhī léi, qí yòu wǒ yě.

Chu/ zhī/ weakness, qí/ seduce/ us/ yě

That Chu exhibits weakness is surely intended to seduce us. (ZZ, Huan 6/2)1.210

However, the sentence in (126), which has been cited as (113) above, is marked with *qi*, and the one in (125) not. We have analyzed that the use of *qi* in (126) is motivated by the epistemic uncertainty of the assessment expressed (see discussion of example (113)). Now let us look at why (125) does not contain *qi*. The context in which this sentence occurs is as follows. In the tenth year of the reign of duke Xi 僖, the earl of Qin 秦 wanted to send Jin's 晉 exiled prince, Chong Er 重耳, back to Jin to be Jin's new ruler. But Pi Zheng 丕鄭, a great officer of Jin, who was then visiting Qin, told the earl of Qin that his plan would not succeed, because Jin's three great officers, Lü Sheng 呂甥, Xi Cheng 郤稱, and Xi Rui 郤芮, would not obey Qin. But Pi suggested to the earl of Qin that if he were to send an emissary to Jin to bribe these three officers, his plan might work. Taking this advice, the earl of Qin sent his great officer Ling Zhi 冷至 to Jin to visit the three great officers with great gifts. However, this bribery plan did not work, because Xi Rui, the speaker of the above cited sentence saw through it as soon as he and the other two great officers were called by the Qin's emissary Ling Zhi. What Xi Rui said to Lü Sheng and Xi Cheng, as in (125), is something he knew by inference but not from being told or from directly perceiving. The use of *qi* in this assertion is expected if it is an uncertain outcome marker. However, *qi* is not present in the sentence. This absence of *qi* can be explained as follows. The speaker purposely dropped the uncertain outcome marker '*qi*', because he wanted to emphasize that what he said is true, telling his listeners that he is fully committed to the truth of what he said. The examples above clearly show how the semantic connotation of *qi* as uncertainty can be manipulated by speakers in a discourse to obtain the best expressive effect.

(iii) The pragmatic effects of *qi* are illustrated in another way: futures regarded as uncertain are marked with *qi* and futures regarded as certain are marked with *jiang* 將.

Here we will look at the difference between these types of future events or states. As discussed earlier, future events or states that stem from the imagination are often marked with *qi*, and we call these future inferences or predictions. We also show that the particle of futurity, *jiang*, "to

be about; to be going to, will” may co-occur with *qi* in such expressions. We propose that the use of *qi* in such contexts is motivated by the uncertain-epistemic feature of the future events or states, since they are only things in thoughts or ideas, while the use of *jiang* is to indicate the futurity of the events or states. However, sometimes we may see inferential future contexts that are not marked with *qi*, but instead are only marked with *jiang*. Compare the following two examples:

- (127) 必早善晉子，其當之也。(國語·周語下/2)

bǐ zǎo shàn Jīn zǐ, qí dāng zhī yě.

necessarily/ early/ treat well/ Jin/ viscount/, qí/ meet/ it/ yě²¹⁷

Be sure to treat well the viscount of Jin in good time, (for to do so) will surely meet the need of the situation. (GY, Zhouyu C/2) 1. 100

- (128) 必善晉周，周將得晉國。(國語·周語下/2)

bǐ shàn Jīn Zhōu, Zhōu jiāng dé Jīn guó.

necessarily/ treat well/ Jin / Zhou, Zhou/ be about to/ get/ Jin/ State

Be sure to well treat prince Zhou of Jin, (for) Zhou will have the State of Jin.

(GY, Zhouyu C/2) 1.96

These two sentences were cited from the same passage in the *Guoyu*. Both were spoken by duke Shanxiang 單襄 of Zhou 周 to his son, prince Qing 頃. Jin Zi 晉子, “the viscount of Jin” in (127), and Jin Zhou 晉周 in (128) refers to the same person, prince Sun Zhou 孫周 of Jin 晉. In both examples, what is expressed in the left-dislocated clause is the speaker’s suggestion to his listener, and what is expressed in the main clause is his explanation as to why the hearer should carry out the suggestion. But one of the examples is marked with *qi*, the other is marked with *jiang*. The context in which these two sentences were spoken is as follows: Duke Shanxiang of Zhou was sick and did not feel well, so he called his son prince Qing to see him. He strongly advised his son Qing to keep good relations with Sun Zhou, who, according to duke Shanxiang’s estimation, would become the future ruler of the Jin State. What is the difference in meaning brought about by the use of *qi* in (127) and the use of *jiang* in (128)? In our opinion, the use of *jiang* is to indicate future time, and the speaker seems purposely to choose not *qi* in (126) to

²¹⁷ In this example, the pronoun *zhi* functions as a demonstrative pronoun making general reference to the political situation discussed in the previous context.

reinforce his certainty about his prediction regarding Sun Zhou 孫周, implying a higher degree of expectation that his suggestion is certain to be carried out.

The following examples show more clearly the use of *qi* and *jiang*:

- (129) 吾子孫其覆亡之不暇, 而況能禋祀許乎? (左傳·隱 11/3)

Wú zǐsūn qí fù wáng zhī bu xiá, érkuàng néng yīnsǐ Xǔ hū?

my/ descendant/ qí/ overthrow/ zhī/ not/ free time/, how much the more/ can/ offer
sacrifice / Xu/ hū

My descendants would not even have time to defend themselves from overthrow (i.e.,
My descendants will have all their time occupied with defending themselves from
overthrow), and even less could they maintain the sacrifices of Xu?²¹⁸ (ZZ, Yin11/3)

1.75

- (130) 鄭將覆亡之不暇, 豈敢不懼? ((左傳·僖 7/3) 1.318

Zhèng jiāng fùwàng zhī bù xiá, qǐ gǎn bù jù?

Zheng/ be about to/ overthrow/ zhī/ not/ free time/, qǐ/ dare/ not/ afraid

Zheng will not even have time to defend themselves from overthrow, how dare they not
be afraid of you? (ZZ, Xi 7/3) 1.318

The first clauses of these two examples are very similar in grammatical structure and lexical content; they only differ in subject and in the choice of *qi* and *jiang*. That is, they both predict a future state and have the phrase *fu wang zhi bu xia* 覆亡之不暇, “have no time to defend themselves from overthrow” as their predicate. But in the first example, *qi* is used in front of the predicate, while in the second example, *jiang* is used in the corresponding position.

One possible explanation for the contrast between these two examples is that futures can be vary in their probability of occurrence. The speaker could exploit some linguistic devices to mark their degree of certainty about the future or their expectation of the actuation of a future event. The use of *qi* or *jiang* is determined by the degree of (un)certainly that the speaker has about what he is saying. We assume that *qi* marks lower certainty and expectation of reality of the future, due to its epistemic downtoner nature, while *jiang* marks higher certainty of reality of the future.

²¹⁸ In Yang Bojun (1981) *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, the *qi* in this sentence is missing (or omitted ?). But in other versions of the *Zuozhuan*, such as the one cited by Legge (Vol. 1: 31), the sentence cited here contains the *qi*.

Contextually, this analysis seems valid. In the first example, the speaker was the earl of Zheng 鄭, and he assumed an undesirable future situation for his descendants, but he surely did not expect this to really occur, thus he used the downtoner *qi*. In the second sentence, the speaker was Guan Zhong 管仲, a great officer of Qi 齊, who was persuading the marquis of Qi 齊 not to attack Zheng 鄭 at the present time, but rather to deal gently with Zheng. He suggested that if Zheng did not obey, he would lead the other States to punish Zheng, and then the overthrow of Zheng would be imminent. Clearly, the choice of *jiang* in this context is significant: it was exploited to make the argument more convincing. Sometimes, we see also cases in which the speaker makes two predictions, one of which is marked with *qi*, and one of which is marked neither with *qi* nor *jiang*:

(131) 孔子聞衛亂，曰：“柴也其來，由也死矣。”（左傳·哀15/5）

Kǒngzǐ wén Wèi luàn, yuē: “Cái yě qí lái, Yóu yě sǐ yǐ.

Confucius/ heard/ Wei/ disorder, say/ Chai/ yě/ qí/ come/ You/ yě/ die/ yǐ²¹⁹

When Confucius heard of the disorder in Wei, he said: “Chai will surely come [here safe], but You will have died.” (ZZ, Ai15/5) 4.1696

The contrast here is in the presence and absence of *qi*, but not the presence of *qi* and the presence of *jiang*. A question arises here: Both sentences are predictions about future events or states; why, then, is only the first one marked with *qi*, while the second one is not?

Our answer to this question is similar to the one given for the contrast between *qi* and *jiang*. The use of *qi* in the first sentence is motivated by the speaker's relatively low certainty about the reality of the event that “Chai will come.” And the absence of *qi* in the second sentence indicates that the speaker had a high level of certainty or commitment regarding the relevant situation. And in fact, from the context in the *Zuozhuan* text, we know that You (also named Zi Lu) indeed died in the disorder of Wei, just as Confucius predicted.

The examples above reveal a very important aspect of *qi*, that is, that *qi* is not only a device that signals uncertainty, but also a device that indicates how a speaker wishes to modify his commitment or confidence in the truth of what he is saying.

²¹⁹Two points should be noted here. First, is the use of the particle *ye*; the *ye* used after the proper noun in these two clauses is a topic marker. Second, is the use of the final particle *yi*; as a mark of perfect aspect, *yi* can also be used in the context of a future event/state, as in the second clause. In this case, *yi* is used to express that the future state is expected to be completed.

6. 7. Chapter 6 summary

In this chapter, we investigated the modal functions and meanings of *qi* in main clauses. We analyzed the contexts in which *qi* is used, showing that the use of *qi* in main clauses is consistently determined by the semantic principle—to indicate that the events or states being expressed are ideas still within the realm of thoughts, rather than things that have already been actualized and can be judged to accord with objective reality. Based on the semantic distributions of *qi* in the expressions such as inferences, imperatives, and intentions, we concluded that the overall modal function of *qi* is that of an uncertain outcome marker in early Classical Chinese. We also pointed out that the use of *qi* is not simply motivated by the semantic principle of specifying unreal or uncertain events/states from real or certain events/states; the presence and absence of *qi* can be pragmatically manipulated by a speaker to reflect his expressive purposes.

Chapter 7

***Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in interrogative sentences in early Classical Chinese**

7. 1. Introduction

Questions are one of most important types of discourse in which the uncertain outcome marker *qi* occurs. It has been well noted in the study of early Classical Chinese grammar that some questions contain *qi*, while others do not. However, no attempt has been made to account for this formal distinction. Some convenient explanations for the use of *qi* in a question have been proposed, but most such treatments ignore questions that do not contain *qi*. Most scholars treat *qi* in questions as an particle to express interrogative mood, possibility, uncertainty, or dubiety (e.g., Yang Shuda 1927 [1954]; Pei Xuehai 1934; Malmqvist 1982; He Leshi 1984 [1989]; He Leshi et al. 1985). Some simply treat it as a preverbal question marker (e.g., Guan Xiechu 1953; Fan Yuzhou 1989). These treatments are far from satisfactory, because they cannot explain why some questions have to use *qi* and others do not need to use *qi*. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the functions and meanings of *qi* in questions, providing a consistent account for both its presence and absence.

We consider that the correlation between interrogative context and the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is not unexpected, because questions also constitute a case of uncertain outcome, as they are utterances that evoke a set of possible answers from which the true answer is selected. In this chapter, we shall show that the use of uncertain outcome marker *qi* in interrogative clauses is parallel to that in declarative clauses—to mark the Irrealis-Realis distinction in questions. That is, whether or not *qi* is used in a question has to do with the speaker's assumption about the addressee's information background of the question being asked, as well his assessment about his own information sources regarding the question. In general, if the speaker asks a question about an event or situation of which the addressee has no direct perception, or firsthand evidence, the particle *qi* is used. In contrast, if the speaker asks a question about a situation of which the

addressee has firsthand or direct visual evidence, then *qi* is not used. Moreover, the use or omission of *qi* in a question also has to do with the information status of the speaker himself. If the speaker asks a question of which he has no knowledge at all, *qi* is used. But if the speaker asks a question of which he has some information, *qi* is not used.

7.2. A brief introduction to questions in early Classical Chinese

7.2.1. Structural considerations

In this section, we will give a sketch of the structural characteristics of questions in early Classical Chinese. Based on the answers being sought, we can divide questions in the early classics into two basic types: yes-no questions and content questions (or, question-word questions).

7.2.1.1. Yes-no questions

In the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, a yes-no question is commonly formed by adding the final question particle *hu* 乎 to its statement counterpart, as in the following examples:

- (1) 叔展曰：“有麥麴乎？”(無社)曰：“無。”(左傳·宣12/6)

Shū Zhǎn yuē: “yǒu màiqǔ hū?” (Huán Wúshè) yuē: “wú.”

Shu Zhan/ say/, have/ malt/ hū, (Wu She)/ say/ not have.

Shu Zhan said: “Do you have any malt?” (Wu She) said: “(I) do not have.” (ZZ, Xuan 12/6) 2. 749

- (2) (趙簡子)問於王孫圉曰：“楚之白珩猶在乎？”對曰：“然。”(國語·楚語下/7)

(Zhào Jiǎnzǐ) wèn yú Wáng Sūnyǔ yuē: “Chǔ zhī bái héng yóu zài hū?” duì yuē: “rán.”

(Zhao Jianzi)/ ask/ yú/ Wang Sunyu/ say/, Chu/ zhī/ white/ heng-jade/ still/ exist/

hū/, reply/ say/, be so

(Zhao Jianzi) asked Wang Sunyu: “Is the white *heng*-jade of Chu still there?” (Wang Sunyu) replied: “It is so.” (GY, Chuyu B/7) 2.579

Hu is a formal signal of interrogative sentences in Classical Chinese (functionally equivalent to a rising tone). It is mostly used in yes-no questions, but occasionally it is also used in a question-word question.²²⁰ Sometimes, a yes-no question may end with both *ye* and *hu*:

²²⁰ The question-word questions with *hu* are usually rhetorical questions as in the following examples:

(i) 何故廢乎？(左傳·閔2/7) 1.269

- (3) 韓厥曰：“君知厥也乎？”齊侯曰：“服改矣”（左傳·成 3/9）

Hán Jué yuē: “jūn zhī Jué yě hū?” Qí hóu yuē: “fú gǎi yǐ.”

Han Jue/ say/, your lordship/ know/ Jue/ yě/ hū/, Qi/ marquis/ say/, clothes/ change/ yǐ

Han Jue asked: “Do you know Jue (i.e., me)?” The marquis of Qi said: “(Only Your) clothes have been changed.” (ZZ, Cheng 3/9) 2. 816

- (4) 武子曰：“嬖乎，女亦知吾望爾也乎？”（國語·晉語五/10）

Wǔ Zǐ yuē: “Xiè hū, nǚ yǐ zhī wú wàng ěr yě hū?

Wu Zi/ say/, Xie/ hū/, you/ also/ know/ I/ expect/ you/ yě/ hū²²¹

Wu Zi said: “Oh, Xie, did you also know that I expect you (to act like that)?” (GY, Jinyu 5/10) 2.403

The use of the particle cluster *ye hu* 也乎 is only seen in the earlier Warring States texts such as the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*; in the later Warring States texts, *ye hu* 也乎 is replaced by final particles such as *yu* 歟/與 and *ye* 耶/邪.²²² In the *Guoyu*, we see several examples with *ye* 邪, one of which is given in (5):

- (5) 今周室少卑，晉實繼之，其或者未舉夏郊邪？（國語·晉語八/19）

jīn Zhōu shǎo bēi, jīn shí jǐ zhī, qí huò zhě wèi jǔ Xià jiāo yé?

now/ Zhou/ court/ small/ weak/, Jin/ this/ succeed/ zhī/, qí/ perhaps/ not yet/ conduct/ Xia/ suburban ritual/ yě

Now (the power of) Zhou royal court is sinking and becoming weak, and it is Jin that is succeeding it (i.e., Zhou) (to be the head of the Feudal States); however, perhaps Jin has not conducted the suburban ritual passed down from the Xia dynasty yet, has it? (GY, Jinyu 8/19) 2.478

Occasionally, we also see yes-no questions expressed without *hu*; these are mostly rhetorical questions:

hé gù fèi hū?

what/ reason/ disown/ hū

For what reason should you be disowned? (i.e., You will not be disowned.) (ZZ, Min 2/7) 1.269

- (ii) 盍納王乎？（國語·周語上/11）

hé nà wáng hū?

why not/ bring in/ king/ hū

Why don't you go to welcome the (true) king back to the State? (GY, Zhouyu A/11) 1. 29

²²¹ Note that *hu* 乎 used after the proper noun Xie 嬖 functions as an exclamation marker.

²²² See Pulleyblank (1995: 16-17). Also Pulleyblank (1995: note 6) refers to Graham (1957) on the equivalence of *yu* 與 and *ye hu* 也乎, and Karlgren (1926) on the dialectal distinction between *yu* 與 and *ye* 邪.

- (6) (呂甥)對曰:“以德為怨,君其不然?”(國語·晉語三/7)

(Lǚ Shēng) duì yuē: “...yǐ dé wéi yuàn, jūn qí bù rán.”

(Lu Shen)/ reply/ say/ take/ virtue/ as/ hatred/, your lordship/ qí/ not/ be so

(Lu Sheng) replied, saying “... to take virtue (i.e., goodness/upright conduct) as hatred, you would surely not be like so, would you?” (GY, Jinyu 3/7) 1. 331

- (7) 然而多聞以待能者,不猶愈也?(國語·晉語四/22)

ránér duō wén yǐ dài néng zhě, bù yóu yù yě?

however/ many/ hear/ therewith/ treat/ talented/ the one who/, not/ still/ better/ yě

However, if you are well-informed with knowledge and use it to treat talented people, isn't it still better? (GY, Jinyu 4/22) 2. 386

Note that the basic function of *ye* is to mark a noun predicate, a topic; it is also used as an aspect marker to express a durative state.²²³ It is often used in the end of a explanatory clause to confirm an assertion, which is how it functions in the sentence cited in (7). Thus, its function here is not to express interrogation. In this sense, this question is unmarked.

Yes-no questions in the earlier texts the *Shangshu* and the *Shijing* usually do not end with a final question particle such as *hu*:

- (8) 嗚呼!我生不有命在天?(尚書·西伯戡黎)

wūhū wǒ shēng bù yǒu mǐng zài tiān?

Oh/ I/ life/ not/ have/ decree/ in/ Heaven

“Oh, my life, has it not been decreed in Heaven?” (Karlgren 1950b: 8/5)

7.2.1.2. Content questions

Content questions in early Classical Chinese are formed with a set of question words. Based on their references, the early Classical Chinese question words can be classified into two groups. The first is the animate question words, including *shui* 誰, *chou* 疇 and *shu* 孰. The second is the inanimate question words, including *he* 何, *he* 曷, *hai* 害, *xia* 遐, *hu* 胡, *xi* 奚, *he* 盍, *an* 安, *yan* 焉, and *wu* 惡. Based on their phonological features, they can be further classified into three groups: those starting with the initials À- in Middle Chinese, e.g. *shui* 誰, *chou* 疇 and *shu* 孰, as listed in Group I; those starting with the initial V- in Middle Chinese, e.g., *he* 何, *he* 曷, *hai* 害, *hu*

²²³ See Pulleyblank (1994b: 326-338).

胡, *xia* 遐, *xi* 奚, *he* 盍, as listed in Group II; and those starting with the initial ʔ- in Middle Chinese, e.g., *an* 安, *yan* 焉, and *wu* 惡, as listed in Group III. The pronunciations of these Q-words in Old Chinese (early Classical Chinese) and Early Middle Chinese (EMC) can be reconstructed based on the framework provided in Pulleyblank (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1992a, and 1994a) as below:

- I. Animate Q-words: *shui* 誰 [EMC dzwi < *ʔkʷjə]
chou 疇 [EMC drow < *ʔkʷəw]
shu 孰 [EMC dzuwk < *ʔkʷjəwk]
- II. Inanimate Q-words: *he* 何 [EMC ɣa < *gál < *ʔkʷá]
he 曷 [EMC ɣat < *gát < *ʔkʷát]
hai 害 [EMC ɣaj^h < *gáts < *ʔkʷáts]
xia 遐 [EMC ɣai/ɣɛ < *gráy < *ʔkʷráy]
hu 胡 [EMC ɣɔ < *gay < *ʔkʷáy]
xi 奚 [EMC ɣɛj < *gàj < *ʔkʷáj] ?
he 盍 [EMC ɣap < *gáp < *ʔkʷáp]
- III. Inanimate Q-words: *an* 安 [EMC ʔan < *án]
yan 焉 [EMC ʔian < *ʔàn]
wu 惡 [EMC ʔɔ < *ʔá]

IV. Compound Q-words

jihe 幾何 [EMC kɿj-ɣa < *kəlgál]; *ruyi* 如合 [ɲiə-jɿ/jɿ < *nàa-ljəy]; *ruhe* 如何 [ɲiə-ɣa < *nàǎ (*nàɣ-gál); *ruzhihe* 如之何 [ɲiə-tɕi-ɣa < *nàǎ-təy-gál]; *ruohe* 若何 [ɲiak-ɣa < *nàk-təy-gál]; *ruozhihe* 若之何 [ɲiak-tɕi-ɣa < *nàk-təy-gál]; *nainhe* 奈何 [ɲja^h-ɣa < *náts-gál];

From the above reconstruction forms, we see that the question words in each group are etymologically related, showing that they are words belonging to the same word family. Those in groups (I) and (II) are more closely etymologically related, for they share the same initial *ʔkʷ- in Old Chinese. And it seems that the distinction between animate and inanimate in these two groups is made by the alternation between the main vowels - ə- and -a-; words in the inanimate

group not only share the same initial *ak^w-, but also the same main vowel - a-, and they are only different in the final consonant.

One of the most striking features concerning the early Classical Chinese question-word system is that it is common to see two or three (or more) Q-words competing with each other to denote a general meaning. That is, on the one hand, a particular inquiring function can be played by several different forms. For example, forms such as *shui* 誰, *chou* 疇 and *shu* 孰 can all be used to inquire about persons, meaning “who,” and forms such as *he* 何, *hu* 胡, *he* 曷, *hai* 害, and *xi* 奚 can all be used to inquire about things, denoting a general meaning of “what; which.” On the other hand, different inquiring functions can be served by the same form. For example, a particular form such as *he* 何 bears multiple inquiring functions. It can be used to form almost all types content questions, such as what-questions, how-questions, why-questions, where-questions, when-questions, etc. Similarly, *he* 曷 also bears multiple inquiring functions. Moreover, some forms even can go across the distinction between animate and inanimate. For example, *shu* 孰 sometimes refers to a class of persons from which a selection is to be made, meaning “who” or “which person,” but sometimes it can refer to a class of objects or things from which a selection is to be made, meaning “what” or “which.” How these interrogative words are related to each other and what precise function each form plays are still questions to be explored. To deal with these issues is not in the domain of this study. The reader is referred to Ding Shengshu 丁聲樹 (1948), which is the first work and also the most influential work that makes an effort to differentiate the different forms of interrogative words in the early Classical text of the *Shijing*. According to Ding, the differences among *he* 何, *he* 曷, and *hu* 胡 in the *Shijing* are as follows: (i) *He* 何 is mostly used in the object and attributive positions to refer to things, meaning *hewu* 何物, “what thing,” or *heshi* 何事, “what matter,” similar to *shenme* 什麼, “what” in the modern Mandarin. But in some cases, it also refers to location, similar to *hechu* 何處, “what place; where;” (ii) *he* 曷 in the *Shijing* is mostly used to ask about time, in particular, referring to future time, similar to *heshi* 何時, “what time,” or *dao shenme shihou* 到甚麼時候, “up to what time;” and (iii) *hu* 胡 is mostly used to ask about reason, similar to 何故, “what reason” or *wei shenme* 為甚麼, “for what; why.”

Structurally, question words occur in the same position in a sentence as do the non-question

words that have the same grammatical function. But when the question word is the object of the sentence, it precedes the verb. Below are some examples that illustrate the basic use of these question words:

(i) The question word used in subject position:

- (9) 誰將西歸? (詩經·匪風)

shuí jiāng xī guī?

who/ will/ west/ return

“Who intends to go home to the West?” (Karlgren 1950a: 149/3)

- (10) 何貴何賤? (左傳·昭 3/3)

hé guǐ hé jiàn?

what/ costly/ what/ worthless

What is expensive and what is cheap? (ZZ, Zhao 3/3) 4. 1238

(ii) The question word used in object position:

- (11) 予何言? (尚書·皋陶謨)

yú hé yán?

I/ what/ say

“What (can) I say?” (Karlgren 1950b: 2/9)

- (12) 又誰敢怨? (左傳·成 3/4)

yòu shuí gǎn yuàn?

moreover/ who/ dare/ resent

Whom do I dare to resent? (ZZ, Cheng 3/4) 2. 813

- (13) 師何及? (左傳·隱5/8)

shī hé jí?

army/ what/ reach

Where has the army reached to? (ZZ, Yin 5/8) 1.47

(iii) The question word used in predicate position:

- (14) 吉夢維何? (詩經·斯干)

jí mèng wéi hé?

lucky/ dream/ be/ what

What are the lucky dreams?

“Which are the auspicious dreams?” (Karlgren 1950a:189/6)

- (15) 其樂如何? (詩經·隰桑)

qí lè rú hé?

qí/ pleasure/ like/ what

What is the pleasure like?

“How (great) is the joy!” (Karlgren 1950a: 228/1)

- (16) 吾其若之何? (國語·周語上 /12) 1. 33

wú qí ruòzhīhé?

I/ qí/ what to do

What can I possibly do about it? (GY, Zhouyu A/12) 1. 33

- (17) 爾居徒幾何? (詩經·巧言)

ěr jū tú jǐhé?

you/ dwell/ follower/ how many

How many are your followers?

“Your (dwelling followers=) clients, how many are they?” (Karlgren 1950a: 198/6)

(iv) The question word used attributively before a noun:

- (18) 今夕何夕? 見此良人? (詩經·綢繆)

jīn xī hé xī? jiàn cǐ liáng rén?

present/ evening/ what/ evening/, see/ this/ good/ man

“What an evening is this, that I see this fine person?” (Karlgren 1950a: 118/1)

- (19) 瞻烏爰止, 于誰之屋? (詩經·正月)

zhān wū yuán/ zhǐ, yú shí zhī wū?

look/ crow/ yuán/ stop/, yú/ who/ zhī/ house

“Look! Those crows are going to stop there; On whose house will they stop?” (Karlgren 1950a: 192/3)

(v) The question word used in adverbial position:

- (20) 何不日鼓瑟? (詩經·山有樞)

hé bù rì gǔ sè?

why/ not/ daily/ play/ lute

“Why do you not daily play your lutes?” (Karlgren 1950a: 115/3)

- (21) 時日曷喪? 予及汝皆亡! (尚書·湯誓)

shí rì hé sàng? yú jí rǔ jiē wáng

this/ sun/ when/ , I/ and / you/ all/ perish

When will the sun destroy? I and you shall all together perish!²²⁴ (SS, Tangshi)

- (22) 天曷不降威? (尚書·西伯戡黎)

tiān hé bù jiàng wéi?

Heaven/ why/ not send down/ terror

“Why does Heaven not send down its terror?” (Karlgren 1950b: 8/4)

- (23) 人而無禮, 胡不遄死? (詩經·相鼠)

rén ér wú lǐ, hú bù chuán sǐ?

person/ ér/ not have/ decorum/, why/ not/ quickly/ die

“A man without decorum, why does he not quickly die?” (Karlgren 1950a: 50/3)

- (24) 余安能知之? (國語·周語中 2)

yú ān néng zhī zhī?

I/ how/ can/ know/ zhī

How can I know that? (GY, Zhouyu B/ 2) 1.54

7.2.2. Functional considerations

In terms of discourse functions, questions in early Classical Chinese may be classified into four major categories:

- (i) Information-seeking questions, referring to the interrogative sentences by which a speaker requests information;
- (ii) Inferential questions, referring to the interrogative sentences by which a speaker makes inference and solicits confirmation;
- (iii) Rhetorical questions, referring to the interrogative sentences by which a speaker expresses strong assertion; and
- (iv) Imperative questions, referring to the interrogative sentences by which a speaker gives a

²²⁴ Karlgren's interpretation of this sentence is different. He does not take the sentence with *he* 曷 as a question. Below is his translation:

“That one (sc. Kie) daily injures and destroys, I and you shall all together perish.” (Karlgren 1950b: 5/3)
It is unclear why Karlgren does not take *he* here as a question word. The common understanding of this sentence is that it is a question; see Yang Shuda (1927 [1966: 114]); Ding Shengshu (1948:358); Qu Wanli (1973: 50), among others.

command, request, or suggestion.

In what follows, we will investigate how the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is used in these four types of questions.

7.3. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in information-seeking questions

In this section, we intend to show that in early Classical Chinese, to ask a question involves making an assumption about the information source of the addressee and of the speaker himself. If what is asked is assumed to be the information of which the addressee and the speaker have no direct perception or insufficient knowledge, the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is used. But, if what is asked is assumed to be the information of which the addressee and the speaker have direct perception or sufficient knowledge, then the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is not used.

7.3.1. Information-seeking yes-no questions with *qi*

The particle *qi* is often used in information-seeking questions. *Qi* is usually associated with questions of which neither the speaker nor the addressee have any direct perception. For example, in each of the following examples (25)-(29), the speaker asks about a possible situation relating to a third person, about which both the speaker and the addressee have no direct information, and we see that *qi* is used there:

- (25) 王曰：“諸侯其來乎？”(子產)對曰：“必來。”(左傳·昭 4/1)

Wáng yuē: “zhūhóu qí lái hū?” duì yuē: “bì lái.”

king/ say/ feudal lords/ qí/ come/ hū/, reply/ say/, certainly/ come

The king asked: “Will the feudal lords possibly come?” (Zi Chan) replied: “They will certainly come.” (ZZ, Zhao 4/1) 4.1248

- (26) (楚王)曰：“今吾使人於周，求鼎以為分，王其與我乎？”對曰：“與君王哉！”(左傳·昭 12/ 11)

(Chǔ wáng) yuē: “jīn wú shǐ rén yú Zhōu, qiú dǐng yǐ wéi fēn, wáng qí yǔ wǒ hū?” duì yuē: “yǔ jūn wáng zāi!”

Chu/ king/ say/, present/ I / send/ person/ yú/ Zhou/, ask for/ tripod; caldron/ thereby/
make/ divide; share/, king/ qí/ give/ I/ hū/, reply/ say/, give/ your lordship/ zāi

The king of Chu said: "Now if I send a messenger to Zhou, and ask for the tripods as our share, will the king of (Zhou) possibly give them to me?" (Zi Ge) replied: "Sure, they will!" (ZZ, Zhao 12/11) 4.1339

- (27) 王曰：“諸侯其畏我乎？”對曰：“畏君王哉！”（左傳·昭 12/11）

Wáng yuē: “Zhūhóu qí wèi wǒ hū?” duì yuē: “Wèi jūnwáng zāi!”

king/ say/ feudal lords/ qí/ afraid/ me/ hū, reply/ say/, afraid/ Your Majesty/ zāi

The king (of Chu) asked: "Is it possible that the feudal lords are afraid of me?" (Zi Ge) replied: "They are afraid of Your Majesty!" (ZZ, Zhao 12/11) 4.1340

- (28) 公謂公孫枝曰：“夷吾其定乎？”對曰：“...難哉！”（左傳·僖 9/6）

Gōng wèi Gongsun Zhī yuē: “Yí Wú qí dīng hū?” duì yuē: “...Nán zāi!”

Duke/ say/ Gongsun Zhi/ say/, Yi Wu/ qí/ control/ hū/, reply/ say/ difficult/ zāi

The duke of Qin said to Gongsun Zhi: "Will Yiwu possibly be able to control the State?" Gongsun Zhi replied: "...It is difficult (for him to do so)." (ZZ, Xi 9/6) 1.331

- (29) 文王問於胥臣曰：“吾欲使陽處父傳讜也而教誨之，其能善之乎？”對曰：“是在讜也。”（國語·晉語四/24）

Wén wáng wèn yú Xū Chén yuē: “wú yù shǐ Yáng Chufu fù Huān yě ér jiàohuǐ zhī, qí néng shàn zhī hū?” duì yuē: “shìp zài Huān yě.”

Wen/ king/ ask/ yú/ Xu Chen/ say/, I/ want/ make/ Yang Chufu/ teacher/ Huan/ yě/ ér/
teach/ zhī/, qí/ be capable of/ zhī/ hū/, reply/ say/, this/ at/ Huan/ yě

King Wen asked Xu Chen, saying: "I want to make Yang Chufu be (my son) Huan's teacher, and let him teach Huan. Can (he) be competent at that?" (Xu Chen) answered:

"This depends on Huan." (GY, Jinyu 4/24) 2.386

In each of the following questions, the speaker asks about a possible situation relating to himself, as to which neither the addressee nor the speaker have any direct access to the information being asked, and we see that *qí* is used there. All these questions share two common features: First, they are information-seeking yes-no questions that contain *qí*, and second, the information inquired about refers to the events or states of which neither the speaker nor the addressee have any direct perception. It seems that in these conversations, the speaker is simply setting the stage for the

addressee to make an inference, assessment, or prediction about the relevant matter expressed in the question. Interestingly, in each of the conversations, the relation between the speaker (the questioner) and the addressee (the responder) is that of advisee (the questioner) and adviser (the responder). In each of these conversations, the speaker (the questioner) is either a prince or a ruler, and the addressee (the responder) is trusted person such as a senior, experienced, or great and wise officer. The questions asked in each of the contexts mostly have to do with the speaker's political future, which the speaker has serious concerns about. The purpose for the speaker to initiate the conversation is to solicit opinions, seek counsel, or ask for advice; he is not simply seeking information to fill an information gap.

- (30) 里克曰：“中立，其免乎？”優施曰：“免。”（國語·晉語二/1）

Lǐ Kè yuē: :zhōng lì, qí miǎn hū? Yōu Shī yuē: “miǎn.”

Li Ke/ say/, middle/ stay/, qí/ avoid/ hū/, You Shi/ say/ avoid

Li Ke said: “(If I) stay in middle, will I possibly escape (the disaster)?”

You Shi said: “It is possible to escape.” (GY, Jinyu 2/1) 1.287

- (31) 大子曰：“吾其廢乎？”（里克）對曰：“...何故廢乎？”（左傳·閔 2/7）

tàizi yuē: “wú qí fèi hū?” duì yuē: “...hé gù fèi hū?”

prince/ say/ I / qí/ disown/ hū/, reply/ say/ what/ reason/ disown/ hū

The prince (i.e., Prince Shen Sheng) asked: “Am I perhaps about to be disowned (from the succession)?” (Li Ke) replied: “...For what reason should you be disowned?” (ZZ,

Mín 2/7) 1.269

- (32) （晉侯）問於卜偃曰：“吾其濟乎？”對曰：“克之。”（左傳·僖 5/7）

(Jīn hóu) wèn yú Bǔ Yàn yuē: “wú qí jǐ hū?” duì yuē: “kè zhī.”

Jin/ marquis/ ask/ yú/ Buyan/ say/, I/ qí/ successful/ hū/, reply/ say/, be capable/ zhī

(The marquis of Jin) asked Bu Yan: “Would I perhaps be successful?” Bu Yan responded:

“You can make it.” (ZZ, Xi 5/7) 1.310

- (33) （王曰）：“吾欲與子謀之，其可乎？”對曰：“未可也。”（國語·越語下/2）

wáng yuē: “wú yù yǔ zǐ móu zhī, qí kě hū?” duì yuē: “wèi kě yě.”

king/ say/, I/ want/ with/ you/ plan/ zhī/, qí/ be possible/ hū/, reply/ say/, not/ possible/ yě

The King (of Yue) said: “I want to plan it (i.e., how to attack Wu) with you, is it perhaps feasible?” (Fan Li) replied: “It is not ready yet.” (GY, Yueyu B/2) 2. 648

It is not surprising that *qi* is present in these questions, because they all ask about information for which the addressee has no direct evidence to provide an answer; the answer to the question can only come from the addressee's inference or assessment. Therefore, no matter what answer is given, it should be regarded as an uncertain outcome.

7.3.2. Information-seeking yes-no questions without *qi*

Information-seeking questions usually do not use *qi* when the speaker assumes that the addressee has firsthand knowledge of or direct access to information regarding the event or situation asked. For example, in each of the following examples, the question is not marked with the uncertain outcome marker *qi*. All these question-answer contexts share one thing in common: the speaker knows or assumes that addressee has direct access to the information asked. Different from the *qi*-marked question discussed previously, in these examples, the questioner and responder were simply exchanging information, not setting the stage for making an inference or conjecture.

- (34) 公笑曰：“子近市，識貴賤乎？”(晏子) 對曰：“既利之，敢不識乎？”(左傳·昭 3/3)

gōng xiào yuē: “zǐ jìn shì, shí guǐ jiàn hū?” (Yàn Zǐ) duì yuē: “jǐ lì zhī, gǎn bù shí hū?”
duke/ laugh/ say/, you/ near/ market/, know/ expensive/ cheap/ hū/, Yan Zi/ reply/ say/,
since/ advantage/ zhī/, dare/ not/ know/ hū

Duke (Jing) laughed and asked (Yan Zi): “You are (living) near the market, do you know what things are dear and what things are cheap (Lit. Do you know the dear and cheap of things)?” (Yan Zi) replied: “Since it is to my advantage to live close to the market, should I dare not to know that?” (ZZ, Zhao 3/3) 4.1238

- (33) 子西使人召王孫勝，沈諸良聞之，見子西曰：“聞子召王孫勝，信乎？”曰：“然。”(國語·楚語下/9)

Zǐ Xī shǐ rén zhāo Wáng Sūnshèng, Shěn Zhūliáng wén zhī, jiàn Zǐ Xī yuē: “wén zǐ zhāo Wáng Sunshèng, Xìn hū?”

Zi Xi/ send/ person/ call; summon/ Wang Sunsheng/, Shen Zhuliang/ hear/ zhī/, see/ Zi Xi/
say/, hear/ you/ call Wang Sunsheng/, true/ hū/, say/ be so.

Zi Xi sent someone to summon Wang Sunsheng (to the court). Shen Zhuliang heard about it, and went to Zi Xi, saying: “I heard that you summoned Wang Sunsheng; was that true?” Zi Xi replied: “It was so.” (GY, Chuyu B/9) 2.583

- (34) 夜半, (里克)召優施, 曰: “曩而言戲乎? 抑有所聞乎?” (國語·晉語二/1)

yè bàn, (Lǐ Kè) zhāo Yōu Shī, yuē: “náng ér yán xǐ hū? yǐ yǒu suǒ wén hū?”

night/ half/, Li Ke/ call/ You Shi/, say/, previously/ you/ word/ fun/ hū/, or/ have/ suǒ/
hear/ hū

In the middle of the night, Li Ke called You Shi to his place, asking: “Is what you said earlier is just something for fun, or is something that you have heard?” (GY, Jinyu 2/1) 1.287

- (35) 齊侯見使者曰: “魯國恐乎?” 對曰: “小人恐矣, 君子則否。” (國語·魯語上/6)

Qí hóu jiàn shǐzhě yuē: “Lǔ guó kǒng hū?” duì yuē: “xiǎorén kǒng yǐ, jūnzǐ ze fǒu.”

Qi/ marquis/ see/ envoy/ say/, Lu/ State/ fear/ hū/, reply/ say/, small/ man/ fear/ yǐ/,
gentleman/ then/ not so

The marquis of Qi saw the envoy (of Lu) and said: “Is Lu scared?” (The envoy) replied: “A small/mean man is scared, but a gentleman is not so.” (GY, Luyu A/6) 1.160

- (36) 呂甥逆君於秦, 穆公訊之曰: “晉國和乎?” 對曰: “不和。” (國語·晉語三/7)

Lǚ Shēng nǐ jūn yú qín, Mù gōng xùn zhī yuē: “Jìn guó hé hū?” duì yuē: “bù máng.”

Lü Sheng/ meet/ ruler/ yú/ Qin, Mu/ duke/ ask/ zhī/ say/, Jin/ State/ peace/ hū/, reply/
say/, not/ peace

Lü Sheng went to Qin to welcome the ruler of Jin (duke Hui) back to Jin. Duke Mu of Qin asked him: “Is Jin at peace?” Lü Shen replied: “It is not at peace.” (GY, Jinyu 3/7) 1.331

One more point should be mentioned: the absence of *qi* not only has to do with the assumption that the addressee has witnessed the relevant event, but in addition, *qi* will be omitted if the speaker inquires about the addressee's personal information. In question (37) below, the speaker is asking about the addressee's ability to pursue a task. *Qi* is not used here, even though an answer to this question must come from the addressee's subjective assessment about himself.

- (37) (楚王)曰: “子能乎?” (子革)對曰: “能。” (左傳·昭12/11)

Chǔ wáng yuē: “zǐ néng hū?” (Zǐ Gé) duì yuē: “néng.”

Chu/ king/ say/, you/ be capable/ hū/, Zi Ge/ reply/ say/, be capable

(The king of Chu) said: “Can you (do it)?” (Zi Ge) replied: “(I) can.”

(ZZ, Zhao 12/11) 4. 1341

We assume the absence of *qi* in this type of question can be explained as follows. That is, when asking a question, a speaker is more concerned with whether or not he will get firsthand information; as long as the answer is from a firsthand source, then it is reliable, and there is no need to use *qi*. Clearly, the question in (37) is about the addressee's personal information, which the speaker assumes that the addressee certainly has firsthand information to answer it, thus the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is not used.

Along similar lines, if the question is about the addressee's future plan of which the speaker assumes that the addressee will have firsthand information to answer, it is also not marked by *qi*, as in (38). Clearly, what is inquired about here is a future event. However, the uncertainty marker *qi* is not used.

- (38) 文子使王孫齊私於臯如曰：“子將大滅衛乎？抑納君而已乎？”臯如曰：“寡君之命無他，納衛君而已。”（左傳·哀 26/1）

Wén Zǐ shǐ Wángsun Qì sī yú Gāo Rú yuē: “zǐ jiāng dà miè Wèi hū? yǐ nà jūn ér yǐ hū?”

Gāo Rú yuē: “guǎjūn zhī mǐng wú tā, nà Wèi jūn ér yǐ.”

Wen Zi/ send/ Wangsun Qi/ private/ yú/ Gao Ru/ say/, you/ be going to/ utterly/
extinguish/ Wei/ hū/, or/ receive somebody back/ ruler/ ér/ stop/ hū/, Gao Ru/ say/,
our ruler/ zhī/ order/ not have/ other/, receive somebody back/ Wei/ ruler/ ér/ stop.

Wen Zi sent Wangsun Qi privately to ask Gao Ru: “Are you going to utterly extinguish Wei, or simply to want us to receive back (i.e., restore) the marquis?” Gao Ru said: “Our ruler's command is simply to restore the ruler of Wei.” (ZZ, Ai 26/1) 4. 1728

We consider that the relevant factor is that the speaker believed that the addressee had firsthand information about the matter in question, because what was queried here was the addressee's future plan. A person would certainly know of his own plans (as long as the plans had in fact been made), though he might be not sure whether the plan could be carried out. The addressee was assumed by the questioner as having “directly acquired” information about the event and thus would be able to provide an informed or reliable answer to the question. Therefore, the question was cast without the uncertainty marker *qi*. This example shows that questions without *qi* imply that the speaker (questioner) believed that the addressee was knowledgeable enough to answer to question; it does not matter whether or not the addressee had in fact

witnessed the event.

Similarly, if the question is about information related to the addressee's personal experience (which is open ended in time), it is also not marked with *qi*, as in (39):

- (39) 楚王聞群公子之死也，自投於車下曰：“人之愛其子也，亦如余乎？”侍者曰：“甚焉。”
(左傳·昭 13/2)

Chǔ wáng wén qún gōngzǐ zhī sǐ yě, zì tóu yú chē xià yuē: “rén zhī ài qí zǐ yě, yì rú yú hū?” shìzhě yuē: “shèn yān.”

Chu/ king/ hear/ a multitude/ prince/ zhī/ die/ yě, self/ throw/ yú/ chariot/ down/ say/,
people/ zhī/ love/ qí / son/ yě, also/ like/ I/ hū/, waiter/ say/, more than/ yān²²⁵

When the king of Chu heard of the death of his sons, he threw himself down under his chariot, saying, “Do other men love their son as much as I did mine?” One of his attendants said: “They love them more.” (ZZ, Zhao 13/2) 4.1346

So far, we have demonstrated that the use or omission of *qi* in a question has to do with the speaker's assumption of the *addressee's* information source or knowledge status regarding the question being asked. However, sometimes the use or omission of *qi* in a question also has to do with the *speaker's* own knowledge status regarding the information asked and his confidence about whether or not he can get a desired answer. Compare the examples in (40) and (41):

- (40) 公謂公冶曰：“吾可以入乎？”對曰：“君實有國，誰敢違君！”（左傳·襄 29/4）

Gōng wèi Gōng Yě yuē: “wú kěyǐ rù hū?” duì yuē: “Jūn shí yǒu guó, shuí gǎn wéi jūn!”
duke/ tell/ Gong Ye/ say/, I/ can; be possible/ enter/ hū/, reply/ say/, your lordship/ shí/
have/ State/, who/ dare/ resist/ your lordship

Duke Xiang asked Gong Ye: “Can I enter (the State)?” (Gong Ye) replied: “You are the one who owns the State; who dares to resist you?” (ZZ, 29/4) 3. 1156

- (41) 衛出公自城鉏使以弓問子贛，且曰：“吾其入乎？”子贛稽首受弓，對曰：“臣不識也。”
(左傳·哀 26/3) 4.1731

Wèi Chū gōng zì Chéngchú shǐ yǐ gōng wèn Zǐ Gàn, qiě yuē: “wú qí rù hū?” Zǐ Gàn jī shǒu shòu gōng, duì yuē: “chén bù shí yě.”

Wei/ Chu/ duke/ from/ Chengchu/ send/ with/ bow/ ask/ Zi Gan, moreover/ say/, I/ qí/
enter/ hū/, Zi Gan/ bow/ head/ receive/ bow/, reply/ say/, servant/ not/ know/ yě

²²⁵ Note that *qi* in this example is a genitive/possessive marker.

Duke Chu of Wei sent a messenger with a bow from Chengchu (as a gift to) Zi Gan to ask: "Could I possibly enter (the State)?" Zi Gan bowed his head to the ground, received the bow, and replied: "I do not know." (ZZ, Ai 26/3) 4.1731

These two examples have three similarities. First, in both cases, the questioner's social status is similar, namely, both are the rulers of a State: the one in example (40) is duke Xiang of Lu, and in example (41) it is duke Chu of Wei. Second, the responder's status is similar: both are great officers in their States. In (40), the responder is Gong Ye, and in (41) it is Zi Gan. Third, the information asked is similar: both are questions about the possibility of entering the State (i.e., both questioners have trouble getting back to their own States). However, the questions in two examples are marked differently. The first question does not contain *qi*, instead, the possibility is lexically expressed by the auxiliary *keyi* 可以, "to be possible"; the second question, however, does contain *qi*.

This grammatical difference is explained by the difference in discourse context. Examining the background information, we find that the reasons that the questioners have trouble getting back to their States are quite different, and the questioners are of different political status. The questioner of the first example, duke Xiang of Lu was in power as a ruler. When he went to the State of Chu for a diplomatic visit, a small disturbance happened in the place Bian 𠂔 in his State. On his way home, duke Xiang got a message from Gong Ye, who was sent by the rebel leader of Ji Wuzi 季武子, that the place Bian 𠂔 has been claimed. After hearing this, duke Xiang asked Gong Ye whether he could enter the State, and Gong Ye replied: "You are the one who owns the State; who dares to resist you?"

The reason for which duke Chu of the Wei State could not enter his State is quite different. Duke Chu was exiled from Wei at the time, because he had reigned tyrannically in the State. But after a period of exile, he wanted to return to Wei. He sent a messenger to ask Wei's experienced great officer Zi Gan whether it would be possible for him to get back into the State. The question was cast with the uncertainty marker *qi* as *wu qi ru hu* 吾其入乎, "Could I possibly enter (the State)?" To this, Zi Gan simply answered: "I don't know." But from the context, we know that Zi Gan told others that duke Wei was not able to enter the State, because he had neither outside nor inside supporters.

From the contexts in which these two questions occur, we see the fact that they were cast in different ways has to do with the *speaker's self-assessment*. The question without *qi* reflects that the speaker had a rather high level of certainty and confidence in getting a desired answer. In contrast, the question with *qi* reflects that the speaker had a rather low level of certainty and confidence in getting a desired answer.

However, just as in declarative sentences, the presence or absence of *qi* in a question can be pragmatically motivated. Sometimes even questions regarding which the addressee did have firsthand information were also marked with *qi*, for pragmatic purposes. The question in (42) is asking about the addressee's feeling towards the speaker. The question in (43) is about the addressee's future plans. Each of the addressees certainly has firsthand information regarding the question, but the question is still marked with *qi*.

- (42) 王送知罃，曰：“子其怨我乎？”對曰：“...臣實不才，又誰敢怨？”（左傳·成3/4）

wáng sòng Zhī Yíng, yuē: “zǐ qí yuàn wǒ hū?” duì yuē: “...chén shí bù cái, yòu shuí gǎn yuàn?”

king/ escort somebody off/ Zhi Ying/, say/, you/ qí/ resent/ me/ hū/, reply/ say/, I/ shí/ not/ talented/, and/ who/ dare/ resent

The king escorted Zhi Ying off, saying: “Do you feel resentment against me?” (Zhi Ying) replied: “...It is me who is lacking in ability, and against whom should I feel resentment?”

(ZZ, Cheng 3/4) 2.813

- (43) 王曰：“令尹之不能，爾所知也。國將討焉，爾其居乎？”對曰：“父戮子居，君焉用之？”（左傳·襄 22/6）3.1069

wáng yuē: “lǐngyǐn zhī bù néng, ěr suǒ zhī yě. guó jiāng tǎo yān, ěr qí jū hū?” duì yuē: “fù lù zǐ jū, jūn yān yòng zhī?”

king/ say/, prime minister/ zhī/ not/ be capable/, you/ suǒ/ know/ yě/, State/ be about to/ punish/ yān/, you/ qí/ stay/ hū/, reply/ say/, father/ kill/ son/ stay/, your lordship/ how/ use/ zhī

The king said: “The inefficiency of the chief minister is what you have known. The State is going to punish him. Will you, (as his son) still stay here (to abide in your office after that)?” (Qi Ji) replied: “If (my) father is put to death and I, his son stay (to abide in my office), how can your lordship still employ me?” (ZZ, Xiang 22/6) 3.1069

Our explanation for this is that *qi* might have been used for some pragmatic purpose. From the contexts in which these two examples are cited, we know that their settings are similar. That is, in both cases, the speaker has done something bad or harmful to the addressee. The speaker of the first question is a king of Chu who had kept the addressee as a hostage for some time; this question was asked when the king decided to set the addressee free. The speaker of the second question is also a king of Chu and he decided to kill the chief minister of Chu, who was the responder's father; the question was asked before the king of Chu killed the responder's father. We believe that the use of *qi* in these two questions implies that the speaker feels somehow guilty and worried about the addressee, signalling that the addressee's feeling or situation is a matter of concern for the speaker. The use of *qi* seems to show politeness and implies the intention to mend the relation between the speaker and the addressee.

7.3.3. Information-seeking content questions with *qi*

Asking a content question also involves making an assumption of the addressee's and the speaker's information status about the matter in question. The semantic distinction between using *qi* and not using *qi* found in yes-no question also exists in content questions. Based on the data from the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, we find that if the speaker of a question presupposes that the addressee does not have any direct perception of the situation being asked about, the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is used, as in (44). Here the speaker asked about the destiny or fate of the great officers in Jin, namely, who would be the first to perish. The presence of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* is expected, because questions like this are more like a guessing game or fortune-telling, for which no guaranteed answer can be offered (and in fact this implication is formally indicated by the presence of *qi* in the addressee's answer that is expressed in a question form).

- (44) 秦伯問於士鞅曰：“晉大夫其誰先亡？”對曰：“其欒氏乎？”（左傳·襄 14/3）

Qín bó wèn yú Shì Yāng yuē: “Jīn dàfū qí shuí xiān wáng?” duì yuē: “qí Lán shì hū?”

Qin/ earl/ ask/ yú/ Shi Yang/ say/, Jin/ great officer/ qí/ who/ first/ perish/, reply/ say/, qí/
the Luan/ family/ hū ²²⁶

²²⁶ According to Schuessler (1987: 557), *shi* 氏, “a family, a clan,” is used as an honorific after place names, kinship terms, or feudal and official titles: Mr., Mrs., Lord, Lady.

The earl of Qin asked Shi Yang, saying: "Which of the great officers of Jin would first go to ruin?" (Shi Yang) answered: "It is surely the Luan, isn't it?" (ZZ, Xiang 14/3) 3.1010
Below is a similar example. In this conversation, the speaker asks for the addressee's assessment of the future of the Guo State. This is certainly the kind of information of which the speaker knows that the addressee has no direct evidence. The speaker might ask the question because he assumes that the addressee knows more about the situation. Similar to example (44), this question-answer conversation is also like a guessing game. Thus the use of *qi* in the question is not surprising.

- (45) 王曰：“虢其幾何？”對曰：“...若由是觀之，不過五年。”（國語·周語上/12）

wáng yuē: “Guó qí jǐ hé?” duì yuē: “...ruò yóu shì guān zhī, bù guò wǔ nián.”

king/ say/, Guo/ qí/ how long/, reply/ say/, if/ from/ this/ see/ zhī/, not/ exceed/ five/ year

The king asked: “How long can the Guo State possibly (last)?” (Guo) answered: “... If judging from this (situation), it will not exist more than five years.”

(GY, Zhouyu A/12) 1. 33

The following content question occurs in a similar discourse context, in which the Chu military commander Zi Fan asked for the experienced great officer Shen Shushi's estimation about the possible result of the war to which he was sent.

- (46) 子反入見申叔時，曰：“師其何如？”對曰：“...子其勉之！吾不復見子矣。”（左傳·成 16/5）

Zi Fǎn rù jiàn Shēn Shūshí, yuē: “shī qí hé rú?” duì yuē: “...zǐ qí miǎn zhī! wú bù fù jiàn zǐ yǐ.”

Zi Fan/ enter/ see/ Shen Shushi/ say/, army/ qí/ what/ be like/, reply/ you/ qí/ strive/ zhī/, I/ not/ again/ see/ you/ yǐ

Zi Fan, entering to see Shen Shushi, asked: “What will the army possibly be like (i.e., what do you think of the war)?” Shen Shushi answered: “You should do your utmost, but I shall not see you again.” (ZZ, Cheng 16/5) 2.880

Similarly, the basic function of *qi* as an uncertain outcome marker can also be manipulated by a speaker for purposes of expression when asking a content question. Below we give two examples to illustrate the interactive function of *qi*. Sometimes when the speaker is asking the addressee

about his own actions, of which the addressee has firsthand information, the uncertainty marker *qi* can still be used. But in this case, the use of *qi* does not imply a presupposition that the addressee is not clear about the situation. Instead it implies a concern or worry about that the addressee's situation.

- (47) 趙孟曰：“吾子其曷歸？”對曰：“鍼懼選於寡君，是以在此，將待嗣君。”（左傳·昭1/8）

Zhào Mèng yuē: “wú zǐ qí hé guī?” duì yuē: “Zhēn jù xuǎn yú guǎjūn, shì yǐ zài cǐ, jiāng dài sǐ jūn.

Zhao Meng/ say/, you; sir/ qí/ when/ return/, reply/ say/, Zhen/ afraid of/ select/ yú/ our ruler/, therefore/ at/ here/, will/ wait for/ succeeding/ ruler

Zhao Meng asked: “When will you probably return (to your State)?” (Zhen) replied: “I am afraid to be selected by our ruler (as one to be exiled). That is why I stay here. I will wait for the succeeding ruler.” (ZZ, Zhao 1/8) 4. 1215

This example refers to Hou Zi 后子 (i.e., Zhen here), one of the princes from the State of Qin 秦, who fled to the Jin 晉 State because of the fear of being sent into exile by his brother, the present king of Qin. Here, the use of *qi* in the question does not imply that speaker Zhao Meng, the marquis of Jin, assumes that the addressee may not be clear about his own future plan, but implies that the speaker is concerned about the addressee's uncertain situation.

Sometimes *qi* is used in a question to represent that the speaker is in a crisis and has no idea for resolving the situation. In this case, the use of *qi* does not assume that the addressee is not clear about the situation. Rather, it implied that the speaker has a strong expectation for the addressee to help him out of the trouble. For example, in (48), the speaker, duke Xian, being very sick, is entrusting his son to his addressee Xun Xi, the prince's teacher. The use of *qi* in his question implies that the speaker has no certainty at all regarding the ongoing situation and seeks for help from the addressee.

- (48) 初，獻公使荀息傅奚齊。公疾，召之，曰：“以是藐諸孤辱在大夫，其若之何？”（左傳·僖 9/4）

chū, Xiàn Gōng shǐ Xún Xī fù Xī Qí. qōng jí, zhāo zhī, yuē: “yǐ shǐ miǎo zhū gū rǔ zài dàfū, qí ruòzhīhé?”

First/, Xian/ duke/ make/ Xun Xi/ be teacher/ Xi Qi/, duke/ sick/, call/ zhī/, say/, with/

this/ small/ zhū/ alone; orphan/ shame/ at/ dignitary/, qí/ do/ what to do about it²²⁷

In the beginning (i.e., in the early time), duke Xian asked Xun Xi to be a teacher for (his son) Xi Qi. When the duke was sick, (he) summoned him (i.e. Xun Xi), and said: “I will have to leave this small orphan with you to make you feel shameful, what would you be going to do with him?” (ZZ, Xi 9/4) 1. 328

7.3.4. Information-seeking content questions without *qi*

Parallel to the yes-no questions without *qi*, the content questions without *qi* are also usually used to ask about situations of which the speaker assumes the addressee has either direct evidence or firsthand information. In examples (49) and (50), what is asked is the information of which the addressee has direct evidence, thus the questions do not contain *qi*.

- (49) 公笑曰:“子進市, 識貴賤乎?” 對曰:“既利之, 敢不識乎?” 公曰:“何貴何賤?”...對曰:“踊貴, 履賤。”(左傳·昭 3/3).

gōng xiào yuē: “zǐ jìn shì, shí guǐ hū?” duì yuē: “jì lì zhī, gǎn bù shí hū?” gōng yuē: “hé guǐ hé jiàn?”...duì yuē: “yǒng guǐ lǚ jiàn.”

duke/ laugh/ say/, you/ near/ market, know/ expensive/ cheap/ hū/, Yan Zi/ reply/ say/, since/ advantage/ zhī/, dare/ not/ know/ hū/, duke/ say/ what/ dear/ what cheap/, reply/ say/ shoes for toeless people/ dear/ shoes/ cheap²²⁸

Duke (Jing) laughed and asked (Yan Zi): “You are (living) near the market, do you know the dear and cheap of things?” (Yan Zi) replied: “Since it is to my advantage to live close to the market, should I dare not to know that?” Duke Jing asked: “What is expensive and what is cheap?” ... (Yan Zi) replied: “The shoes for toeless people are dear and the shoes for ordinary people are cheap.” (ZZ, Zhao 3/3)4. 1238

²²⁷ Several points need to be mentioned about this example. First, the word *zhu* 諸, which is usually used as a contraction of *zhi hu* 之乎 in the end of a sentence, here, according to Yang Bojun (1981: v. 1. 328), should be read as *zhe* 者, and in this example, it functions similarly as the genitive marker *de* 的 in modern Chinese. We assume that the reason for *zhu* (or read as *zhe*) to be used as a genitive marker is that *zhu* is phonologically close to the genitive marker *zhi*. Second, *ru* 辱, “to disgrace, to dishonor, to bring shame on somebody,” is a word used in modest speech, expressing humility and politeness. It is often seen in the context in which one is making a request for somebody to do something

²²⁸ The word *yong* 踊, originally meaning “to leap, to jump,” is also used to refer the punishment in which one’s toes were cut off. In this example, it refers to the shoes for the toeless people. This is a well-known story about the cruelty of Duke Jing of Qi, who had many people’s toes cut off as a punishment. In the conversation, Yan Zi ironically answers Duke Jing’s question, telling him that there was such a demand for the *yong*-shoes in the market.

- (50) 晉侯觀於軍府，見鍾儀。問之曰：“南冠而縶者，誰也？”有司對曰：“鄭人所獻楚囚也。”
(左傳·成 9/9)

Jīn hóu guān yú jūn fǔ, jiàng Zhōng Yí. wèn zhī yuē: “nán guān ér zhì zhě, shuí yě?” yǒu sī duì yuē: “Zhèng rén suǒ xiàn Chǔ qiú yě.”

Jin/ marquis/ watch/ yú/ military/ arsenal/, see/ Zhong Yi/, ask/ zhī/ say/, south/ hat/ ér/ tie up/ zhě/, who/ yě/, administer; person in charge/ reply/ say/, Zheng/ people/ suǒ/ present/ Chu/ prisoner/ yě

The Marquis of Jin inspected the military arsenal, and saw Zhong Yi there. (He) asked about him: “Who is the one that wears a Southerner’s hat and is tied up with ropes?”

The person in charge answered: “He is the Chu prisoner that is brought by the Zheng people.” (ZZ, Cheng 9/9) 2. 844

In each case of the following content questions, the speaker asks a question that is about the information of the addressee’s own action or situation, and *qi* is not used:

- (51) 將戰，吳子呼叔孫，曰：“而事何也？”對曰：“從司馬。”(左傳·哀 11/3)

jiāng zhàn, Wú Zǐ hū Shu Sūn, yuē: “ěr shì hé yě?” duì yuē: “cóng sīmá.”

be about/ battle/, Wu Zi/ call/ Shu Sun/, say/, you/ take charge of/ what/ yě/, reply/ say/, follow/ the *sima*-position²²⁹

The battle was about to start; Wu Zi called upon Shu Sun and asked: “What are you in charge of?” Shu Sun replied: “I am in the position of *sima*.”²³⁰ (ZZ, Ai 11/3) 4.1663

- (52) 魏子曰：“吾子置食之間三嘆，何也？”(左傳·昭 28/4)

Wèi Zǐ yuē: “wú zǐ zhǐ shí zhī jiān sān tàn, hé yě?”

Wei Zi/ say/, you; sir/ arrange/ food/ zhī/ moment/ three/ sigh/, what/ yě

Wei Zhi asked: “You have sighed three times during the moment when the food is served, what is the reason?” (ZZ, Zhao 28/4) 4.1497

Sometimes, the absence of *qi* in a content question is not motivated by the presupposition that the addressee has direct perception of the information. Instead it could be omitted because the speaker wants to identify an object, as in (53) or to clarify a situation, as in (54) and (55). It is reasonable to assume that, in examples (53)-(55), the speaker has the assumption that the

²²⁹ *Sima* 司馬 is an official in charge of the royal household.

²³⁰ Derek D. Herforth (personal communication by letter) suggests that the sentence 而事何也 can be more literally translated as: “What is your (official) service?”

addressee's knows better than he does regarding the matter in question, otherwise he/she would not try to clarify the matter with the addressee. In such context, the use of *qi* is not compatible with the assumption. Thus *qi* is not present.

- (53) 秋七月壬午朔，日有食之。公問於梓慎曰：“是何物也？禍福何為？”（左傳·昭21/5）
 qiū qī yuè rénwǔ shuò, rì yǒu shí zhī. gōng wèn yú Zǐ Shèn yuē: “shìp hé wù yě? huò fú hé wéi?”

autumn/ seven/ month/ *renwu* day/ the first day, sun/ have/ eclipse/ *zhī*, duke/ ask/ *yú*/ Zi Shen/ say/, this/ what/ object/ *yě*/, misfortune/ fortune/ what/ be

In the autumn, the first day of the seventh month, the *renwu* day, there was a solar eclipse (Lit. The sun had an eclipse). Duke (Zhao) asked Zi Shen: “What is that thing? What kind of misfortune or fortune does it mean?” (ZZ, Zhao 21/5) 4. 1427

- (54) 獻公卜伐驪戎，史蘇占之，曰：“勝而不吉。”公曰：“何謂也？”（國語·晉語一/2）
 Xiàn gōng bǔ fá Lǐ Róng, Shǐ Sū zhān zhī, yuē: “shèng ér bù jí.” gōng yuē: “hé wèi yě?”
 Xian/ duke/ divine/ attack/ Li Rong/, Shi Su/ prognosticate/ *zhī*/, say/ win/ *ér*/ not/ auspicious/, duke/ say/, what/ say/ *yě*

Duke Xian divined about the attack of Li Rong, Shi Su prognosticated it and said: “You will win the war, but it is not an auspicious thing.” Duke Xian asked: “What does that mean?” (GY, Jinyu 1/2) 1. 253

- (55) 雍姬知之，謂其母曰：“父與夫孰親？”其母曰：“人盡可夫也，父一而已，胡可比？”（左傳·桓 15/2）

Yōng Jī zhī zhī, wèi qí mǔ yuē: “fù yǔ fū shú qīn?” qí mǔ yuē: “rén jìn kě fū yě, fù yī ér yǐ, hú kě bǐ?”

Yong Ji/ know/ *zhī*/, say/ *qí*/ mother/ say/, father/ and husband/ who/ affectionate/, *qí*/ mother/ say/ man/ all/ can/ husband/ *ye3*/, father/ one/ only/, how/ can/ compare

Yong Ji knew that; she told her mother and asked: “Father and husband, who is more affectionate to me?” Her mother said: “Every man can be (chosen to be) your husband, but only one man can be your father; how can they be compared?” (ZZ, Huan 15/2)

1.143

7.3.5. Summary

In summary, in this section we have shown that the various uses of the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in information-seeking questions appear to be determined by the following aspects: (i) the speaker's presupposition of his addressee's information source and knowledge state about the question asked; (ii) the speaker's state of knowledge at the time when the question is asked; and (iii) the speaker's purposes for asking the question. Normally, asking a question indicates that one wants to fill an information gap. One asks a question if one assumes that the person being asked can offer the desired information. However, to what extent the addressee can offer a satisfactory answer depends upon what purposes the speaker has and upon what he already knows (including his own state of knowledge and that of his addressee). Interestingly, in early Classical Chinese, the speaker's knowledge status regarding the information being asked and his assumptions about his addressee's knowledge status, receive formal marking, through the presence or absence of the uncertain outcome marker *qi*. Usually the presence of this epistemic uncertainty marker in a question has an implication such as "I have no knowledge at all about this situation; you may not know enough about it either, but I am sure that you know better than I." And usually the absence of this marker in a question implies that "you saw or heard the situation that I want to know about," or "I am sure that you know enough about the situation that I ask about."

7.4. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in inferential questions

In early Classical Chinese, a question sentence could be used not only to request information, but also to express an assumption or inference about an event or state, functioning like a weak or polite assertion. We refer to the latter type of question sentences as inferential questions. In most cases, this type of question is marked with *qi* and has the basic pattern as "*qi* 其.....*hu* 乎?" According to Mai Meiqiao 麥梅翹 (1987), there are 737 occurrences of the particle *hu* 乎 in the *Zuozhuan*, of which 650 are used as a final particle. Sentences ending with *hu* may express the following discourse functions:

- (i) information-seeking questions (96 examples);
- (ii) inferential questions (118 examples, among which, 111 are marked with *qi*);

(iii) rhetorical questions (337 times);

(iv) imperatives (19 times); and

(v) exclamation (80 times).

What is interesting in Mai's statistics is that in usage (ii), among the 118 *hu*-ending sentences that are used to express inferences, 111 of them are marked with *qi*. This leads to the conclusion that an inferential question is usually associated with *qi*. This is as expected, because this type of question is a kind of expression of epistemic uncertainty, thus it conditions the presence of the uncertain outcome marker *qi*.

In the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu*, inferential questions with *qi* may express the following kinds semantic contents.

7.4.1. Inferential questions expressing identification

In examples (56)-(58), what is expressed in each of these sentences is not a request for information, but a guess or inference about the relation between two entities. The use of the question form is to solicit confirmation of the inference or guess. In other words, the purpose of asking this type of question is not to obtain information, but to seek for confirmation. Semantically, we can understand these expressions as a kind of weak assertion.²³¹ Obviously, the use of *qi* in these questions is motivated by the epistemic uncertainty of inference context.

(56) 其衛風乎? (左傳·襄 29/13)

shí qí wèi fēng hū?

this/ qí/ Wei/ song/ hū

This is surely the music of Wei, isn't it? (ZZ, Xiang 29/13) 3.1162

(57) 樂而不淫，其周公之東乎? (左傳·襄 29/13)

lè ér bù yín, qí Zhōu Gōng zhī dōng hū?

joyful/ ér/ not excessive/, qí/ Zhou Gong/ zhī/ east/

(It is) joyful but not excessive, (this) is surely the music from the time when Duke Zhou went on the punitive military expedition in the east, isn't it? (ZZ, Xiang 29/13) 3.1162

²³¹ Here a question arises as to how to translate such sentences into English. My temporary solution is to translate them as tag questions: "It is surely ..., isn't it?" But, as far as the meaning is concerned, it seems that they may also be translated as rhetorical questions like "Isn't it surely ...?" or as declaratives like "It is surely..."

- (58) 若由是觀之，其丹朱之神乎？(國語·周語上/12)

ruò yóu shì guān zhī, qí Dān Zhū zhī shén hū?

if/ from/ this/ see/ zhī/, qí/ Dan Zhu/ zhī/ deity/ hū

If viewed in this way, this might be Deity Dan Zhu, (the son of Yao), mightn't it? (GY, Zhouyu A/12) 1.32

The connotation of guessing is more clearly seen in examples (59) and (60), in which an answer to a question is given in question form:

- (59) 臧孫聞之曰：“國有人焉，誰居？其孟椒乎！”(左傳·襄 23)

Zàng Sūn wén zhī yuē: “guó yǒu rén yān, shuí jū? qí Mèng Jiāo hū?

Zang Sun/ hear/ zhī/ say/, State/ have/ man/ yān/, who/ jū/, qí/ Meng Jiao/ hū²³²

When Zang Sun heard that and said: “There is a (talented) man in the State. Who is it? It is surely Meng Jiao, isn't it?” (ZZ, Xiang 23) 3.1084

Legge: “There is a man in the State. Who was it? Was it not Mang Tseaou (= Meng Jiao)?” (Vol. 2: 503)

- (60) 公曰：“何時？”對曰：“...其九月、十月之交乎？”(左傳·僖 5/8) 1.311

gōng yuē: “hé shí?” duì yuē: “...qí jiǔ yuè, shí yuè zhī jiāo hū?”

duke/ say/, what/ time/, reply/ say/, qí/ ninth/ month/ tenth/ month/ zhī/ (of places or periods of time) meet; join/ hū

The Duke (i.e., the marquis of Jin) asked: “What time?” (Bu Yan) replied: “Perhaps it would be sometime between the end of the ninth month and the beginning of the tenth month.” (ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1.311

7.4.2. Inferential questions expressing current events/states

The *qi*-marked *hu*-ending questions may also be used to express the speaker's inference, conjecture or estimation about a possible situation. In example (61), the speaker Shi Fu observed that the prince of Cao sighed at the moment when the ceremonial reception started, and he guessed that the prince of Cao might have something to worry about. Here we see that the speaker expressed his inference about the possible situation of his addressee by means of *qi*-marked question,

²³² According to Yang Bojun (1981 v.3: 1084), *ju* 居 is an interrogative particle. Yang Shuda (1927 [1978: 153]) also mentions examples in which *ju* is used as a final question particle.

indicating a rather low degree of certainty about the truth of his inference.

- (61) 享曹大子。初獻，樂奏而歎，施父曰：“曹大子其有憂乎？非歎所也。”（左傳·桓 9/4）
xiǎng Cáo tài zǐ. chū xiàn, yuè zhuò ér tàn. Shī Fù yuē: “Cáo tài zǐ qí yǒu yōu hū? fēi tàn suǒ
ye.”
make offering; to enjoy somebody with something / Cao/ prince/, first/ present/, music/
play music/ ér/ sigh/, Shi Fu/ say/, Cao/ prince/ qí/ have/ worry/ hū/, not/ sigh/ place/ yě
A ceremonial reception was given to the prince of Cao. When the first cup was presented,
as the music struck up, he sighed. Shi Fu said: “The prince of Chao must surely have
something to worry about, for this is not a place to sigh.” (ZZ, Huan 9/4) 1. 126

Examples (62)-(63) below are also cases in which *qi*-marked questions are used to express the speaker's inference or conjecture about a possible situations:

- (62) 若我不出，王其以我為慙乎？（國語·周語中/1）
ruò wǒ bù chū, wáng qí yǐ wǒ wéi duǎn hū?
if/ I/ not/ go out/, king/ qí/ take/ me/ as/ resentment/ hū
If I do not go on the expedition, the king will think that I have a resentment against him,
won't he? (GY, Zhouyu B/1) 1.53
- (63) 子為魯上卿，相二君矣，妾不衣帛，馬不食粟，人其以子為愛且不華國乎？（國語·
魯語上/16）
zǐ wéi Lǔ shàngqīng, xiāng èr jūn yǐ, qiè bù yī bó, mǎ bù shī sù, rén qí yǐ zǐ wéi ài qiě bù
huá guó hū?
you/ as/ Lu/ chief minister/, assist/ two/ ruler/ yǐ/, wife/ not/ wear/ silk/, horse/ not eat/
millet/, people/ qí/ consider/ you/ as/ stingy/ and/ not/ bring honour/ State/ hū
You are the chief minister of Lu, and have been assisting rulers for two reigns. But your
wife does not wear silk as clothes and your horses do not eat grains as food. People
would consider you are stingy and a disgrace to the State, wouldn't they? (GY, Luyu
A/16) 1.183

In examples (64)-(65), in addition to the presence of *qi*, the speaker's inference about a possible situation is also marked by the epistemic adverb *huozhe* 或者, “perhaps, maybe, probably, etc.”

- (64) 天其或者欲使衛討邢乎? (左傳·僖 19/5)

tiān qí huòzhě yù shǐ Wèi tǎo Xíng hū?

Heaven/ qí/ perhaps/ want/ make/ Wei/ punish/ Xíng/ hū

Perhaps Heaven wants to make Wei punish Xíng.

Or: May not Heaven be wishing to use Wei to punish Xíng? (ZZ, Xi 19/5) 1. 383

- (65) 郕子其或者欲已亂於齊乎? (左傳·宣 17/2) 2.774

Xízi qí huòzhě yù yǐ luàn yú Qí hū?

Xi Zi/ qí/ perhaps/ want/ stop/ disorder/ yú/ Qí/ hū

Perhaps Xi Zi wants to bring the disorder to an end by an invasion of the State of Qi?

Or: May not Xi Zi want to bring the disorder to an end by an invasion of the State of Qi?

(ZZ, Xuan 17/2) 2.774

It is reasonable to assume that the combination of *qí*, *huozhe*, and interrogative particle *hu* implies that the speaker has a rather low degree of certainty about what he is guessing. Moreover, it is also possible that using all these strategies to do with epistemic uncertainty simultaneously might be motivated by the speaker's attempt to express a high degree of politeness to his addressee, because downtoning one's certainty about something can produce a sense of modesty.

7.4.3. Inferential questions expressing future events/states

The *qí*-marked *hu*-ending questions in (66)-(77) are all inferences or conjectures about possible events or states in the future. Interestingly, in the modern printed texts, sentences with this semantic meaning are all marked by the exclamation mark “!” but not by the question mark “?”, as seen in Yang Bojun (1981), *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, and the *Guoyu* 國語 texts edited in Shanghai Shida (1978). Even from Legge's translation, we see that these sentences are all interpreted as “statements,” as in (66). Is this due to the fact that, in the modern language, it seems “odd” to express a prediction with a question? This treatment seems to indicate that these sentences should be understood as exclamations but not questions, and that perhaps the final particle *hu* should be taken as an exclamation marker, not question marker.

However, in our opinion, these sentences are still structurally interrogative, because *hu* is by nature a question marker. And the semantic properties of the expressions in (i), (ii) and (iii) are

the same, in the sense that they all express inferential ideas or information. It seems that the use of the question marker *hu* in an inferential expression is semantically motivated. That is, by the combining the uncertain outcome marker *qi* and the question marker *hu*, a speaker indicates that he is not only making an inference, but also signalling that he is soliciting confirmation of his inference. This is quite different from the case in which an inferential expression is simply marked with *qi* in a declarative sentence, as discussed in 6.4.1. Compared to the declarative *qi*-marked sentences, it seems the *qi*-marked interrogative sentences reinforce more firmly the uncertainty of the inferences expressed. In other words, the combination of *qi* and a question sentence with *hu* seems to indicate a lower degree of certainty than the combination of *qi* and a declarative sentence. In addition, the former combination may show a higher degree of politeness to the addressee.

This analysis seems to work in the following examples.

- (66) 鄭伯其死乎? (左傳·成 6/1)

Zhèng bó qí sǐ hu?

Zheng/ earl/ qí/ die/ hū

The earl of Zheng is surely going to die soon, isn't he?

Or: The earl of Zheng is surely going to die soon! (ZZ, Cheng 6/1) 2.826

(Legge: "The death of the earl of Ch'ing (Zheng) cannot be far off.")

- (67) 不及百年, 此其戎乎? (左傳·僖 22/1)

bù jí bǎi nián, cǐ qí róng hū?

not/ up/ one hundred/ year/, this/ qí/ Rong/ hū

Within one hundred years, this place will surely become the residence of Rong people.

(ZZ, Xi 22/1) 1.394

- (68) 若趙孟死, 為政者其韓子乎? (左傳·襄 31/1)

ruò Zhào Mèng sǐ, wéi zhèng zhě qí Hánzǐ hū?

if/ Zhao Meng/ die, administer/ government/ one who/ qí/ Hanzi/ hū

If Zhao Meng dies, the person who governs the State will surely be Hanzi, won't he?²³³

(ZZ, Xiang 31/1) 3.1183

²³³ In the sentence in (68), the subject is expressed by a *zhe*-construction in which *wei zheng* 為政, "to govern the State" is a relative clause that is headed by *zhe* 者, a pronominal substitute for the head of a noun phrase, meaning "that which, one who."

- (69) 有楚國者，其棄疾乎？（左傳·昭 13/2）

yǒu Chǔ guó zhě qí Qì Jǐ hū?

have/ Chu/ State/ one who/ qí/ Qì Jǐ/ hū

The one who will have the State of Chu will surely be Qì Jǐ, won't he? (ZZ, Zhao 13/2) 4.1351

- (70) 季、孟其長處魯乎？叔孫、東門其亡乎？（國語·周語中/8）

Jǐ, Mèng qí cháng chǔ lǔ hū? Shūsūn, Dōngmén qí wáng hū?

Jǐ/ Mèng/ qí/ long/ stay/ Lu/ hū, Shusun/ Dongmen/ qí/ perish/ hū

Jǐ (Wenzi) and Mèng (Zhongzi) will surely stay in Lu for a long time, won't they?

Shusun and Dongmen will surely decline, won't they? (GY, Zhouyu B/8) 1.76

Similar to the declarative type of inferential expression, sometimes a *qi*-marked inferential question about a future event or state may also co-occur with the adverb *jiang* 將, “will,” to reinforce the futurity of the prediction, as in the following example:

- (71) 單子其將死乎？（左傳·昭 11/6）

Shàn Zǐ qí jiāng sǐ hū?

Shan Zi/ qí/ will; to be going to/ die/ hū

Shan Zi will surely die, won't he? (ZZ, Zhao 11/6) 4. 1325

And sometimes *qi* is followed by the adverb *bi* 必, “necessarily, certainly” to raise a little the certainty of the prediction:

- (72) 衛君其必歸乎？（左傳·襄 14/4）

Wèi jūn qí bǐ guī hū?

Wei/ ruler/ qí/ certainly/ return/ hū

Certainly, the ruler of Wei will surely be able to return (to his State), won't he? (ZZ, Xiang 14/4) 3.1014.

7.4.4. Inferential questions expressing counterfactual assertions

A *qi*-marked inferential question may co-occur with a sentence that expresses a counterfactual situation, as in the following examples (73) and (74). There are three similarities in these two examples: (i) In both cases, *qi* is used in the main clause (the apodosis) of a conditional construction in which the subordinate clause (the protasis) expresses a counterfactual (or unreal) situation. (ii)

In each case, the *qi*-marked main clause expresses the speaker's inferential judgment or assertion that is assumed to be true under the condition expressed in the protasis. (iii) In both examples, the inferences is expressed by the combination of the question marker *hu* and the uncertain outcome marker *qi*. Note that in Yang Bojun (1981), they are both marked with the exclamation mark "!" However, in our opinion, they are still sort of questions, because the speaker is not just expressing his assertion, but is also soliciting confirmation of his assertion.

- (73) 王曰：“城麋之役，女知寡人之及此，女其辟寡人乎？”(左傳·昭 8/6)

wáng yuē: “Chéngjun zhī yǐ, nǚ zhī guǎrén jí cǐ, nǚ qí pì guārén hū?

king/ say/, Chengjun/ zhī/ battle/, you/ I/ zhī/ reach/ this/, you/ qí/ avoid/ I/ hū

The king (of Chu) said: “In the battle in Chengjun, if you knew that I would get to this situation, you would surely have made a way for me, wouldn't you?” (ZZ, Zhao 8/6)

4.1304

- (74) 微禹，吾其魚乎？(左傳·昭 1/1) 4.1210

wéi Yǔ, wú qí yú hū ?

if it were not/ Yu/, I / qí/ fish/ hū

If there had not been Yu, we would surely have become fish, wouldn't we? (ZZ, Zhao 1/1) 4.1210

7.5. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in rhetorical questions

7.5.1. The semantics of rhetorical questions

Different from ordinary information-seeking questions, rhetorical questions do not expect to elicit answers to eliminate a lack of information; instead, they express strong assertions. In general, a rhetorical question has the illocutionary force of a strong assertion of opposite polarity from what is apparently asked (see Chung-hye Han 1998). That is, a rhetorical *positive* question has the illocutionary force of a *negative* assertion and a rhetorical *negative* question has the illocutionary force of a *positive* assertion, as in following English rhetorical questions:

- (75) a. *Rhetorical yes-no questions*

Did I tell you I would see you at 7 o'clock? (= I didn't tell you so.)

Didn't I tell you I would see you at 7 o'clock? (= I did tell you so.)

b. *Rhetorical content questions*

What have you ever done for Mary? (= You have done nothing for Mary.)

What haven't you done for Mary? (= You have done everything for Mary.)

The fact that rhetorical questions have the illocutionary force of an assertion of the opposite polarity is a universal phenomenon in languages. The question of why rhetorical questions get the interpretation the way they do has attracted many linguists' attention. Chung-hye Han (1998) has recently addressed this issue. According to Han, the source of the polarity reversal in the interpretation of rhetorical questions is the negation contributed by the semantics of questions and the semantics of *wh*-words (i.e., content question-words). She proposes that the polarity reversal in the interpretation of rhetorical questions is the result of the following principles:

(76) a. Rhetorical questions denote the negative answer.

b. The *wh*-phrase in rhetorical *wh*-questions denotes \emptyset (i.e., an empty set)

(Chung-hye Han 1998: 242, (16))

Han's analysis is similar to the semantics of questions as discussed in Chapter 3. That is, a yes-no question denotes a positive and negative pair of propositions as its possible answers, and a content question denotes a set of alternative propositions containing its possible answers. Now we will look at how the basic principles of the semantics of questions work in the case of rhetorical questions. According to Han, yes-no questions usually have polarity reversal effects in terms of the speaker's expectation towards the answer. Usually, an ordinary negative yes-no question implies that the speaker expects a positive answer, as in:

(77) Didn't Mary see John? (Implication: Yes, Mary saw John.)

And in general, a positive yes-no question does not have any implications as to the speaker's expected answer, as in:

(78) Did you see John?

However, in some cases, a positive yes-no question may implicate that the speaker expects a certain answer, and if it does, it implies that the speaker expects a negative answer. For example, if the speaker thought that Mary didn't see John, he would ask "Did Mary see John" instead of asking "Didn't Mary see John?" That is to say, even ordinary questions also have polarity effects in terms of the speaker's expectations regarding the answer. It is this polarity reversal effect of yes-no questions that is responsible for the polarity reversal in the interpretation of rhetorical yes-no questions. In this sense, we may say that a rhetorical yes-no question is a question in which a speaker expresses a strong expectation regarding the answer. One should note that, although questions have the built-in feature to imply a speaker's expectation and can get a rhetorical interpretation in a particular context, rhetorical questions are usually marked differently from the ordinary questions. For example, consider the difference between the following two questions:

(79) After all, who helped Mary?

(80) Who helped Mary, any idea?

The question in (79) only has the rhetorical interpretation, while the one in (80) can only be interpreted as an ordinary question.

Now let us consider rhetorical content questions. According to Han (1998), a similar point can be made about ordinary content questions and the speaker's expectations regarding the answer. That is, ordinary negative content questions imply that the speaker expects that the set of individuals who satisfy the question is smaller than the set of individuals who don't satisfy the question. For example, if a teacher in a class asks a question such as "Who didn't finish the homework?" he expects that the set of students who did not finish the paper is smaller than the set of students who did finished the paper. In general, a positive content question does not have any implication as to the speaker's expectation with respect to the answer. However, if it has any implication at all, it implies that the set of individuals who satisfy the question is smaller than the set of individuals who do not satisfy the question. For example, if the teacher mentioned above assumed that the set of students who finished the homework is smaller than the set of

students who did not finish the homework, he would ask a question like “Who finished the homework?” instead of “Who didn’t finish the homework?” In other words, a content word is similar to a negative quantifier in a question, implying that the set of members who meet the speaker’s expectation is always smaller than the set of members who do not meet the speaker’s expectation. In this sense, a rhetorical content question is used when the speaker assumes that the set of members who meet the his expectation is empty. Namely, if a speaker says “What has John ever done for Mary?” he assumes that the set of things that satisfy or meet his expectation is empty, meaning that he believes that John has done nothing for Mary. Here again, we have to point out that, in order to get the rhetorical interpretation, a rhetorical content question is usually marked differently from an ordinary content question.

There is still one point worth noting about the semantics and formal properties of rhetorical questions. That is, although rhetorical questions do not expect to elicit answers and are assertions of opposite polarity, this does not mean that they are less like questions. In fact, they are still typical questions for two reasons: First, they have the basic structure of questions, even though in most cases they do not pattern exactly the same as the ordinary questions and they usually receive some additional marker. Second, they are utterances that request a response, namely a tacit response in which the addressee accepts, or agrees with, the assertion made by the speaker.

7.5.2. The formal features of rhetorical questions

With the understanding of the semantics and formal properties of rhetorical questions as discussed above, let us now turn our attention to the rhetorical questions in early Classical Chinese. In early classical texts, rhetorical questions are the most commonly seen type of questions. One distinct feature of rhetorical questions in early Classical Chinese is that they differ from the ordinary information-seeking questions not only in semantic interpretation, but also in formal properties. A rhetorical question usually contains the following grammatical elements:

7.5.2.1. Rhetorical yes-no questions

(i) Rhetorical yes-no questions are often associated with an auxiliary such as *gan* 敢, “dare,” *ke* 可, “can, ought, should,” or *neng* 能, “can, be capable,” or adverbs such as *kuang* 況, “furthermore,

moreover," *you* 猶, "still;" and *you* 又, "again." They can be marked with *qi*, as in (81)-(85), or without *qi*, as in (86)-(88).

- (81) 我其敢求位? (尚書·多士)

wǒ qí gǎn qiú wèi?

we/ qí/ dare/ seek/ throne

Dare we possibly seek the throne?

"How should we have dared seek the throne?" (Karlgren: The Book of Documents: 55/3)

- (82) 若火之燎原, 不可鄉邇, 其猶可扑滅? (尚書·盤庚)

ruò huǒ zhī liáo yuán, bù kě xiàng ěr, qí yóu kě pū miè?

like/ fire/ zhī/ burn/ plain/, not/ can/ approach/ close/, qí/ still/ beat/ extinguished

(What you did) is just like a fire's blazing on the plain; it cannot be approached, and (how) can it be still possibly beaten down and extinguished?

"The (facility=) easy success of evil is like a fire's blazing on the plain: it cannot be approached, how much the less can it be beaten down and extinguished?" (Karlgren 1950b: 6/12)

- (83) 不以人子, 吾子其可得乎? (左傳·宣 12/2)

bù yǐ rén zǐ, wú zǐ qí kě dé hū?

not/ take/ other / son, my/ son/ qí/ can/ get/ hū

If I do not use some one's son to exchange, can my son be possibly recovered? (ZZ, Xuan 12/2) 2.743

- (84) 天而既厭周德矣, 吾其能與許爭乎? (左傳·隱 11/3) 1.75

tiān ér jǐ yàn Zhōu dé yǐ, wú qí néng yǔ Xǔ zhēng hū?

Heaven/ ér/ jǐ/ tired of/ Zhou/ virtue/, I/ qí/ be able to/ with/ Xu/ contend/ hū

Since Heaven is manifesting its dissatisfaction with virtue of Zhou already, am I possibly able to go on contending with Xu?

- (85) 楚雖大, 非吾族也, 其肯字我乎? (左傳·成 4/4)

Chǔ suī dà, fēi wú zú yě, qí kěn zǐ wǒ hū?

Chu/ although/ great/, not/ we/, akin/ yě/, qí/ be willing/ love; cherish/ we/ hū

Although the Chu State is great, it is not akin to us; will it be willing to love us? (ZZ, Cheng 4/4) 2. 818

- (86) 重耳敢不拜? (左傳·僖 23/6)

Chóněr gǎn bù bài?

Chong Er/ dare/ not make a courtesy call

How can Chong Er dare not to express his thanks? (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1. 410

- (87) 今亂本成矣, 立可必乎? (左傳·閔 2/7)

jīn luan běn chéng yǐ, lì kě bì hū?

now/ disorder/ root/ form/ yǐ/ , set up / can/ certainly / hū

Now the root of disorder has already been formed, can you still be certainly established (as the successor of the throne)? (ZZ, Min 2/7) 1.272

- (88) 蔓草猶不可除, 況君之寵弟乎? (左傳·隱 1/4)

Màn cǎo yóu bù kě chú, kuàng jūn zhī chǒng dì hū?

spreading/ grass/ still/ not/ can/ remove, how much less/ you/ zhī/ spoiled/

younger brother/ hū

Even the spreading wild grass cannot be removed, much less your spoiled brother, isn't that so? (ZZ, Yin 1/4) 1.12

(ii) Rhetorical yes-no questions are often associated with a rhetorical question particle such as *qǐ* 豈 or *yōng* 庸. These two particles are considered as typical rhetorical questions markers, because they are only used in rhetorical questions and imply a dissenting negative answer. They can both be interpreted as “how can, how could.” They can occur with *qǐ*, as in (89)-(90), or without *qǐ*, as in (91).

- (89) 楚之執事豈其顧盟? (左傳·昭 1/2)

Chǔ zhī zhìshì qǐ qí gù méng?

Chu/ zhī/ administrative officer/ how could/ qí/ care for/ covenant

How could the minister of Chu pay any regard to our covenants?

(ZZ, Zhao 1/2) 4. 1207

- (90) 晉其庸可冀乎? (左傳·僖 15/8)

Jīn qí yōng kě jì hū?

Jin/ qí/ how can/ be possible/ expect/ hū

How can Jin be expected to annex? (ZZ, Xi 15/8) 1.367

- (91) 晉，吾宗也，豈害我哉？(左傳·僖 5/8)

Jìn, wú zōng yě, qǐ hài wǒ zāi?

Jin/, my/ ancestor/ yě/, how could/ harm/ me/ zāi

(The prince of) Jin and I are descendants of the same ancestor. How could he injure us?

(ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1. 307

(iii) Rhetorical yes-no questions are often associated with a negative word such as *bu* 不, *wu* 無, or *fei* 非. The examples cited below illustrate these formal features. They can be marked with *qi*, as in (92)-(93); or without *qi*, as in (94)-(95).

- (92) 子其無憂乎？(左傳·昭 1/1)

zǐ qí wú yōu hū?

you/ qí/ have not/ worry/ hū

Don't you worry? (ZZ, Zhao 1/1) 4. 1203

- (93) 今王外利矣，其無乃階禍乎？國語·周語中/1)

jīn wáng wài lì yǐ, qí wú nǎi jiē huò hū?

now/ king/ out/ profit/ yǐ/, qí/ would it not be/ steps; stair/ disaster/ hū

Now the king has started to gain profit from outside, would it not be to make a stair leading to disaster? (GY, Zhouyu B/1) 1.48

- (94) 夫不惡女乎？(左傳·襄 26/8)

fū bù wù rǔ hū?

that one/ not/ hate/ you/ hū

Does he not hate you? (ZZ, Xiang 26/8) 3. 1118

- (96) 以是處國，不亦難乎？(國語·晉語一/5)

yǐ shì chù guó, bù yǐ nán hū?

with/ this/ govern/ state/, not/ also/ difficult/ hū

To govern the State with this (i.e., in this way), isn't it also difficult?

(GY, Jinyu 1/5) 1. 266

(iv) However, there are also cases in which the rhetorical yes-no question do not contain the additional formal markers as the ones cited above. In the following example, the rhetorical question is formally the same as an ordinary yes-no question:

- (97) 叔氏，而忘諸乎？(左傳·昭 15/7)

Shū Shì, ér wàng zhū hū?

Shu Shi/, you/ forget/ zhū/ hū²³⁴

Shu Shi, do you (really) forget that? (implication: You must remember that.) (ZZ, Zhao 15/7) 4.1372

In the following two examples, the rhetorical yes-no questions only contain *qi* but not other particles:

- (98) 若晉取虞，而明德以薦馨香，神其吐之乎？(左傳·僖 5/8)

ruò Jīn qǔ Yú, ér míng dé yǐ jiàn xīng xiāng, shén qí tǔ zhī hū?

If Jin/ take/ Yu, ér/ brighten/ virtue/ therewith/ present/ fragrant/, spirits/ qí/ vomit/ zhī/ hū

If Jin takes over Yu, and the cultivates bright virtue, and therewith present fragrant offerings, will the spirits vomit them out? (ZZ, Xi 5/8) 1.310

- (99) 齊其有乎？(國語·周語下/1)

Qí qí yǒu hū?

Qi/ qí/ have/ hū

Is there possibly (such a person) in Qi? (GY, Zhouyu C/1) 1. 92

7.5.2.2. Rhetorical content questions

Rhetorical content questions also contain some additional formal markers, similar to rhetorical yes-no questions.

(i) Rhetorical content question are also often associated particles such as *gan* 敢, “dare,” *neng* 能, “can, be able,” *you* 又, “again,” *du* 獨, “alone.” They can be marked with *qi*, as in (100)-(102), or without *qi*, as in (103)-(104).

- (100) 子之愛人，傷之而已，其誰敢求愛於子？(左傳·襄31/12) 3.1192

zǐ zhī ài rén, shāng zhī éryǐ, qí shuí gǎn qiú ài yú zǐ?

you/ zhī/ love/ people/, harm/ zhī/ only/, qí/ who/ dare/ seek/ love/ yú/ you

Your loving a person is just to do harm on him; who would possibly dare to seek love from you? (ZZ, Xiang 31/12) 3.1192

²³⁴ Yang Bojun (1981, vol. 4: 1372) notes that *zhu* 諸 here should be read as *zhi* 之, and it is used as a demonstrative pronoun.

- (101) 非禹，其誰能修之？(左傳·襄29/13)

fēi Yǔ, qí shuí néng xiū zhī
not/ Yu/, qí/ who/ can/ make/ zhī

If it were not Yu, who could possibly make this music? (ZZ, Xiang 29/13) 3. 1165

- (102) 百官象之，其又何誅焉？(左傳·桓 2/2)

bǎi guān xiàng zhī, qí yòu hé zhū yān?
hundred/ official/ resemble; imitate/ zhī/, qí/ again/ punish/ yān

If all the officials take that as their model, how can you again possibly punish them all?

(ZZ, Huan 2.2) 1.89

- (103) 予曷敢不終朕畝？(尚書·大誥)

yǔ hé gǎn bù zhōng zhèn mǔ?
I/ how/ dare/ not/ finish/ my/ acres

“How would I dare not to finish (the weeding of) my acres?” (Karlgren 1950b: 13/14)

- (104) 天將興之，誰能廢之？(左傳·僖 23/6)

tiān jiāng xīng zhī, shuí néng fěi zhī?
Heaven/ will/ raise/ zhī/, who/ be able/ remove; to do away with/ zhī

If the heaven is going to raise him, who can depose him? (ZZ, Xi 23/6) 1.409

(ii) Rhetorical content questions are often seen to be associated with negative words. Some of them co-occur with *qí*, as in (105)-(106), but others do not, as in (107).

- (105) 恪德以臨事，其何不濟？(國語·晉語五/1)

kè dé yǐ lín shì, qí hé bù jì?
strictly abide by/ virtue/ therewith/ come to, attend to/ affair/, qí/ what/ not succeed

If one can strictly abide by virtue to attend to the State affairs, what can he not possibly succeed? (GY, Jinyu 5/1) 2.393

- (106) 且行千里，其誰不知？(左傳·僖 32/3)

qiě xíng qiān lǐ, qí shuí bù zhī?
moreover; furthermore/ go; march/thousand/ measure of distance(one li is about 1/2 km)/,
qí/ who/ not/ know

Moreover, (to have) an one-thousand-*li*-march, who would probably not know it?

(ZZ, Xi 32/3) 1. 490

- (107) 何草不黃?何日不行?(詩經·何草不黃)

hé cǎo bù huáng? hé rì bù xíng?

what/ grass; small plant/ not/ yellow/, what/ day/ not/ march

“What plant is not yellow; what day do we not march?” (SJ, He cao bu huang; Karlgren 1950 a: 234/1)

(iii) There are also cases in which the rhetorical content question is not marked with other additional particles and only contains the question word, just like ordinary questions. However, they can be marked with or without *qi*. Examples (108)-(109) are cases with *qi*, and examples (110)-(113) are cases without *qi*:

- (108) 君雖獨豐,其何福之有?(左傳·桓 6/2)

jūn suī dú fēng, qí hé fú zhī yǒu?

your lordship/ although/ alone/ abundant/, qí/ what/ fortune; blessing/ zhī/ have

Even though your lordship (can offer) abundant (rituals to spirits) on your own, what blessings can you possibly get from the spirits? (ZZ, Huan 6/2) 1.112

- (109) 殺女,璧其焉往?(左傳·哀 17/5)

shā nǚ, bǐ qí yān wǎng?

kill/ you/, bǐ-jade/ qí/ where/ go

If I kill you, where will possibly the *bi*-jade go? (i.e., if I kill you, the *bi*-jade will surely be mine.) (ZZ, Ai 17/5) 4.1711

- (110) 不稼不穡,胡取禾三百廛兮?(詩經·伐檀)

bù jià bù sè, hú qǔ hé sān bǎi chán xī?

not/ sow/ not reap/, how/ take/ grain/ three/ hundred/ farmyard/ xī

“If you do not sow and do not reap, how can you bring in three hundred yard-fulls of grain?” (Karlgren 1950a: 112/1)

- (111) 君子有遠慮,小人何知?(左傳·哀 11/)

jūnzǐ yǒu yuǎn lǜ, xiǎorén hé zhī?

a gentleman/ have/ distant/ thoughts/, a mean person/ what/ know

A gentleman has distant thoughts (i.e., takes thought for future), what can a mean person know (about that)? (ZZ, Ai 11/) 4.1659

- (112) 君治而國安，欲作亂者誰與？（國語・晉語八/1）2. 448

jūn zhǐ ér guó ān, yù zuò luàn zhě shuí yǔ?

your lordship/ govern/ ér/ state/ stable/, want/ make/ disorder/ zhě/ who/ yú

If your lordship is good at governing, and the State is stable, then who will be the one who wants to bring disorder to the State? (GY, Jinyu 8/1) 2. 448

- (113) 姜氏欲之，焉辟害？（左傳・隱 1/4）

Jiāng Shǐ yù zhī, yān pǐ hài?

Jiang Shi/ want/ zhī/, where/ avoid/ disaster

Jiang Shi wants it (this way), where can I avoid the disaster (i.e., how can I avoid the disaster)? (ZZ, Yin 1/4) 1. 12

7.5.3. The interactive function of *qi* in rhetorical questions

One important fact that we see from the examples cited above is that rhetorical questions can be marked with *qi* or without *qi*. Traditionally, the *qi* used in rhetorical questions as in the above examples is considered as a rhetorical question marker, the same as *qi* 豈, a particle used to introduced a rhetorical question and which implies a dissenting answer (e.g., Yang Shuda 1928[1978: 161]). Other scholars treat *qi* in rhetorical questions as a modal particle expressing rhetorical mood (e.g., He Leshi 1984 [1989]). However, we disagree with these interpretations. Given the examples in which *qi* does not occur, but the questions still have a rhetorical interpretation, we propose that *qi* is not a particle to mark rhetorical questions or rhetorical mood. The presence of *qi* in rhetorical questions is motivated by the epistemic uncertainty of the assertions expressed. In other words, it is not surprising to see the uncertain outcome marker *qi* in a rhetorical question, since what is expressed is the speakers' strong assertion about a possible event or situation. Thus, it is easily regarded as a case of uncertain outcome, and thus is marked with the outcome marker *qi*, indicating that the speaker does not fully committed himself to the truth of his assertion.

The reason that not all the rhetorical questions are marked with *qi* may be explained as follows: The presence of *qi* in rhetorical questions might also be pragmatically motivated. That is, the speaker might purposely mark a rhetorical question with *qi* to produce the effect of

softening the assertion, thus showing politeness to the addressee. In other words, the uncertain outcome marker *qi* might have been used as a politeness marker in this context. The absence of *qi* in these rhetorical questions can be explained as follows: Assertions can vary in their degree of certainty. Speakers might exploit the presence and absence of *qi* to mark their degree of certainty in the truth of what they say. We assume that the absence of *qi* indicates a higher degree of certainty in the factual status of the utterance; the presence of *qi* shows a lower degree of certainty in the factual status of the utterance. In other words, pragmatically speaking, a rhetorical question with *qi* is a relatively weak assertion, while a rhetorical question without *qi* is a strong assertion.

7.6. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in imperative questions

In addition to usages discussed above, interrogative sentences may also be used to express requests, commands, suggestions, or warnings, parallel to their declarative counterparts of the form “2nd-person Sbj + non-past tense predicate + (*yi/ye/zai*),” this type of question is often marked with *qi*. Consider these examples:

- (114) 女其行乎? (左傳·僖 24/1)

rǔ qí xíng hū!

you/ qí/ go/ hū

Will you please go? > You please go! (ZZ, Xi 24/1) 1. 414

- (115) 君其定衛以待時乎? (左傳·襄 14)

jūn qí dìng Wèi yǐ dài shí hū?

your lordship/ qí/ settle/ Wei/ therewith/ wait for/ time/ hū

Should your lordship settle Wei now and wait for the time (for a different course)? > You should surely settle Wei now and wait for another time. (ZZ, Xiang 14/9) 3.1019

- (116) 且不見我，君其無悔乎? (國語·晉語四/13)

qiě bù jiàn wǒ, jūn qí wú huǐ hū?

moreover/ not/ see/ me/, your lordship/ qí/ not/ regret/ hū

Moreover, if you do not see me, won't you possibly feel regret later? > You should surely see me. (GY, Jinyu 4/13) 2. 368

Note that in the modern commentaries, these sentences are marked with the exclamation mark “!” instead of the question mark “?” However, in our opinion, these sentences are still grammatically interrogative sentences, although their discourse function is to express command (114), suggestion (115), or warning (116).

Previous studies have not discussed the function of the *qi* in this type of question sentences (e.g., it is not discussed in Wang Yinzhi 1798 [1966]; Yang Shuda 1927 [1978]; Pei Xuehai 1934). While He Leshi (1989[1984]) considers that *qi* expresses command, suggestion under the condition of second-person subject, she does not mention the function of *qi* in this type of *hu*-ending sentences with second person subjects; Malmqvist (1982) does not discuss this construction, either. Although the function of *qi* in this type of sentence has not received much attention, the function of *hu* used there has been the focus of much attention. Most scholars who work on the grammatical particles of Classical Chinese consider the final particle *hu* in the above examples as a particle expressing command or suggestion. For example, Pei Xuehai (1934) says that *hu*, *yi wei ming ling zhi ci* 乎, 一為命令之詞, “*hu* is also a word to express command.” Also in Mai Meiqiao (1987) also notes that *hu* in the above environment is a final particle expressing command, advice, or imperative.

Here a question arises as to the source of the interpretation of commands or imperatives in the above examples. Compare the following three examples:

(117) 女其行乎? (僖 24)

rǔ qí xíng hū!

you/ qí/ go/ hū

Will you please go? > You please go! (ZZ, Xi 24/1) 1. 414

(118) 子其行矣, 我姑待死. (國語・晉語三/4)

zǐ qí xíng yǐ, wǒ gū dài sǐ.

you/ qí/ go/ yǐ/, I/ for a time; meanwhile/ wait for/ die

You should surely be gone (You should surely go); I will just stay here and die. (GY,

Jinyu 3/4) 1.321

(119) 子行乎?其及也。(國語・晉三/4)

zǐ xíng hū? qí jié yě.

you/ go/ hu1/, qí/ reach/ yě

Will you go?(>You had better go), or (you) will be reached (by disaster).

(GY, Jinyu 3/4) 1.321

What is interesting here is that all three sentences express commands, even though they are formally different. The first sentence contains both *qi* and *hu*, the second contains *qi* and *yi*, and the third contains only *hu*. Neither the analysis of *qi* as a particle to express imperatives, commands, or deontic modality (i.e., the necessity of an event) nor the analysis of *hu* as an particle expressing imperatives or commands can offer a consistent account for the functions of the particles in these examples. In other words, we cannot say that the command interpretation of (117) comes from the *hu* used but not *qi*, in (118) the command interpretation comes from only *qi*, and in (119) the command interpretation in (119) comes from only *hu*.

Instead, we propose that these three sentences can be understood as follows. Their interpretation as requests, commands, or suggestions is from the structure “2nd-person Subj + non-past tense Predicate.” The occurrence of *qi* is motivated by the fact that expressions such as requests, suggestions or commands constitute cases of uncertain outcome. The use of *qi* in these sentences is also pragmatically motivated to soften or tone down the command/request/suggestion, thus showing politeness. The use of elements with epistemic downtoning function is a common feature of polite speech crosslinguistically.²³⁵ Moreover, the use of the question form to make a polite command is also a common phenomenon seen in many languages. Thus, we also consider the use of the question particle *hu* in a command, as in (117) and (119), to be a pragmatic use of questions. That is, to express a command in question form has a softening effect, showing room for consultation, as in the English examples below:

(120) Open the window!

(121) Can you open the window?

²³⁵ See Lichtenberk (1995: 318).

We propose that both the question marker *hu* and modal particle *qi* can be used to signal politeness when used in a command, and the combination of these two marker expresses a command or suggestion with a higher degree of politeness.

It seems that in early Classical Chinese, when making a command, a speaker may manipulate the choice between absence or presence of the uncertain outcome marker *qi*, and the choice between using declarative or interrogative sentences to express different degrees of politeness or different degrees of expectation of compliance. The different degrees of strength of imperatives can be expressed as follows:

Strong —> weak/polite

second-person subject + VP —> second-person subject + VP + *hu* —> second-person subject + *qi* + VP —> second-person subject + *qi* + VP + *hu*

7.7. Chapter 7 summary

In this chapter, we continued the investigation started in Chapter 6 regarding the modal function of *qi* with the focus on its use in interrogative sentences. We have shown that the choice between presence and absence of *qi* in information-seeking questions distinguishes Irrealis questions from Realis questions. Namely, a question with *qi* implies an assumption that the addressee has no direct perception or firsthand information about the matter in question, while a question without *qi* implies an assumption that the addressee has direct perception or firsthand information about the matter in question. *Qi*'s basic function in information-seeking question is still that of uncertain outcome marker. The use of *qi* is most commonly found in inferential questions. The close correlation between *qi* and this type of question clearly indicate that *qi* is an epistemic-uncertain modal marker by nature. We also discussed the use of *qi* in rhetorical questions and imperative questions, showing that the use of *qi* in these contexts has to do with the pragmatic purpose of expressing politeness.

Chapter 8

The grammatical functions of *qi* in Shang Oracle-Bone inscriptions

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss the syntactic and semantic issues that arise in the interpretation of the particle *qi* in the earliest known examples of the Chinese language -- the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions (hereafter OBI). We intend to show that, similar to *qi* in early classical texts, *qi* in OBI might also have three basic grammatical functions: (i) a genitive marker in nominal genitive constructions; (ii) a nominalizing marker to mark a clause as dependent; and (iii) a modality marker in a main clause. Data will be presented to show that these three usages of *qi* have been attested in OBI. We will pay particular attention the following two issues:

- (i) What modal functions does *qi* play in OBI? Is *qi* in OBI also a mark of uncertain outcome, the same as its modal function in the later periods of early Classical Chinese?
- (ii) Is there any historical connection between the modal use of *qi* and the genitive and nominalizing functions of *qi*?

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 outlines some important treatments of this particle as proposed in previous studies, focusing on those proposals that are relevant to the present analysis. Section 3 investigates the genitive and nominalizing uses of *qi* in OBI data. Section 4 discusses the modal functions and meanings of *qi* in OBI data. Section 5 explores the historical connection between the three grammatical functions of *qi*. Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

8.2. Previous studies of *qi* in OBI

What *qi* means and how it works in the syntax of the language represented by the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions are issues of long-standing debate. A variety of theories have been put forward in the literature. A brief sketch of the main ideas of some important proposals is given here, as this will facilitate the subsequent discussion.²³⁶

²³⁶ For a detailed literature review of the study of *qi*, see Takashima (1994).

8.2.1. A modal approach

The view that the “pronominal” use of *qi* and the “modal” use of *qi* in classical texts are two different words represented by the same graph has been extended into the study of the OBI language. Because *qi* is predominantly used in front of verbs, most scholars consider *qi* in OBI to be a preverbal adverbial particle conveying some sort of modal meaning.²³⁷

Below are some important proposals regarding the modal meanings of the OBI *qi*:

(i) *Qi* in OBI conveys a sense of “uncertainty,” “dubiety,” or “tentativeness” meaning (e.g., Hu Guangwei 1928; Chen Mengjia 1956; Takashima 1970).

(ii) *Qi* in OBI expresses “interrogative mood” (Guang Xiechu 1953; Fan Yuzhou 1989).

(iii) *Qi* in OBI means “definitely” and does not mean “perhaps,” indicating an intended action or situation (Nivison 1992b).

(iv) *Qi* in OBI marks a charge as a “less desirable alternative” (Serruys 1974).

(v) *Qi* is a modal and an aspectual particle in OBI (Takashima 1994). The modal functions and meanings of *qi* are further explored in Takashima (1994) which states that we cannot assign any uniform meaning to *qi*; neither ‘perhaps, maybe, might’ (as proposed in earlier studies) nor ‘definitely, certainly’ (as proposed in Nivison 1992b: 6-7) are adequate definitions. “These terms mark out limited domains on the broader modal scales of ‘possibility/certainty’ and ‘intention/wish,’ and are thus too bound to be applicable in all contexts where *qi* is used” (Takashima 1994: 494). According to Takashima, *qi* moves on the modal scales of “possibility/certainty” and of “intention/wish.” In other words, *qi* can convey a sense of doubt such as “perhaps,” an assertive sense like “definitely,” or anything in between; it can also convey the intentionality of “will, shall” or an optative sense, “may, would that...” As for the “undesirable *qi* theory” of Serruys (1974), Takashima (1994) characterizes it as “accidentally correct” (see more discussion below). In addition, according to Takashima, *qi* in OBI is not only a modal particle expressing a wide range of modal meanings; it also functions as a lexicalized aspectual marker meaning “anticipative,” or “prospective,” and denoting the subsequent unfolding of a situation when combined with a verb; the resulting meaning is “to be going to.”

²³⁷ However, since the 1970s, in particular with the publishing of Chang Tsung-tung (1970) and Serruys (1974), the view that *qi* only functions as a modal-like particle has been changed. Chang Tsung-tung (1970) proposes that in addition to modal function, *qi* in OBI might be also a mark of subordinate sentences (as cited in Serruys 1974: 48). This idea is adopted and further developed in Serruys (1974: 48-58).

8.2.2. A pronominal approach

Different from other scholars in the field, Nivison (1968, 1971a, 1992a 1992b, 1992c) makes continuing efforts to argue against the influential view that the modal *qi* and the pronominal *qi* in the Classical texts are two different words written in the same graph, arguing that the modal *qi* and the pronominal *qi* derive from different functions of the same word.²³⁸ According to him, there is no such thing as modal *qi* in OBI; the so-called modal *qi* is just the same word of pronoun *qi* used in different aspects; both these two uses of *qi* are derived from the verb *qi*. “Modal *qi*” and ‘pronominal *qi*’ are essentially just different uses of the same *supple* expression” (1992b: 11). Nivison’s main hypothesis about the relation between the different functions of OBI *qi* are as below:

(1) *qi* is a verb of strong assertion: “it is the case that...”, or “this will be, namely...” (of uncontrollable happenings); speaker “will make it the case that...” (of controllable actions); speaker “will make it the case that...” (of controllable actions); (2) an adverb, “definitely;” and (3) as a verbal adjective amounting to “the” (which would indicate definite existence or occurrence). Before a noun it might amount to “the... in question,” and even “his...,” etc.; and before a verb it could in its “adjective” phrase convert the verb into a verbal noun, “the...-ing.” Before a verb-phrase or sentence it could thus create a noun phrase: “the fact that...,” or simply “that...” Along these lines, there may be the possibility of using *qi* to effect a “sentence-fragment” modality (Nivison 1992b: 10-11).

More than twenty years after Nivison first presented his ideas in his unpublished paper (1968), Takashima (1996) has expressed his agreement with Nivison’s basic idea that the so-called modal *qi* and the pronominal *qi* are a single word with different functions.²³⁹ But contrary to Nivison who holds that *qi* was originally a verb, Takashima (1996: Section 2) proposes that *qi* was originally an anaphoric pronoun with a genitive function (called a genitive pronoun, or genitive-anaphoric-pronoun *qi*, in his term). In this article, Takashima admits that *qi* is a kind of adverbial particle conveying a variety of modal and aspectual meanings. As a modal particle, the modality of *qi* is operating on the epistemological scale of both “possibility/certainty” and

²³⁸ According to Nivison (1992b), the view that the so-called modal *qi* and the pronoun *qi* are not two different words but the same word with different functions was first proposed and argued in Nivison (1968), a paper read at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society in Berkeley.

²³⁹ The actual writing of the earlier versions of Takashima (1996) was in the late 80s (personal communication).

“intention/wish.” When *qi* combines with a “+will” verb, it means “certainly, definitely,” while when *qi* combines with a “-will” verb, it means “perhaps, maybe.” And as an aspectual particle, *qi* expresses aspects such as “anticipative,” “prospective,” or “mutative.” Takashima (1996) agrees with Nivison that, in addition to these two uses, *qi* in OBI might have been used as an anaphoric pronoun with a genitive function and a subordinate sentence marker, and as a marker of “subjunctive mood.” Moreover, he suggests the hypothesis that the modal (including the aspectual *qi*) could have been connected to the pronominal *qi* (1996: 28). However, he does not provide the details as to how the modal use of *qi* was derived from its pronominal use.²⁴⁰

8.2.3. The present study: A genitive approach

Similar to Nivison (1992) and Takashima (1996), we also do not consider the different functions of *qi* in OBI to be a case of homonymy (i.e., *jiajie* 假借, two different words represented by the same graph because of their similarity in sound), but rather a case of polysemy (i.e., a case in which the same word has different functions). However, instead of viewing *qi* as originally being a verb as proposed in Nivison 1992b, or as originally being a pronoun with a genitive function as proposed in Takashima (1996), we consider *qi* to be originally a genitive marker which later became a modality marker to encode a modal distinction between Realis and Irrealis, specifying unreal events/states (i.e., uncertain outcomes) from real events/states (i.e., certain outcomes). In what follows, we present OBI data to show the possibility that *qi* might have been used as a genitive marker in the language, showing the other two grammatical functions of *qi* such as being a nominalizer and a mark of uncertain outcome or irrealis identified in early Classical Chinese are also attested in OBI.

²⁴⁰ As for the details of how the pronoun *qi* spawned its modal meaning, no explicit account is given in Takashima (1996). Recently, Takashima (personal communication) holds that *qi* in OBI is a pronoun with genitive and subordinative functions, and the so-called modal meaning of *qi* is produced by the effect of syntactically incomplete sentence. According to him, a sentence like *wo qi zuo yi* 我其作邑 is not a complete sentence—it is an incomplete one, and would be interpreted as “We, our making a city/settlement[!]” The modality of this sentence (in this case it is [+will] [+determination/intention]) is produced by the syntactically incomplete one. The nature of *qi* in OBI is somewhat similar to the particle の in Japanese, which is genitive, and when it is added to a verb (e.g., あなたこれ食べるの), it is a highly modal expression, producing such a meaning as interrogative “Do you eat this?” or “You will eat this!” etc.

8.3. The genitive and nominalizing functions of *qi* in OBI

8.3.1. *Qi* as a genitive marker in possessive constructions

Example (1) below is the only example with respect to which scholars in OBI have a general agreement that *qi* used there might be a possessive pronoun (e.g., Nivison 1992c: 8; Shen Pei 1992: 164; Zhang Yujin 1994: 174; Takashima 1996: 17):

- (1) 庚寅卜, 王, 余燎其配. (*Yingguo* 1864)

gēngyín bǔ, wáng, yú liáo qí pèi.

gengyin day/ divine/, king/, I/ offer a burnt-offering/ *qí* / mate, spouse

A: Crack-making on the *gengyin* day, the king [tested]: I will make a burnt-offering to his mate. (cited in Takashima 1996: 17 example 9)

B: Crack-making on the *gengyin* day, the king [tested]: I will make a burnt-offering to (ancestor XX)'s mate.

Interpretation A represents the understanding of *qi* as a possessive pronoun or a pronoun-like element that is used as a pronominal possessor. Interpretation B represents our understanding of *qi* as a genitive marker that is used when a NP in the previous context is in a semantic relation with another NP in the following context as that of a possessor and a possessee (see discussion in Chapter 5).²⁴¹

It seems that the criterion for scholars to conclude that *qi* used in this example is a pronoun is not simply that it occurs in front of a noun. That is, besides (1), there are also cases in which *qi* used immediately before a noun in OBI, but scholars still hesitate to treat them as cases of pronominal *qi*. The follow two examples represent such cases:

- (2) a. 有鹿.

yǒu lù

have/ deer

There are deer.

- b. 亡其鹿.

wáng qí lù.

²⁴¹ According to Takashima (1996, Note 11: 38), it is possible that *qi* here referred to the consort of Huang Yin 黄尹 who appears frequently as a recipient of the burnt-sacrifice. If this is correct, in our genitive analysis, *qi* would be the genitive marker used to specify the possessive relation between Huang Yin 黄尹 and his consort, referred to by the noun *pei* 配 here.

not have/ qí/ deer

There may not be deer. (*Heji*: 893 obverse; cited in Shen Pei 1992: 164)

- (3) a. 貞: 有虎.

zhēn: yǒu hǔ

test/ have/ tiger

Tested: There are tigers.

- b. 貞: 亡其虎.

zhēn: wáng qí hǔ.

test/ not have/ qí/ tiger

Tested: There may not be tigers. (*Heji*: 671 obverse; cited in Shen Pei 1992: 164)

Both Nivison (1992b: 11-12) and Takashima 1996: 15) tend to treat the *qi* in (2b) and (3b) as a pronoun having anaphoric reference. However, Shen Pei (1992: 164-165) treats the *qi* in (2b) and (3b) as the modal *qi*, the same as the *qi* used in the preverbal position as in example (4):

- (4) a. 壬申卜, 貞: 弼其有禍.

rénshēn bǔ, zhēn: Bì qí yǒu huò.

renshen day/ divine/, test/ Bi/ qí/ have/ misfortune

Divining on the *renshen* day, tested: Bi may have misfortunes.

- b. 不其禍.

bù qí huò.

not/ qí/ misfortune

It may not be misfortunes (for Bi).²⁴² (*Tokyo* 962; cited in Shen Pei 1992: 164-165)

To determine whether the *qi* used in (2b) and (3b) is a pronoun or a modal particle is one of the most puzzling issues in the study of *qi* in OBI, for which we do not have a certain answer either at the moment. But we feel difficult to hold a pronominal analysis because of the use of *qi* in the following examples:

- (5) a. 己酉卜, 𠄎貞: 危方其有禍.

jǐyǒu bǔ, Nan zhēn: Wēi Fāng qí yǒu huò.

jíyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Wei Fang/ qí/ have/ misfortune

²⁴² We are not sure about our interpretation of (4b); the word *huo* 禍, “misfortune” here seems to be a verb, like the word *yu* 雨, “rain” in the phrase *bu qi yu* 不其雨, “it may not rain.”

Divining on the *jiyou* day, Nan tested: Wei Fang may have misfortunes.

b. 己酉卜，敵貞：危方亡其禍。五月。

jǐyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: Wēi Fāng wáng qí huò. wǔ yuè.

jiyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Wei Fang/ not have/ qí/ misfortune/ fifth/ month

Divining on the *jiyou* day, Nan tested: Wei Fang may not have misfortunes. Fifth month. (*Heji* 8492, cited in Shen Pei 1992: 165)

Charges with this pattern are undoubtedly bring difficulties to the pronominal analysis of the *qi* used after the negative possessive verb *wang* and before a noun as in (2b) and (3b). In (5), *qi* occurs in both charges, and in the negative charge (5b), *qi* has the same distribution as the *qi* in (2b) and (3b). If we consider the *qi* in (2b) and (3b) as a pronoun having anaphoric reference, then we should also apply this analysis to the *qi* in (5b). However, this hypothesis does not seem to work in (5b), because it will be difficult to explain why the two *qis* in (5) should be treated differently. Namely, why do we have to treat *qi* in (5a) as an adverbial or modal particle, and to treat the *qi* in (5b) as a pronoun-like word referring back to what was introduced previously? Moreover, this kind of treatment seems to go against the logical relation between a question and its answers, if one holds the view as we do that paired charges are the binary answers denoted by the yes-no questions being divined. That is, if we are correct in understanding the positive and negative charges as in (5) as the set of possible answers denoted by a yes-no question in the diviner's mind, as proposed in Part I, then the charges in (5) can be taken as the two possible answers denoted by a question like "Will Wei Fang have misfortunes?" The possible answers to this yes-no question would be a positive proposition such as "Wei Fang will have misfortunes" and a negative proposition such as "Wei Fang will not have misfortunes." However, if we maintain that *qi* in (5b) is a pronoun-like element, then the possible answers would be as follows: "Wei Fang will have misfortunes" and "Wei Fang will not have **these/the** misfortunes." It is hard to explain why one would answer the question with a positive answer by not specifying a particular of "misfortunes," but would answer the question with a negative by specifying a particular kind of misfortunes. It is possible that the question being divined in this context referred to a particular kind of misfortunes such as "Will Wei Fang have these misfortunes?" Nevertheless, if it was this case, then the possible answers denoted by such questions would be

also balance in the following way: “Wei Fang will have **these** misfortunes” and “Wei Fang will not have **these** misfortunes.” In a word, the two possible answers generated by the same question should be equal in indefinite or definite according to the regular logical relation between a question and its answers. If this understanding of the relation between a question and its possible answers is correct, then it leads to the conclusion that the two *qis* in both charges in (5) must be grammatically and semantically identical element. In other words, if we treat the *qi* after the verb *wang* in (5b) as pronoun, then we should also treat the *qi* before the verb *you* in (5a) as a pronoun; if we treat the *qi* before the verb *you* as a modal particle, then we should also treat the *qi* after the verb *wang* as a modal particle.

Here we prefer a modal analysis for the *qis* in (5).²⁴³ However, this analysis requires an explanation for the seemingly irregular word order of “*wang* + *qi*” in terms of the regular order for the co-occurrence of *qi* and a verb is “*qi* + verb.” Namely, why does modal *qi* occur after the verb *wang*? For this our tentative explanation is as follows.

We consider irregular word order of “*wang* + *qi*” might have to do with the double property of the negative verb *wang*. Namely *wang*, as a negative form of the possessive verb *you*, except for having the character of a verb, also has the character of a negative word. Therefore, when there is the need to add a modal meaning to negative possessive sentence, then one would have two choices: One is to follow the syntactic rule by which *qi* combines with a verb, namely, *qi* precedes the negative verb *wang* and yields the word order of “*qi wang*.” The other is to follow the syntactic rule by which *qi* combines with an ordinary negative adverb, namely *qi* follows the negative verb *wang* and yields the irregular word order of “*wang qi*.” It seems that in such expression, there is the intention to emphasize the negative aspect of the verb *wang*, thus treating it as simply a negator, and neglecting its verbal property. Therefore, the word order “*wang qi*” is preferred. And the fact that the “irregular” expression was used more commonly, thus becoming as a “regular” or “standard” device seems to suggest that “*wang qi*” might have been reanalyzed as an inseparable unit and used as the modal negative form for the verb *you* in the language. However, this hypothesis still needs further investigation.

²⁴³ As will be discussed in 8.4, we cannot ignore the fact that the presence of *qi* in a divinatory context in which the paired charges contain the possessive verb *you* and its negative counterpart *wang* is usually sensitive to the desirability and controllability of the event/state being expressed.

By excluding these examples in which *qi* might be considered a pronoun, now let us return the *qi* in example (1), which is the only reliable example in OBI in which we see that *qi* is used in a possessive phrase. One point to notice is that even if the phrase *qi pei* 其配 is a possessive construction as a whole and can be glossed as “his mate,” this does not mean that *qi* in this phrase is necessarily a possessive pronoun, more or less equivalent to “his” in English. Instead, there are two possible analyses for the grammatical function of *qi* in this possessive phrase: (i) *qi* is a pronominal possessor, and (ii) *qi* is a pure genitive marker indicating the possessive relation between an antecedent NP and the following noun. In other words, if we were to take the analysis in (i), then *qi* would be a possessive pronoun, like “his,” or, it may just be a pronoun used temporarily as a possessor, similar to the pronoun *yu* 余, “I,” in the structure *yu zi* 余子, “my child/children,” in the following example (6). In this example, *yu* 余, a first person pronoun meaning “I,” is used attributively in front of the noun *zi* 子, “child.” The function of the pronoun *yu* 余, “I” here is the pronominal possessor of the head noun *zi* 子, “child; children.”

(6) 乙丑卜，王貞占：娥子余子。

yǐchǒu bǔ, wáng zhēn zhàn: E zǐ yú zǐ.

yichou day/ divine/, king/ test/ prognosticate (?) / E/ nurture/ I / child

Divining on the *yichou* day, the king tested and prognosticated: (Lady) E is able to

nurture/bring up my children.²⁴⁴ (*Heji* 21067)

On the other hand, if we were to take the analysis in (ii), then *qi* would be a genitive marker like *qi* or *zhi* in early Classical Chinese (see Chapter 5) but not a pronominal possessor like *yu* in (6).

It seems that the genitive analysis is not easily supported by the OBI data. First of all, there

²⁴⁴ We are not clear about the interpretation of *zhan* in this example. In Xu Zhongshu (1989: 351-2) the following example is cited:

己酉卜，王占娥嬖允其于一月....

jǐyǒu bǔ, wáng zhàn E miǎn yǔn qí yú yī yuè....

jiyou day/ divine/, king/ prognosticate; divinw / E/ indeed/ qí/ yú/ first/ month

Divining on the *jiyou* day, the king prognosticated: Lady E's giving birth will perhaps indeed in the first month... (*Xu*: 5-7-5)

Following the *Shuowen* definition of *zhan* 占 as *shi zhao wen ye* 視兆問也, “to ask by examining the cracks,” Xu says *zhan* in this sentence means *bu wen* 卜問, “to ask by divining.” But Xu also considers that *zhan* 占 used here is similar to the character *zhan* 占 that is usually used in the formulaic phrase *wang zhan yue* 王占曰, saying that the meaning of *zhan* 占 is close to the meaning of the character *zhan* 占 in the *Shuowen*, concluding *zhan* 占 means “to judge good or ill luck by examining the cracks; to make prediction by examining the cracks; to prognosticate.” Here we follow this interpretation.

However, in Zhang Yujin (1994: 303), *zhan* in (6) is interpreted as a place name. Namely *zhan* E is considered as a noun phrase meaning “E, the Lady from Zhan.”

is only one example in which *qi* involves in possessive constructions. Moreover, in OBI, the possessive phrases that are marked with *qi* or its related form *zhi* are not seen. As mentioned in Chapter 5, in later classical texts, we see that when a pronoun is used as a possessor, it can be followed by a genitive marker such as *zhi* or *qi*, as in *wo zhi di* 我之弟, “my younger brother,” or *zhen qi di* 朕其弟, “my younger brother.” Thus, we can assume that a pronominal possessive phrase without the genitive marker *qi* or *zhi* is a case in which the genitive marker was omitted. In other words, we assume that the underlying structure of pronominal possessive phrases is a possessive structure headed by the genitive marker *zhi* or *qi*, and the pronoun is the possessor which may or may not be overtly present (see Chapter 5). Along similar lines, we would expect the pronominal or nominal possessive in OBI also to be headed by a genitive marker, something like *zhi* or *qi*; this would help determine the nature of *qi* in example (1). However, this is not the case in the OBI data we have seen so far. Instead, what we see in OBI is the possessive without the presence of a genitive marker, as in the phrase *yu zi* 余子, “my children” in (6). Below is another similar example:

- (7) a. 癸未卜, 咎貞: 黃尹保我史。

guǐwěi bǔ, Dūn zhēn: Huáng Yīn bǎo wǒ shǐ.

guiwei day/, Dun/ test/, Huang Yin/ protect/ we/ emissary

Divining on the *guiwei* day, Dun tested: Huang Yin will protect our emissaries.

- b. 貞: 黃尹弗保我史。

zhēn: Huáng Yīn fú bǎo wǒ shǐ.

test/, Huang Yin/ not/ protect/ we/ emissary

Tested: Huang Yin will not protect our emissaries. (*Bingbian* 557: 1-2)

In this example, *wo shi* 我史, “our emissaries,” is similar to the pronominal possessive construction *yu zi* 余子, “my children” in (6), in that neither is marked with an overt genitive marker. In OBI, the nominal possessive constructions are also simply expressed by joining the two nouns together:

- (8) 帝臣

dì chén

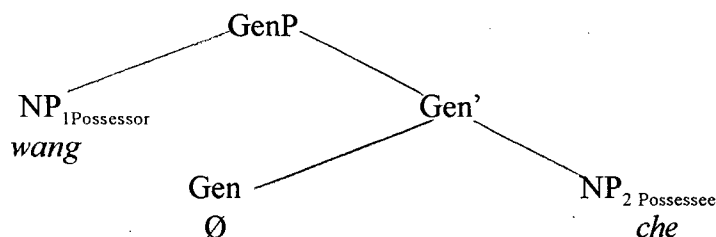
king; god/ minister; servant

the king's/god's ministers/servants (*Tieyun* 1.1)

- (9) 王車
 wáng chē
 king/ chariot
 the king's chariot (*Jinghua* 1)²⁴⁵

The nominal possessive constructions in (6) and (7) are similar to the pronominal possessive constructions in (8) and (9) in that none of them contain an overt genitive marker such as *qi* or *zhi*. This evidence surely does not support the hypothesis that the language has a genitive marker like *qi*. However, this evidence also does not disprove the hypothesis, because in the later stages of the language, there are also similar possessive constructions in which the genitive markers *qi* or *zhi* do not occur. Based on the above examples, we assume that in OBI, a genitive relation between the two nouns can be expressed without a covert genitive marker. The structure of the possessive phrases in the above examples is illustrated in (10).

(10)



In this structure, the genitive relation between the two nouns is headed by a null genitive head. Now the question to be considered is: Where is *qi* in the phrase *qi pei* 其配, “his mate,” located in this structure? Is it in the position of Spec GenP as the possessor, or in the head position of GenP, namely, the Gen position?

Functionally, the phrase *qi pei* 其配, “his mate,” in example (1) is similar to the pronominal possessive construction *yu zi* 余子, “my children” in (6) and *wo shi* 我史, “our emissaries” in (7). So it is possible to treat *qi pei* 其配, “his mate” as a pronominal possessive construction in which *qi* is like a third person pronoun used as a possessor, in the same way as the pronouns *yu* and *wo*.

However, the fact that *qi* never appears in OBI independently as a subject or an object in

²⁴⁵ These possessive examples in (8) and (9) are cited from Ito1 and Takashima (1996: 223-224).

a sentence, like *yu* or *wo*, suggests that we should not treat *qi* as an ordinary pronoun like *yu* or *wo*. In other words, we cannot take *qi* as an ordinary third person pronoun used temporarily as a possessor in the phrase *qi pei* 其配, “his mate.” Then, can we take *qi* here as a specific possessive pronoun like *his*, *her*, *its*, and *their* in English?

In terms of the contextual meaning, this analysis seems quite possible. However, considering the pronoun system in OBI, and in the later period, this analysis is untenable for the following reasons. First, in OBI, and in later forms of Chinese, a pronoun does not have a different form in its possessive usage. Then a question arises as to why there must be the particular form of third person possessive? Another problem with this analysis is that there is no nominal form for third person pronouns in the language; then why must there be a possessive form? Therefore, from the pronoun system of the language, it seems untenable to take *qi* as a third person possessive pronoun.

However, theoretically, it seems possible to take *qi* as a general possessive pronoun which is not restricted only to third person. In other words, it is possible that *qi* is a general genitive/possessive form for the first, second, and third persons which can be interpreted as “my, your, her/his/its/their” depending on the context. However, this analysis is also not tenable, because of the fact that when first or second person possessor is expressed, an ordinary first or second person pronoun, not *qi*, is used.

There is an additional reason to hold this hypothesis. That is, if we consider historical evidence of the genitive marker *qi* in early Classical Chinese—its descendant form in some modern Chinese dialects (see Chapter 5) and its cognate, the genitive case marker *-gi* in Tibetan (Yu Min 1949)—it is not implausible to assume that *qi* as used in example (1) is a pure genitive marker.

So for these reasons, we do not take *qi* in the OBI data, as in example (1), as a pronoun-like element used in a genitive/possessive function. Instead, we treat it as a pure genitive marker.

8.3.2. The nominalizing function of *qi* in dependent clauses

If the status of *qi* as a genitive marker in possessive constructions may be doubtful, there is certainly no doubt that *qi* is used as a nominalizing marker in dependent clauses in OBI. In fact,

evidence for this indirectly upholds the analysis of *qi* as a genitive marker. In the following example, *qi* seems to be used as a nominalizing marker:

(11) 己未貞：王其告其從亞侯。

jǐwèi zhēn: wáng qí gào qí cóng Yà Hóu

jiwei day/ test/, the king/ qí/ report/ qí/ follow/ Ya Hou

On the *jiwei* day tested: The king shall be going to perform the announcement ritual (that he) follows Ya Hou.

(More smoothly: "The king shall be going to announce his [intention to] follow Ya

Hou.") (*Cuibian* 367, the translation is cited from Takashima 1996: 19, example 10)

There are two *qi* in this example. The first *qi* occurs in the front of the main verb *gao* 告, "announce" in the main clause. The second *qi* occurs after the main verb *gao*, "announce" and before the second verb *cong* 從, "follow." Let us ignore the first *qi* for the time being. As for the second *qi* in this sentence, Chang Tsung-tung (1970) first proposes to treat it as the subordinator of "object clause." This idea is taken up in Serruys (1974) who further extends it to the analysis of *qi* in other types of subordinate clauses such as conditional clauses, suggesting that *qi* can be treated as a subordinator of "if" or "when," as in the following example:

(12) 癸亥卜，爭，羽辛未王其迺河，不雨。

guǐhài bǔ, Zhēng, yǔ xīnwèi wáng qí yǒu hé, bù yǔ.

guihai day/ divine/, Zheng/, next/ *xinwei* day/ king/ qí/ wine libation/ He (the river god)/, not/ rain

"At divination of day kuei-hai, Cheng tested [the proposition], next day Hsin-wei (eight days later) the king, if he will make wine libation to the Ho)river god), it will not rain."

(cited in Serruys 1974: 54)

According to Serruys, the *qi* in this example is used as a subordinator, as seen in his translation: he put a pause between "the king" and the if-clause, which seems to indicate that he takes *qi* as a subordinator like "if." The recognition that *qi* behaves differently in main clauses and subordinate clauses is of significance for our understanding of the nature of this particle. However, how to analyze the function of *qi* in this environment is still under debate. Both Chang (1970) and Serruys (1974) treat it as a subordinator. However, it seems that the treatment of *qi* as a

subordinator is misleading, because with this terminology, one might think that *qi* in a subordinate/dependent clause is something like the English “that,” “if,” or “when.”²⁴⁶ In our opinion, the *qi* as used in (11) and (12) should be understood as a nominalizing marker, the same as the nominalizing marker *qi* or *zhi* in early Classical Chinese as discussed in Chapter 5. That is, the *qi*-marked dependent clauses in (11) and (12) manifest analogous properties to the nominalized construction “Subj/Ø + *zhi/qi* + VP” in the early classical periods.²⁴⁷ The similarity between “(Subj) + *qi/zhi* + VP” in dependent clauses in OBI and that in early Classical Chinese can be further supported by the following example:

- (13) a. 甲午貞：于父丁告律其步。

jiǎwǔ zhēn: yú Fù Dīng gào Lǚ qí bù.

jiawu day/ test/, to/ Father/ Ding/ report/ Lü/ qí/ go on foot

Divining on the *jiawu* day, (X) tested: To Fu Ding (we) should announce Lü’s going (somewhere) on foot.

- b. 勿告律其步。

wù gào Lǚ qí bù.

not / report/ Lü/ qí/ go on foot

To Fu Ding (we) should not announce Lü’s going (somewhere) on foot. (*Heji* 32856)

In this pair, the main verb *gao* 告, “report, announce,” in both charge sentences takes a complement/object clause: Lü *qi bu* 律其步, “Lü’s going on foot.” Here we see clearly that *qi* intervenes between the subject and verb in the complement clause, rather than immediately following the main verb as in (11). The occurrence of *qi* in this position shows that *qi* is not a subordinator like *that* in English. In other words, if *qi* is a subordinator used to introduce an embedded object/complement clause like *that* in English, it is expected to immediately follow the main verb *gao*, “report,” to introduce the object clause, but not to occur between the subject phrase Lü 律 and the verb *bu* 步, “go on foot” in the object clause.

²⁴⁶ Maybe we can say that the *qi*-marked dependent clauses are more like the English genitive constructions such as “John’s coming” or “John’s arrival,” rather than the “that” clauses.

²⁴⁷ The view that *qi* has a nominalizing function in OBI is first suggested in Nivison (1992c) as follows: Similarly “*qi*” in its verbal or pre-verbal mode could be used (my theory goes) as an adjective, nominalizing the verb or verb-phrase that follows, so that noun-phrase “*qi* x(ing)” refers to the “x(ing),” actual or hypothetical, that would have been asserted by the sentence “*qi* x.” The resulting idiom is a quasi “that” clause that functions as a subordinate clause (just as the form “subject *zhi* verb *ye*” does in later Chinese, the most common use being as a conditional clause. (1992c: 4). Takashima (1996: 24) agrees with this view, saying “*qi* has a nominalizing effect, entailing a quasi ‘that’ clause functions like ‘subject *zhi* verb *ye*’ in classical Chinese.”

The dependent clause *Lü qi bu* 律其步, “Lü’s going on foot” in (13) is reminiscent of the nominalized clause “(subject) + *zhi/qi* + VP” in early Classical Chinese. As have demonstrated in Chapter 5, nominalizing function of *qi* and *zhi* in this type of construction is in fact an extension of their function as genitive markers. Along similar lines, we may also assume that the dependent *qi* in (11)-(13) is a nominalizing marker, which is the extension of the genitive *qi*.

The most commonly seen dependent clauses that involve the use of *qi* are conditional/topic clauses, as in (12). Below are more similar examples:

- (14) a. 丙申卜，爭貞：王其逐麋，萁。

bǐngshēn bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wáng qí zhú mí, gòu.

bingshen day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, king/ qí/ chase/ *mi*-deer/, encounter

Divining on the *bingshen* day, Zheng tested: If the king goes chasing *mi*-deer, he will encounter some. (*Bingbian* 88: 3)

This divination is about a hunting activity, and whether the king will catch game during his intended hunt. Here *qi* occurs in the conditional clause, between the subject and the verb. This use of *qi* is quite common in divinations about hunting activities, which are usually expressed in the following formula in the inscriptions of later periods:

- (15) 戊子卜，何貞：王其田，往來亡災。

wùzǐ bǔ, He zhēn: wáng qí tián, wǎng lái wáng zāi.

wuzi day/ divine/, He/ test/, king/ qí/ hunt/, go/ come/ there is no / disaster

Divining on the *wuzi* day, He tested: If the king goes hunting, there will be no disasters in his going and coming. (*Heji* 29093)

In examples (11) to (15), *qi* is used in the dependent clauses with verbs expressing controllable events or states. In fact, *qi* may also co-occur with verbs expressing uncontrollable events or states in a dependent clause. Consider the following examples:

- (16) a. 辛酉卜，敵貞：乙丑其雨，不佳我囡。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: yǐchǒu qí yǔ, bù wéi wǒ huò

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, *yichou* day/ qí/ rain/, not /be/ we/ misfortune

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Nan tested: If it rains on the *yichou* day, it is not the case that God sends down misfortune upon us.

b. 貞: 乙丑其雨, 隹我囡.

zhēn: yǐchǒu qí yǔ, bù wéi wǒ huò

test/, *yichou* day/ qí/ rain/, be/ we/ misfortune

Tested: If it rains on the *yichou* day, it is the case that God sends down misfortune upon us. (*Bingbian* 306: 6-7)

In (17) below, the conditional structures are used in the prognostication component. The event associated with *qi* is also uncontrollable.

(17) 王固曰: 其隹丁娩, 妸. 其隹庚娩, 引吉.

wáng zhàn yuē: qí wéi dīng miǎn, jiā. qí wéi gēng miǎn, yǐn jí.

king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ be/ dīng day/ give birth/, good/, qí/ be / *geng* day/ give birth/, greatly/ auspicious

The king prognosticated and said: "If it is on a *dīng* day that (she) gives birth, it will be good; if it is on a *geng* day that (she) gives birth, it will be protractedly auspicious.

(*Bingbian* 241: 1)

In examples (16)-(17), *qi* is placed in front of the verb in the protasis, and the analysis of *qi* as a nominalizing marker appears to work. However, one point worth noting is that not all dependent clauses in OBI are marked by *qi*. The following example shows that *qi* is not necessarily used in a conditional clause:

(18) a. 癸未卜, 亘貞: 王出囡, 若.

guǐwěi bǔ, Huán zhēn: wáng yǒu fú, ruò.

guiwei day/ divine/, Huan/ test/, king/ offer/ captive/, approve

Divining on the *guiwei* day, Huan tested: As for the king's offering captives (as sacrificial victims), it will meet with (God's) approval.

b. 王出囡, 不若.

guǐwěi bǔ, Huán zhēn: wáng yǒu fú, bù ruò.

guiwei day/ divine/, Huan/ test/, king/ offer/ captive/, not/ approve

Divining on the *guiwei* day, Huan tested: As for the king's offering captives (as sacrificial victims), it will not meet with (God's) approval. (*Bingbian* 53: 1-2)

The charge sentences in this example can be analyzed as a topical/conditional construction. That

is, in each of the charges, the first clause refers to an intended future event, the sacrificial event of offering captives, and the following clause predicts a possible result will follow if the sacrificial event takes place. From the contrast between the second clause in the two charges, we assume that the question being divined is whether the king's offering captives will meet God's approval (see Chapter 4). Clearly in this case, *qi* is not present in the protasis 王出服.

The examples above raise a question: What is the difference between the presence and absence of *qi* in a conditional/topic clause? One possible explanation is that the presence and absence of *qi* is simply a syntactic option. Namely, we may assume that conditional/topic clauses in OBI do not receive a uniform formal marking with *qi*: they can be expressed as nominalized constructions by inserting the nominalizing marker *qi* between the subject and the verb; or they may also be expressed in a non-nominalized construction without using *qi*. However, this explanation only suggests that there exist two possible types of conditional/topic clauses in OBI; it does not account for the semantic difference between these two types of clauses. If we take the basic assumption that any difference in syntactic form in language must be connected with a difference in semantic meaning,²⁴⁸ then we will have to further explore the semantic reason for the choice between the presence and absence of *qi* in conditional/topic clauses. Considering that *qi* may also function as a modal particle in main clauses (see discussion below), the questions facing us are these: Is *qi* in the conditional type of dependent clause a pure nominalizing marker or a pure modal particle? Or, does *qi* function as a nominalizing marker and a modal particle at the same time? We will come back to these questions in Section 8.4.4.2.

8.4. The modal function of *qi* in main clauses

Since the beginnings of OBI study, *qi* has been assumed to be a particle with some modal force. It is reasonable to have this basic modal assumption about *qi*, because in most cases, *qi* is used in front of a verb, and the presence and absence of *qi* show no effects with respect to the grammaticality or well-formedness of a sentence. However, there is still no general agreement as to the exact

²⁴⁸ The most fundamental assumption about semantic interpretation and its connection with syntax proposed in generative grammar is that it is compositionally derived from the structure provided by the syntax. That is, semantic rules mirror syntactic rules, and sentence meanings are mapped compositionally from sentence structures. For a brief introduction to this concept, see Hagstrom (1998: Chapter 5) and Kearns (2000: Chapter 1). For a more complete introduction to these concepts, see Heim & Kratzer (1998). The similar concept is also expressed in Chafe (1971) (see Takashima 1973 for the exposition of Chafe's ideas and the reference).

modal function and meaning *qi*. The most puzzling question facing us is why some charge sentences are associated with *qi*, but other charges, that are seemingly the same, are not associated with *qi*. Why would a diviner to use *qi* in one charge, and not use *qi* in the another? The aim of this section is to answer this question through the examination of *qi*'s occurrence in divinatory contexts, in particular, in the charge component.

8.4.1. The basic assumption: *qi* is a mark of uncertain outcome

Here we provide a hypothesis by which the presence and absence of *qi* in a charge sentence can be consistently accounted for.

We propose that the basic modal function of *qi* in OBI is also that of an uncertain outcome marker (or an Irrealis marker), the same as *qi* in early Classical Chinese. However, this does not mean that *qi* is merely a mark specifying a binary dimension of objective reality. If it is so, the distributions of *qi* in the divinatory contexts would not be as complex as the way they are. In our view, the apparent complexity of the distributions of *qi* in different contexts lies in the application of the modal distinction encoded by *qi* to various contexts. In other words, the absence and the presence of *qi* could have been manipulated by the diviners as a tool not only to signal his degree of certainty about the factual status of the possible outcome proposed in the charge, but also to index his attitude concerning the desirability or expectation of the situation expressed in the charge.²⁴⁹

This analysis can be supported by the following evidence:

- (i) The use of *qi* in main clauses is only seen in the charge and prognostication components; it is never used in the preface and verification components.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Note that the presence or absence of *qi* is not only related to the diviner's attitude toward the proposition being expressed, but also combines with some aspectual and tense effects. The reader is referred to Takashima (1994) for a detailed discussion of the aspectual functions of *qi*. In our opinion, *qi* is not necessarily considered an aspectual marker, even though the use of *qi* shows some aspectual (or tense) effects. As a mark of uncertain outcomes or Irrealis, the association of *qi* with some particular aspects or tenses is not surprising: the Realis-Irrealis distinction is always accompanied with a compatibility in tenses and aspects.

²⁵⁰ In OBI, all the uses of *qi* occurs in the components of charge and prognostication. The incompatibility between main-clause *qi* and the contexts of preface and verification has to do with inconsistency in modality. That is, the events or states expressed in these two contexts are what has happened, which is not compatible with *qi*'s modal function of expressing uncertainty. The incompatibility between dependent-clause *qi* and the contexts of preface and verification might be due to the fact the events or states recorded in these two components are simply meant to be kept as memoranda, thus there is no need to use complex sentences.

- (ii) The use of *qi* in simple sentences (i.e., charges that contain only one verb) is mostly associated with the divinatory contexts about uncontrollable events or states. *Qi* is usually not associated with controllable verbs in simple main clauses.²⁵¹ However, in the environment of complex sentences, *qi* may optionally be associated with controllable verbs in main clauses.
- (iii) Within the divinatory contexts about uncontrollable events or states, *qi* is usually associated with charges that express undesirable situations.
- (iv) The use of *qi* in dependent clauses shows no sensitivity to the controllability of a verb. In other words, in the environment of dependent clauses, *qi* may co-occur with a controllable verb or an uncontrollable verb as shown in Section 7.3.2.

We consider the correlation between *qi* and the above contexts to be determined by *qi*'s nature as an uncertain outcome marker (or Irrealis marker). In what follows, we will present OBI data supporting this view.

8.4.2. Some definitions

8. 4. 2. 1. Simple sentences (charges) and complex sentences (charges)

By simple sentences (charges), we refer to the charge clauses that contains only one verb. By complex sentences (charges), we refer to the charge clauses that contains more than one verb.

8. 4. 2. 2. Controllable verbs

By controllable verbs (including predicate adjectives), we refer to the verbs (or adjectives) that express events or states that are manageable by human beings.²⁵² Common controllable verbs in OBI are of the following kinds:

- (i) verbs expressing hunting, or going out activities, such as *zhu* 逐, "to chase," *shou* 狩, "to hunt," *tian* 田, "to hunt," *xian* 陷, "to trap," *chu* 出, "to go out," *wang* 往, "to go to," *ru* 入, "to enter," and *bu* 步, "go-by-foot," (ii) verbs to do with military affairs, such as *hu* 乎, "to call upon," *ling* 令, "to order," *zheng* 征, "to have a punitive campaign," *fa* 伐, "to attack," and *cong*

²⁵¹ In the *Bingbian*, only occasionally *qi* is associated with verbs to do with sacrificial activities in main clauses (see discussion later).

²⁵² Takashima (1973) is the first work which makes a distinction between controllable verbs and uncontrollable verbs, and shows some grammatical rules, in particular, the usage of the negative words in OBI interacts with the semantic feature of controllability of verbs.

从, “to follow somebody in a military campaign;” (iii) verbs expressing agricultural activities or building activities, such as 耜, “to plough,” *li shu* 立黍, “to preside or supervise the millet planting,” and *zuo* 作, “to make;” and (iv) verbs expressing sacrificial events, including verbs to do with the way of offering sacrifice victims, such as *you* 侑, “to offer,” *liao* 燎, “to burn,” *you* 酹, “to perform the *you*-cut sacrifice,” and the verbs to do with sacrificial rituals such as *yu* 卺, “to perform an exorcism,” *gao* 告, “to make announcement,” *dao* 禱, “to pray for,” *zhu* 祝, “to invoke,” *ning* 寧, “to conduct pacifying ritual,” and *bin* 賓, “to treat (someone) as a guest.”

8.4.2.3. Uncontrollable verbs

By uncontrollable verbs (including predicate adjectives), we refer to the verbs (or adjectives) that express events or states that are not manageable by human beings. In the specific case of the Shang divination activities, uncontrollable verbs refer to the events or states that are beyond the manageability of the Shang people, in particular, the Shang rulers and diviners. Common uncontrollable verbs in OBI include the following types:

(i) verbs to do with weather conditions such as *yu* 雨, “rain,” *qi* 啟, “clear up (i.e., not cloudy),” *yiri* 易日, “turn sunny,” *feng* 風 (風), “windy,” and *xue* 雪, “snow;” (ii) verbs to do with death, sickness, disaster, mishap, such as *si* 死, “die,” *ji* 疾 “sick,” *you huo* 出咎 “have misfortune,” and *wanghuo* 亡, “not have misfortune;” (iii) verbs to do with luck, such as receiving blessing or help from God, such as *ji* 吉, “auspicious,” *jia* 妣, “lucky,” and *shouyou* 受又, “receive assistance from God;” (iv) verbs to do with God’s or spirits’ wills, such as *ruo* 若, “to meet God’s approval,” and *tuo* 咎, “cause a mishap;” and (v) verbs to do with the existence and possession of a situation, such as *you* 有, “there is, have,” and its negative counterpart *wang* 亡, “there is no, not have.”

In addition to these verbs that expression situations not conducted by humans, there are some verbs that express human-conducted activities that should also be considered as uncontrollable, if these verbs express activities conducted by persons or groups beyond the control of the Shang king. For example, verbs such as *lai* 來, “to come,” and *qie* 挈, “to bring along,” depicting the actions under the control of a human being, are considered uncontrollable when the performer of the relevant action is a person or a tribe not belonging to Shang. Consider the following examples:

- (18) a. 己未卜，般貞：缶其來見王。一月。

jǐwèi bǔ, Nán zhēn: Fǒu qí lái jiàn wáng. yī yuè.

jíwei day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Fou/ qí/ come/ see/ king/ one; first / month

Divining on the jíwei day, Nan tested: Fou may happen to be coming to have audience with His Majesty. First month.

- b. 己未卜，般貞：缶不其來見王。

jǐwèi bǔ, Nán zhēn: Fǒu bù qí lái jiàn wáng. yī yuè.

jíwei day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Fou/ not/ qí/ come/ see/ king/, one/ month

Divining on the jíwei day, Nan tested: Fou may not happen to be coming to have audience with His Majesty.” (Bingbian 124: 15-16)

- (19) a. 咎來馬

Dūn lái mǎ

Dun/ come / horse

Dun will bring horses.²⁵³

- b. 不其來馬。

bù qí lái mǎ

not/ qí/ come/ horse

(Dun) may not bring horses. (Bingbian 342: 4-5)

Sometimes, *lai* may combine with verbs expressing existence, such as *you* 有, “there is; have,” and its negative counterpart *wang* 亡, “there is not; not have,” to express an uncontrollable event or state, as in (20).

- (20) a. 貞：其出來嬲自訖。

zhēn: qí yǒu lái niǎo zì zhǐ



test/ qí/ there is/ come/ alarming news/ from/ Zhi²⁵⁴

Tested: There may happen to be the advent of alarming news from Zhi.

- b. 貞：亡來嬲自訖。

zhēn: wáng yǒu lái niǎo zì zhǐ

²⁵³ Note that the verb *lai* 來, “to come” in this example is used as a causative verb, meaning “to make... come, to bring.”

²⁵⁴ Most scholars take the character 嬲, written as  in the bone inscription, as a variant form of *jian* 艱,  “difficulty.” Here I follow Takashima in interpreting it as “(alarming) news (carried by messenger).” However, the pronunciation of this word is not clear. If we take the part 壺 as its phonetic element, then it is presumably pronounced like zhù (see Takashima 2004b: PP117, note 6).

test/ there is no/ come/ alarming news/ from/ Zhi

Tested: There will not be the advent of alarming news from Zhi. (*Bingbian* 383: 1-2)

There is an additional group of verbs expressing human-conducted activities that should be considered uncontrollable. These are the verbs that have the semantic feature of “success.”

Consider the following examples:

(21) a. 壬子卜, 爭貞: 自今五日 我𠬪𠬪。

rénzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: zì jīn wǔ rì wǒ cái Zhòu.

renzi day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, from/ present/ five/ days/ we/ harm/ Zhou

Divining on the *renzi* day, Zheng tested: Starting from the present, in five days (or: five days from now), we will (be able to/successfully) harm Zhou.

b 貞: 自今五日 我弗其𠬪𠬪。

zhēn: zì jīn wǔ rì wǒ fú qí cái Zhòu.

test/, from/ present/ five/ days/ we/ not/ qí/ harm/ Zhou

Tested: Starting from the present, in five days (or: five days from now), we may

not (be able to/successfully) harm Zhou. (*Bingbian* 1: 1-2)

Apparently, the action expressed by the verb *cái* 𠬪, “to harm” is controllable,²⁵⁵ because a person can decide whether or not to perform it. But there is a good reason to consider it uncontrollable, as suggested by Chow (1982): “𠬪 may be classified as a ‘success’ verb which implies that successful completion of a certain act is intrinsic to the meaning of the verb” (1982: 297).²⁵⁶ Following this analysis, we take *cái* as an uncontrollable verb, because whether or not one can successfully complete such an action is something out of one’s control. The addition of the English phrases “to be able to” or “successfully” in the above translation reflects the semantic feature of this type of “succeed” verb. Other verbs that can be assigned to this category including: *huo* 隻, “capture,” *bi* 𠬪, “capture by net,” and *zhi* 執, “to capture.” Consider below:

²⁵⁵ According to Takashima (2004 b: PP 1, note 2), the verb *cái* is interpreted as *shang* 傷, “hurt, damage” in Zhang Bingquan (1957). However, Serruys interprets it as “destroy” (as cited in Takashima 2004a, PP1). It is suggested by Takashima that *cái* is better understood as meaning “to harm,” more or less like Zhang’s interpretation, because sometimes the direct object of *cái* may be a person or a group sent on a mission by the Shang king, and it would be reasonable to assume that Shang diviners and rulers did not wish their own emissary to suffer anything as extreme as destruction (see Takashima 2004b: PP 1, note 2 for more discussion).

²⁵⁶ The first work to use the term and the concept of “success” verbs is presented in Takashima (1982), “A Study of the Bone Graph 𠬪,” a paper given at the 7th Meeting of the Chinese Linguistics Circle of the Pacific Northwest, Vancouver, 20 February. Thanks to Takashima (personal communication) for this information.

(22) a. 王弗其隻兕.

wáng fú qí huò sǐ

king/ not/ qí/ catch/ buffalo

His Majesty may not (be able to/successfully) catch buffaloes.

b. 王隻兕.

wáng huò sǐ

king/ catch/ buffalo

His Majesty will (be able to/successfully) catch buffaloes. (*Bingbian* 86: 9-10)

(23) a. 貞：罕麋。

zhēn: bǐ mí

test/, net/ *mi*-deer

Tested: (His Majesty) will (be able to/successfully) net *mi*-deer.

b. 貞：弗其罕麋。

zhēn: fú qí bǐ mí

test/, not/ qí/ net/ *mi*-deer

Tested: (His Majesty) may not (be able to/successfully) net *mi*-deer. (*Bingbian* 86: 7-8)

With the understanding of uncontrollable verbs as described above, now let us look at the correlation between them and *qi*. Interestingly, in the grammatical context of main clauses, *qi* is basically only associated with the charges that contain uncontrollable verbs, as shown in (18)-(23). In what follows, we will further discuss this fact.

8.4.3. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in simple sentences (charges)

8.4.3.1. The distribution of *qi* in simple sentences (charges)

We have mentioned in Chapter 5 that as far as paired charges are concerned, the distribution of *qi* may have one of the following four patterns:

(i) Pattern A: *Qi* occurs in both charges

a. *qi* + positive

b. *qi* + negative

- (24) a. 甲辰卜, 侁貞: 今日其雨.

jiǎchén bǔ, Chēng zhēn: jīn rì qí yǔ.

jiachen day/ divine/, Cheng/ test/, present/ day/ qí/ rain

Divining on *jiachen* day, Cheng tested: Today it may perhaps rain.

- b. 甲辰卜, 侁貞: 今日不其雨.

jiǎchén bǔ, Chēng zhēn: jīn rì bù qí yǔ.

jiachen day/ divine/, Cheng/ test/, present/ day/ not/ qí/ rain

Divining on *jiachen* day, Cheng tested: Today it may perhaps not rain.

(*Bingbian* 63: 3-4)

(ii) Pattern B: *Qi* occurs in the positive charge

- a. *qi* + positive

- b. Ø + negative

- (25) a. 癸巳卜, 敵貞: 今日其雨.

guǐsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn rì qí yǔ.

guisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, present/ day/ qí/ rain

Divining on the *guisi* day, Nan tested: Today it may perhaps rain.

- b. 癸巳卜, 敵貞: 今日不雨. 允不.

guǐsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn rì bù yǔ. yǔn bù.

guisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, present/ day/ not/ rain/, indeed/ not

Divining on the *guisi* day, Nan tested: Today it will not rain. Indeed it did not (rain).²⁵⁷

(*Bingbian* 235: 9-10)

(iii) Pattern C: *Qi* occurs in the negative charge

- a. Ø+ positive

- b. *qi* + negative

- (26) a. 貞: 今日雨.

zhēn: jīn rì yǔ.

test/, present/ day/ rain

Today it will rain.

²⁵⁷ The English translation is cited from Takashima's (2004 a). Here Takashima makes a distinction in meaning between the presence and absence of *qi* in both members by giving a modal meaning, i.e., "may," to the charge in (a) and assigning a non-modal meaning to the charge in (b).

b. 貞: 今日不其雨.

zhēn: jīn rì bù qí yǔ.

test/, present/ day/ not/ qí/ rain

Today it may perhaps not rain. (*Heji* 140 Reverse: 3-4)

(iv) Pattern D: *Qi* occurs in neither of the charges

a. Ø+ positive

b. Ø + negative

(27) a. 己丑卜, 爭貞: 羽乙未雨.

jǐchǒu bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: yǔ yǐwèi yǔ

jichou day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, next/ *yíwei* day/ rain

Divining on the *jichou* day, Zheng tested: Next *yíwei* day it will rain.

b. [](乙)未不雨.

.... (yǐ)wèi bù yǔ

yíwei day/ not/ rain

(Next) *yíwei* day it will not rain. (*Bingbian* 522: 1-2)²⁵⁸

The paired charges in (24)-(27) seem to show that the association of *qi* with a charge is arbitrary. But is the distribution truly random, or is it a pattern determined by a consistent semantic rule? To put it differently, does the presence or absence of *qi* in these examples make any difference for the meaning of the charge sentences? If one assumes, as we do, that the use of any linguistic unit in an utterance must be lexically or grammatically significant, then presence and absence of *qi* must have its linguistic motivation

8.4.3.2. The correlation between *qi* and uncontrollable verbs in simple sentences (charges)

A careful examination shows that the correlation between *qi* and a charge is not random, but is determined on a consistent semantic and pragmatic basis. First, the correlation between *qi* and a charge is determined by the semantic feature of controllability of the verbs. For the moment, let us temporarily put aside the details about why *qi* is sometime associated with the positive charge and sometimes associated with the negative charge, and only concentrate on the general environments that condition the use of *qi* in main or matrix clauses. We find that, in all the examples in the

²⁵⁸ This is the only example that we found in the *Bingbian* Collection in which *qi* does not occur in either of the members of a charge pair with the verb *yu* 雨, "rain."

Bingbian collection involving the use of *qi* in main clauses, the striking feature shared by these divinatory contexts is that they are all divinations about uncontrollable events or states. This is clearly shown in examples (18)-(27).

Second, we find that not all uncontrollable verbs allow *qi* to have the above four distributional patterns in paired charges as in (24)-(27). In particular, the uncontrollable verbs that can be associated with *qi* in these four patterns are the verbs whose positive and negative polarity do not represent two opposite situations in which one is always desirable, and the other is always undesirable. The uncontrollable verbs, *yu* 雨, "rain," and *lai* 來, "to come" are of this kind. The common semantic feature shared by these two verbs is that their two polarities do not represent two extremely opposite situations in which one is always good and one is always bad. For example, sometimes to have rain is a desirable situation, especially when a drought has lasted for a long period, but sometimes, to have rain is undesirable, especially when it has been raining too much, or when an excursion event is planned. What we find in the OBI data from the *Bingbian* collection is that only verbs with this kind of semantic feature can be associated with *qi* in the above four patterns. Serruys (1974: 25) first proposes that *qi* marks a charge as the "less desirable alternative."²⁵⁹ However, Takashima (1994, and personal communication) notes that this theory is only "accidentally correct," namely to mark a charge as the "less desirable alternative" is not an inherent feature of *qi*. In his view, the association between *qi* and the undesirable charges has to do with a complex interplay of presupposition, the order of divinatory statements (i.e., which was uttered first—positive or negative), expectation of the diviner for the response of the numen, and other factors. Here, to determine whether the "undesirable" theory of *qi* is correct is not as important as to find out whether there is any linguistic rule that governs

²⁵⁹ Serruys' basic points are illustrated in these two excerpts:

"Leaving aside the function of *ch'i* (i.e., *qi*) as a particle introducing or marking subordinated clauses (a valuable suggestion made by Chang, but without attempt to specify in more detail), we find that the presence or absence of *ch'i* is a sign of very clear contrasts between two different kinds of oracular propositions: presence of *ch'i* marks the proposition or the alternative among possible courses of action, which is considered less desirable, less preferred, often positively feared and resorted to only if really unavoidable. This rule applies regardless of whether the proposition is expressed in negative or affirmative sentences" (1974: 25).

In addition, Serruys reacts against the view that "*ch'i* is a word or particle with morphological and syntactic function, expressing the modality of uncertain feeling and subject deletion," as proposed in Takashima (1970), and says:

"*ch'i* does not express primarily 'uncertain feeling' but a definitely certain judgment and opinion, viz. that the proposition carrying the particle *ch'i* represents the 'less desired alternative,' and the English 'perhaps, may be' does not seem to account for the real meaning implied by the absence and presence of *ch'i* in certain opposite sentences" (1974: 94, note 8).

the correlation between *qi* and the undesirable charge in a divinatory context consisting of a pair of positive-negative charges. According to my observations, the correlation between *qi* and the undesirable charge is true only for those uncontrollable verbs whose polarity represents two opposite situations in which one is always desirable and the other is always undesirable, but *qi* is usually associated with the undesirable situation. For example, verbs like *si* 死, “die,” or *ji* 疾, “sick” are of this type. The following examples to illustrate these generalizations:

- (28) a. 己巳卜, 𠄎貞: 雀其死。

jǐsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: Què qí sǐ.

jisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Que/ qí/ die

Divining on the *jisi* day, Nan tested: Que may perhaps die.

- b. 貞: 雀不死。二月。

jǐsǐ bǔ, Nán zhēn: Què bù sǐ. èr yuè

jisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, Que/ not / die/ second/ month

Tested: Que will not die. Second month. (*Heji* 110: 4-5)

- (29) a. 貞: 王其疾目。

zhēn: wáng qí jí mù

test/ king/ qí/ sick/ eyes

Tested: His Majesty is perhaps ailing (in his) eyes.

- b. 貞: 王弗疾目。

zhēn: wáng fú jí mù

test/ king/ not/ sick/ eyes

Tested: His Majesty is not ailing (in his) eyes. (*Bingbian* 502: 13-14)

- (30) a. 貞: 婦姁娩, 𠄎。

zhēn: Fù Huí miǎn, jiā.

test/, Lady Hui/ give birth/, lucky.

Tested: Fu Hui's giving birth will be lucky.

- b. 貞: 婦姁娩, 不其𠄎。

zhēn: Fù Huí miǎn, bù qí jiā.

test/, Lady Hui/ give birth/, not/ qí/ lucky.

Tested: Fu Hui's giving birth may perhaps not be lucky. (*Bingbian* 347: 1-2)

In these three examples, the main verbs are uncontrollable: the one in (28) is *si* 死, “to die;” the one in (29) is *ji* 疾, “to be sick;” and the one in (30) is *jia* 妣, “to be lucky.” Obviously, the common feature shared by these three verbs is that positive and negative polarities of these verbs represent two opposite situations, one of which is always desirable and the other is always undesirable. Another common feature shared by these three divinations is that *qi* is only associated with the undesirable alternative. Below is another example in which *qi* is associated with the charge expressing an undesirable situation:

- (31) a. 辛卯卜, 般貞: 其奠. 三月.

xīnmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn: qí hàn. sān yuè

xinmao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, qí/ dry/, third/ month

Divining on the *xinmao* day, Nan tested: It may perhaps be dry (i.e., there may perhaps be a drought). Third month.

- b. 辛卯卜, 般貞: 不奠.

xīnmǎo bǔ, nán zhēn: bù hàn.

xinmao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, not/ dry

Divining on the *xinmao* day, Nan tested: It will not be dry (i.e., there will not be a drought). (*Bingbian* 370: 1-2)

Whenever *qi* is involved in a divination about whether or not there will be a drought, it is only associated the positive charge, which expresses the undesirable situation of having drought:

- (32) a. 丙辰卜, 般貞: 我受黍年.

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn: wǒ shòu shǔ nián.

bingchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, we/ receive/ millet/ harvest

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Nan tested: We will harvest a (good) crop of millet.

- b. 丙辰卜, 般貞: 我弗其受黍年. 四月. 上吉.

bǐngchén bǔ, Nán zhēn: wǒ fú qí shòu shǔ nián. sì yuè. shàngjí.

bingchen day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, we/ not/ qí/ receive/ millet/ harvest. Fourth/ month/ highly auspicious

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Nan tested: We may not harvest a (good) crop of millet.

Fourth month. Highly auspicious. (*Bingbian* 8: 1-2)

The positive charge in (32a) represents the situation of having a harvest, while the negative one in

(32b) represents the situation of not having a harvest; *qi* occurs in the positive charge only. Examples (28)-(32) show Serruys's observation is correct in the contexts in which the paired charges contain the uncontrollable verbs whose polarity represents two opposite situations in which one is always desirable and the other is always undesirable. However, in the contexts which do not contain verbs with this semantic feature in polarity, *qi* is not necessarily associated with the undesirable charge, as in examples (18)-(27). The inadequacy of the theory that *qi* is a mark of "less desirable alternatives" has been pointed out by Chow (1982: 143 -158), although he does not observe that the correlation between *qi* and "less desirable alternatives" has to do with the semantic feature of verb's polarity as we described above. Chow notes that one of the difficulties with this analysis is that it cannot account for the case in which *qi* is used in both of the paired charges. Even Serruys himself admitted the difficulty, providing this explanation:

"Since the majority of divinations are couched in terms of what the diviner already considers desirable, it might be proposed that this exceptional pattern (i.e., the case in which *qi* occurs in both charges) here could be used as when such a decision or opinion concerning preference or desirability was not expressed or could not be formed. The underlying main clause might then have been: 'we shall prepare for the eventuality that... we shall expect that...'" (1974: 36).

However, this explanation is criticized in Chow (1982: 149). Chow points out that "whether 'a decision or opinion concerning preference or desirability was not expressed or could not be formed' is a question very difficult to answer definitely." Chow provides examples in which *qi* is used in both charges where one of the charges expresses a desirable situation and the other an undesirable situation, demonstrating that *qi* is not a mark of "less desirable" alternative:

(33) a. 我史其戕方.

wǒ shǐ qí cái Fāng.

we/ emissary/ qí/ harm/ Fang

Tested: Our emissary may happen to be able to harm Fang.

b. 我史弗其戕方.

wǒ shǐ fú qí cái Fāng.

we/ emissary/ not/ qí/ harm/ Fang

Tested: Our emissary may not happen to be able to harm Fang. (*Bingbian* 76: 5-6)

According to Chow, what is expressed in (33a), the positive charge, is a desirable situation, while its negative counterpart (33b) is an undesirable situation; however, *qi* occurs in both of them. Thus, the analysis of *qi* as a mark of “undesirable alternative” is untenable. Interestingly, in the same plastron, we find the following pair in which *qi* is also associated with both charges:

(34) a. 方其戕我史.

Fāng qí cái wǒ shǐ .

Fang/ qí/ harm/ we/ emissary

Tested: Fang may happen to be able to harm our emissary.

b. 方弗其戕我史.

Fāng fú qí cái wǒ shǐ .

Fang/ not/ qí/ harm/ we/ emissary

Tested: Fang may not happen to be able to harm our emissary. (*Bingbian* 76: 3-4)

From the content of the divinations in (33) and (34), it seems that they are related to the same matter: the situation under consideration is the result of a military campaign between the Shang emissary, *wo shi*, “our emissary; our envoy forces” and Fang, a state west of the Shang. The charges in (33) are proposed from the perspective of the Shang group, while those in (34) are proposed from the perspective of the Fang State. What we are interested in here is that in both divinatory contexts, *qi* is associated with two opposite possible outcomes. Such examples are not uncommon in OBI. We observe that *qi* may occur in both desirable and undesirable charges, if the verbs in the context are not those whose positive and negative polarities represent two opposite situations in which one is always good and one is always bad. This means that the use of *qi* in OBI is not simply for the purpose of marking what is expressed as an “undesirable alternative.” In other words, the correlation between *qi* and an undesirable alternative must be motivated by another more subtle semantic or pragmatic reason.

Here, we propose that the correlation between *qi* and uncontrollable events/states, as well as

that between *qi* and “undesirable alternatives” can be consistently accounted for by analyzing *qi* as an epistemic uncertain outcome marker. That is, just as in early Classical Chinese, *qi* in the ordinary use of the Shang language is also an epistemic modality marker used to signal relative uncertainty on the part of the speaker about the factual status of the information being conveyed, distinguishing an unreal event/state from a real event/state.

However, to inject this modal meaning and function into the actual contexts in which *qi* is used, and to pin down what is an uncertain outcome and what is a certain outcome according to the Shang are far from simple task. The first thing we need to explain is why not all the charge sentences (including the prognostication) are uniformly associated with *qi*, given the generally unreal and hypothetical property of these sentences, in the sense that they represent events or states that have not yet occurred, but are just ideas that are still within the realm of the diviners’ or the Shang rulers’ thoughts.

Our explanation for this is as follows. The seemingly complicated distribution of *qi* in the divinatory contexts probably resulted from the diviners’ exploitation of the distinction between the presence and absence of *qi* for pragmatic purposes. That is, in the Shang diviners’ minds, the distinction between an uncertain outcome (unreal event/state) and a certain outcome (real event/state) is not a binary but a gradient dimension in which some possible events or states are judged to be relatively more certain to happen than others. Specifically, in the context of divination, the uncontrollable events or states are generally conceived of as uncertain outcomes, and thus are marked with *qi*; the controllable events or states, on the other hand, are generally conceived of as certain outcomes, and thus are not marked with *qi*. It is not hard to understand why the uncontrollable events are categorized as uncertain outcomes and the controllable events are categorized as certain outcomes. This explains why *qi* is mostly associated with the contexts with uncontrollable verbs, and is not often to see in the contexts with controllable verbs. It goes without saying that the cases in which *qi* occurs in both charges represent the regular usage of *qi*, and the cases in which *qi* does not occur in any of the charges can be regarded as a modally unmarked form which makes no indication of the diviner’s opinion or attitude about the situation being expressed.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Examples about uncontrollable events or states in which *qi* is not associated with any of the charges are rare.

The cases requires further explanation are those in which *qi* is only associated with one of the charges. Several explanations might be proposed for the discrepancy. The first possible explanation comes from the fact that uncontrollable future events can vary in their probability of occurrence. Therefore, the diviners might have exploited the optionality of *qi* to mark his different degrees of certainty between the two proposed alternatives. The diviners would indicate the distinction in certainty by using *qi* in the alternative which they thought was less likely to happen. Certainly, it is not easy to determine such a distinction in every divinatory example; however, the use of *qi* in following example seems to mark the distinction:

(35) a 癸巳卜，敵貞：今日其雨。

guǐ sì bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn rì qí yǔ.

guisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, today/ qí/ rain

Divining on the *guisi* day, Nan tested: Today it may rain.

b. 癸巳卜，敵貞：今日不雨。允不。

guǐ sì bǔ, Nán zhēn: jīn rì bù yǔ. yǔn bù.

guisi day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, today/ not/ rain/, indeed/ not

Divining on the *guisi* day, Nan tested: Today it will not rain. Indeed, it did not rain.

(*Bingbian* 263: 9-10)

This is a common case of rain divination in which both the positive charge and its negative counterpart were cast in simple sentences containing only the uncontrollable verb *yu* 雨, “to rain.” As we mentioned earlier, *yu* is not a verb whose positive and negative polarities represent two opposite situations in which one is always good, and the other is always bad, because sometimes having rain may be considered a desirable condition but sometimes it may not. Therefore, one cannot simply say that the positive charge, which is associated with *qi*, represents an undesirable situation in this divinatory context. However, the occurrence of the adverb *yun* 允, “indeed” in the verification associated with the negative charge seems to indicate that the situation of not having rain, which is not marked with *qi*, was the one that the diviner proposed with a higher degree of certainty about its actualization. Note that the presence and absence of *qi* in the two charges may also have to do with signalling desirability (see discussion below). The following example shows the similar situation:

(36) a 己卯卜, 般貞: 不其雨.

jǐmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn: bù qí yǔ.

jimao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, not/ qí/ rain.

Divining on the *jimao* day, Nan tested: It may perhaps not rain.

b. 己卯卜, 般貞: 雨. 王固曰: 其雨佳壬. 壬午允雨.

jǐmǎo bǔ, Nán zhēn: yǔ. wáng zhàn yuē: qí yǔ wéi rén. rénwǔ yǔn yǔ.

jimao day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, not/ qí/ rain/, king/ prognosticate/ say/, qí/ rain/ be/ *ren* day/. *renwu* day/ indeed/ rain

Divining on the *jimao* day, Nan tested: It will rain. {Prognostication} The

king prognosticated: If it rains (lit. Its raining), it will be a *ren* day. {Verification} On the *renwu* day, it indeed rained. (*Bingbian* 235: 1-2)

Different from (35), in (36), the negative charge is marked with *qi*.²⁶¹ It seems that the presence and absence of *qi* in the two charges is to mark that diviner's different degrees of certainty concerning the situations expressed. The occurrence of the emphatic adverb *yun*, 允, "indeed" in the verification associated with the positive charge seems to indicate that the diviner was relatively more certain that the positive charge, which is not marked with *qi*, would be the situation that will be actualized.

A second explanation for the divinations in which *qi* is associated with only one of the charges have occurred for a cognitive or psychological reason. Namely, the diviner might have purposely exploited the distinction to express his expectation and preference concerning the situations being proposed. This explanation predicts the correlation between *qi* and an undesirable situation, since to mark something bad or undesired with as uncertain outcome is compatible with the common human psychology. That is, if something is bad, or undesired, we will expect it not to actually occur, and it is natural to mark it with an uncertain outcome marker. However, if something is good, or desired, we will expect it to actually occur, thus, the absence of *qi* is predictable.²⁶² In other words, Serruys' observation that *qi* is often associated with an undesirable

²⁶¹ *Qi* also occurs in the prognostication sentence in (36b). However, the *qi* in this prognostication sentence is a nominalizing marker to mark the clause that hosts it as a dependent clause, as shown in the English translation. *Qi* is often present in prognostication component as an uncertain outcome marker. But due to the major concern here is the use of *qi* in charges, we refrain from discussing the detailed use of *qi* in prognostications.

²⁶² A similar idea is also seen in Chow (1982: 154). He suggests that the fact that *qi* is frequently associated with the less desirable alternative has to do with the common psychology of human beings. "People often refuse to anticipate misfortunes and, once they have occurred, refuse to accept them" (1982: 154).

situation, as seen in examples (28)-(32), can be attributed to the pragmatic use of the uncertain outcome *qi*.

Is the use of such a linguistic strategy motivated by the fact that Shang diviners were trying to persuade the spirits to grant their wishes, so as to influence the future? Or, is it simply a matter of superstition, namely, to mark something bad or unexpected with the uncertainty marker *qi* is a way to lessen the possibility of actualization of the unlucky and unexpected situation? These are interesting questions that need further exploration.

8.4.3.3. The correlation between *qi* and controllable verbs in simple sentences (charges)

The correlation between *qi* and controllable verbs is also determined by the diviner's assessment concerning the controllability of an event. In general, *qi* is seldom associated with the controllable verbs in main clauses. If *qi* does co-occur with a controllable verb in a main clause, it is usually a case in which the performer of the controllable action is not the Shang king himself, but a third person or a group who is not within the manageability of the Shang ruler. Let us take the verb *hu* 乎, "to call upon" for example. This verb is often used in the divinations about mobilizing troops, or summoning somebody to do something for the king. This verb occurs 213 times in the *Bingbian* collection, but only nine examples involve the use of *qi*. And among these nine examples, five use of *qi* is used in the main clauses: two of these are sentences in the prognostication context, and three are charge sentences. What we want to point out here is that for the five cases in which *qi* co-occurs with *hu* in a main clause, the events expressed are in fact to be considered uncontrollable. For example:

- (37) a. 甲子卜，爭，雀弗其乎王族來。
jiǎzǐ bǔ, Zhēng, Què fú qí hū wáng zú lái.

jiazi day/ divine/, Zheng/, Que/ not/ qí/ call upon/ royal/ clan/ come

Divining on the *jiazi* day, Zheng (tested): Que will perhaps not be able to summon the Royal Clan to come.

- b. 甲子卜，爭，雀其乎王族來。
jiǎzǐ bǔ, Zhēng, Què qí hū wáng zú lái.

jiazi day/ divine/, Zheng/, Que/ qí/ call upon/ royal/ clan/ come

Divining on the *jiazi* day, Zheng (tested): Que will perhaps be able to summon the Royal Clan to come. (*Bingbian* 261: 7-8)

It is not surprising that *qi* is used in the two opposite charges of this divinatory context, because the event under consideration is in fact an uncontrollable one. This can be explained as follows. First, the performer of the action *hu*, “to call upon; to summon” is not the Shang king himself, but a third person, Que, a military commander of Shang. One may argue that the performer of the action of *hu* is not necessarily uncontrollable, because as Shang’s military commander, Que should be under the control of the Shang king. However, there is another argument to support our analysis of the event as uncontrollable. That is, the goal of the action *hu* is to get the Royal Clan to come, implying the necessity of a successful completion. In other words, the accomplishment of such a goal is something beyond the control of both the Shang king and Que.

The other four examples which also involve the correlation between *qi* and the verb *hu* are cases in which *qi* is used in the dependent clause:

(38) 戊午卜，敵貞：我其乎敦胄，戕。

wùwǔ bǔ, Nán zhēn: wǒ qí hū dūn Zhòu, cái.

wuwu day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, we/ qí/ call upon/ attack/ Zhou/, harm

Divining on the wuwu day, Nan tested: If we call upon (troops) to make assault on Zhou, (we will) be able to harm (them) (*Bingbian* 124: 12)

The charge in (38) is a complex sentence consisting of two clauses. The first clause is a condition clause, and the second is a main clause containing only the main verb *cái*, “to harm.” The subject of the conditional clause is the first person pronoun *wo*, “we,” and the predicate is *hu dun Zhou*, “to call upon (troops) to attack Zhou.” *Qi* is used between the subject and the predicate as a nominalizing marker.

The common cases in which *qi* is not associated with a controllable verb can be illustrated by the following example:

(39) a. 羽庚子出伐。

yǔ gēngzǐ yǒu fá.

next/ gengzi day/ offer/ human victim

Next gengzi day, we should make an offering of human victims.

b. 羽庚子勿出伐.

yǔ gēngzǐ yǒu fá.

next/ *gengzi* day/ offer/ human victim

Next *gengzi* day, we should not make an offering of human victims. (*Bingbian* 317: 5-6)

In the *Bingbian* collection, the verb *you*, “to offer,” which is one of the most common verbs used in the divination about sacrificial events, does not co-occur with *qi* in the main clause, as in example (39). In this example, *qi* is not present in the charge sentences. Following Takashima’s (2004a), we interpret the charge sentence with a deontic modal meaning, signifying the obligation to carry out the event, as indicated by the word “should.” The basis for this interpretation is the use of the prohibitive negative *wu* 勿, “do not” in the negative charge.

One point worth noting here is that the divinatory contexts about controllable activities all contain the modal force that is concerned with obligation, desire, wish, and intention. This is not hard to understand, because the conduction of a divination for a controllable event is usually motivated by the intention to pursue this event. In other words, usually a divination about a controllable event is made only when a decision to perform the action or event has been already made.²⁶³ Thus, the association of the prohibitive negative *wu* 勿 with divinatory contexts about controllable events is not surprising.

This understanding of the semantic feature of divinatory contexts about controllable events in this way help us further understand the usual absence of *qi* in this context. We consider the rare association of *qi* with charges about controllable events to perhaps be related to *qi*’s function as an epistemic uncertainty marker. That is, it is not difficult to determine the motivation behind the absence of *qi* in the case of controllable events. First, controllable events/states can be conceived of as “certain outcomes,” because the actualization of a controllable event is within the manageability of the Shang people, regardless the outcome of the divination. Thus, the uncertainty marker *qi* is absent from this type of context. Second, as mentioned above, the controllable event being divined about is normally an event that the Shang intended to conduct, and the purpose of the divinations is to know God’s or the spirits’ will as to whether or not the intended event should be conducted. Obviously, such a semantic feature is not consistent with the uncertain

²⁶³ Chow (1982: 153) also points out that the preliminary step to any divination about controllable activities was a decision either to take action or not to take action.

connotation of *qi*. Thus, *qi* is not used in this kind of divinatory context.

However, it is not always as simple as this. That is, the absence of *qi* is not uniform in all the cases involving controllable events. Sometimes, *qi* is also used in a simple charge about a controllable event. For example:

(40) a. 貞: 乙未其燎.

zhēn: yǐwèi qí liáo.

test/, *yíwei* day/ qí/ make burnt offering

Tested: Next *yíwei* day, we should make a burnt offering.

b. 貞: 乙未勿衣燎.

zhēn: yǐwèi wù yī liáo.

test/, *yíwei* day/ not /hurriedly/ make burnt offering ²⁶⁴

Tested: Next *yíwei* day, we should not hurriedly make a burnt offering. (*Bingbian* 128: 9-10)

Even though examples like this, in which *qi* co-occurs with a controllable verb expressing a sacrificial event are not often seen in the *Bingbian* collection,²⁶⁵ the existence of such cases cannot be neglected, if we intend to better understand the behaviour and nature of *qi* in OBI.

Below is another example in which *qi* co-occurs with a verbal phrase about a controllable event:

(41) a. 庚寅卜, 賓貞: 今載王其步伐夷.

gēngyín bǔ, Bīn zhēn: jīn zài wáng qí bù fá Yī.

gengyin day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, present/ cyclical period/ king/ qí/ go on foot/ attack/ the Yi group

Divining on the *gengyin* day, Bin tested: (During) the present cyclical period, the king shall go on foot to attack the Yi.

²⁶⁴ Note we follow Takashima (2004 a: PP 128) to interpret the word *yi* 衣 in the negative charge as *cu* 卒 (=猝), meaning “hurriedly; hastily.”

²⁶⁵ In the *Bingbian* collection, only occasionally do we see *qi* associated with verbs to do with sacrificial activities in main clauses, as in example (40). Other examples in which *qi* co-occurs with a verb expressing sacrificial activities in the main clause of a charge are seen in the following rubbings: (BB 7: 1); (BB101: 2); (BB 141: 1); (BB 457: 8). There are also several examples from the prognostication context in which *qi* occurs with a verb expressing sacrificial activities, including (BB 499:3); (BB 632: 14). However, in texts from later periods, we see that *qi* is rather frequently used in a main clause with a sacrificial verb (see Shen Pei 1992: 92-119; Takashima 2000). Does this mean that the correlation between *qi* and sacrificial verbs in the main clauses involves a historical change? This is an issue that deserves further study.

b. 庚寅卜，賓貞：今載王勿步伐夷。

gēngyín bǔ, Bīn zhēn: jīn zài wáng wù bù fá Yí.

gengyin day/ divine/, Bin/ test/, present/ cyclical period/ king/ not / go on foot/ attack/ the Yi group

Divining on the *gengyin* day, Bin tested: (During) the present cyclical period, the king should not go on foot to attack the Yi. (*Bingbian* 276: 3-4)

Note that in this example, the charge sentences contain two verbs; however, we still analyze them as simple sentences, because the two verbs do not refer to two different actions or events, rather they constitute a serial verb structure referring to a single event.

Now we must determine how to explain the difference between the presence and absence of *qi* in a charge about controllable event. There must be some semantic or pragmatic motivation behind this difference. It seems the presence and absence of *qi* in the sentences that expresses intended and controllable events can be understood as follows. The semantic feature of the verb as controllable and the pragmatic feature of the event as intended make it natural to tend not to associate the event with the epistemic uncertainty marker *qi*. This explains the frequent absence of *qi* from the sentences with controllable verbs. However, this tendency does not necessarily mean that *qi* is semantically blocked from the expressions of intention. Intentions can vary in their expectation of actualization/realization. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that as an uncertain outcome marker or an epistemic downtoner, *qi* might be exploited to mark such a distinction. In other words, the absence of *qi* in the sentences about controllable events marks a rather strong intention, while the presence of *qi* marks a rather weak intention. Even though the lack of full contexts in the OBI data does not show this distinction in detail, this hypothesis is not implausible. These expressions are similar to ones in early Classical Chinese, in which the choice between presence and absence of *qi* for expressions of intentions is also exploited to indicate a distinction between an ordinary (weak/polite) and a strong intention. What is different is that in early Classical Chinese, the presence of *qi* in an expression of intention is more common, and the absence of *qi* in an expression of intention is rare. However, in OBI, the situation is opposite, namely, the absence of *qi* in a charge expressing an intended action or event is the common case, while the presence of *qi* in this type of charge is less common. It is not

difficult to understand this difference in use of *qi* in the expressions of intentions in the two different forms of Chinese. That is, the later texts represent the ordinary discourse of language use, while the OBI materials represent a special discourse of language use. It is reasonable to assume that in ordinary conversations, a speaker would intend to express his intention in a weak manner, thus showing politeness to his addressee. However, in the discourse of the Shang divination, a diviner would like to express the ruler's intention in a strong way, implying his wishes to the spirits.

8.4.4. *Qi* as an uncertain outcome marker in complex sentences (charges)

As far as complex sentences are concerned, *qi* may occur in both dependent clauses and main clauses. In what follows, we will first look at the use of *qi* in the main clause of a complex sentence. Then, we return to the issue of whether or not *qi* also expresses a modal function in conditional/topic clauses.

8.4.4.1. The use of *qi* in the main clause of complex sentences (charges)

The commonly seen case in which a main clause is a component of a complex sentence occurs in what we call double-negative paired charges, as discussed in Chapter 4. Consider the following example:

(42) a. 丙辰卜，爭貞：王往省從西，若。

bǐngchén bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wáng wǎng xǐng cóng xī, ruò.

bingchen day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, king/ go/ inspect/ follow/ west/, approve

Divining on the *bingchen* day, Zheng tested: The king should go to make a tour of inspection, following/along the western (route); (God) will approve

Or: Divining on the ping-ch'en day [53], Cheng tested: His Majesty go to inspect [i.e., make a royal progress?] (following:) by way of the west, for it will meet with (Ti's) approval. (cited in Takashima 2004a, PP 409: 3)

b. 貞：王勿往省，不若。

zhēn: wáng wù wǎng xǐng, bù ruò.

test/, king/ not/ go/ inspect/, not/ approve

Tested: The king should not go to make a tour of inspection; (God) will not approve.

Or: Tested: His Majesty should not go to inspect, for it will not meet with (Ti's) approval. (cited in Takashima 2004a: PP 409: 4) (*Bingbian* 409: 3-4)

This example is a case of double-negative. How to interpret it is still debated (see Chapter 4). Here, we offer two possible translations to reflect our understanding. Even though the translation show some difference in the details, the first clause is understood as a main clause which refers to an intended controllable event in both interpretations. The second sentence in both charges expresses an uncontrollable situation; the positive one represent a desirable situation, while its negative counterpart represents an undesirable situation. In this example, *qi* is not present in any of the clauses.

The basic structural pattern of the charge sentences in (43) is similar to that in (42). And in each charge, what is expressed in the first clause is also a controllable event, and what is expressed in the second clause is an uncontrollable situation. But different from (42), in (43) *qi* occurs in the second clause of the negative charge, which represents an undesirable situation.

(43) a. 庚戌卜，𪚩貞：王立黍，受年。

gēngxū bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng lì shǔ, shòu nián.

gengxu day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ plant/ millet/, receive/ harvest

Divining on the *gengxu* day, Nan tested: The king should supervise the millet planting; he will receive a (good) harvest

Or: Divining on the *gengxu* day, Nan tested: The king should supervise the millet planting, for he will receive a (good) harvest.

b. 庚戌卜，𪚩貞：王勿立黍，弗其受年。

gēngxū bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng lì shǔ, fú qí shòu nián.

gengxu day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ plant/ millet/, not/ *qí*/ receive/ harvest

Divining on the *gengxu* day, Nan tested: The king should not supervise the millet planting; he will perhaps not receive a (good) harvest.

Or: Divining on the *gengxu* day, Nan tested: The king should not supervise the millet planting, for he will perhaps not receive a (good) harvest. (*Bingbian* 81: 1-2)

The basic sentence pattern, the positive-negative relation, and the controllable-uncontrollable relation expressed in example (44) are the same as those in (42) and (43). However, there is a

difference here: *qi* occurs in the first clause of the positive charge that refers to an intended event, and at the same time, *qi* also occurs in the second clause of the negative charge that refers to an undesirable situation.

(44) a. 辛未卜, [/] 貞: 翌壬申王其狩, 𠄎.

xīnwèi bǔ, ...zhēn: yì rénshēn wáng qí shòu, bǐ.

xinwei day/ divine/, .../ test, next/ *renshen* day/ king/ qí/ hunt/, net

Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested: On the next *renshen* day, the king should hunt; he will net (some game)

Or: Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested: On the next *renshen* day, the king should hunt, for he will net (some game).²⁶⁶

b. 未... 壬申王勿狩, 不其𠄎.

wèi rénshēn wáng wù shòu, bù qí bǐ.

xinwei day/ divine/, .../ test, next/ *renshen* day/ king/ not/ hunt/, not / qí/ net

(Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested:) On the next *renshen* day, the king should not hunt; he will not net (some game)

Or: (Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested:) On the next *renshen* day, the king should not hunt, for he will not net (some game). (*Bingbian* 423: 1-2)

To sum up, examples (42), (43), and (44) represent three possible patterns concerning the correlation of *qi* with the case of double-negative paired charges, which can be illustrated as:

A. { p, q }

B. { p, q }

C. { *qi* p; q }

{ -p, -q }

{ -p, -*qi* q }

{ -p; -*qi* q }

²⁶⁶ For convenience, for this example we only cited the preface and charge sentences. However, in the recorded texts, both charges are also inscribed with a verification, as below:

(i) a. 辛未卜, [/] 貞: 翌壬申王其狩, 𠄎. 壬申允狩, 𠄎. 隻兕六豕十豕六麋百九十豕九.

Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested: On the next *renshen* day, the king should hunt; he will net (some game). { Verification } On the *renshen* day, the king indeed hunted and netted some game, catching water buffaloes numbering six, wild boars numbering sixteen, and fawns numbering one hundred and ninety-nine.

a. ' Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested: On the next *renshen* day, the king shall not hunt, (for) he may not net (some game). { Verification } On the *renshen* day, the king indeed hunted and netted some game.

b. 未。 。 。 壬申王勿狩, 不其𠄎. 壬申狩。 𠄎.

(Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested:) [On the next *renshen* day, the king should not hunt; he will not net (some game). { Verification } On the *renshen* day, the king indeed hunted and netted some game.

b. ' (Divining on the *xinwei* day, [/] tested:) [On the next *renshen* day, the king shall not hunt, for he may not net (some game)]. On the *renshen* day, the king indeed hunted and netted some game. (*Bingbian* 423: 1-2)

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there are in fact two matter being divined about in this type of paired charge set. The positive and negative clauses in the first part usually refer to an intended event, and what is considered here is whether or not the event should be carried out. The positive and negative clauses in the second part usually represent two possible outcomes that are associated to the intended event, one of which is desirable and the other of which is undesirable.

What we are interested in here is the choice between presence and absence of *qi* in each clause of the paired charges. Let us start with the second clauses, which express uncontrollable situations. The presence and absence of *qi* in this part is consistent with the cases in which *qi* is used in simple charges about uncontrollable events or states, as discussed in 7.4.3. That is, *qi* is intended to be used in the clauses about undesirable situations, as in Patterns (B) and (C). Clearly, the presence and absence of *qi* are also motivated by the pragmatic reasons to signal the diviner's attitude concerning the desirability of the situation. This expressive purpose is realized through the semantic congruence between the uncertainty marker *qi* with the undesirable situation. This is not surprising, because it is human nature not to want undesirable situations to really happen.

Now let us discuss the first part of the double-negative paired charges. Clearly, what is being decided here is whether or not to pursue an intended event. The presence and absence of *qi* in the first clause are also congruous to the cases involving the use of *qi* in simple charges about controllable events, as discussed in 7.4.3.3. Namely, the semantic feature of the verb as controllable and the pragmatic purpose of expressing intention yield a tendency not to associate a controllable event with the epistemic uncertainty marker *qi*. Thus, in most cases, *qi* is not present in the first clause. However, this does not necessarily mean that *qi* is semantically blocked from the expressions of intention. The diviner might use the choice between presence and absence of *qi* to differentiate between the levels of expectation of carrying out an intended event.

8.4.4.2. The use of *qi* in dependent clauses (topics/conditionals)

We have discussed the cases in which *qi* is used in dependent clauses (see 7.2), preferring the analysis of *qi*'s function in this context as a nominalizing marker. However, an issue remains unclear: Does *qi* also expresses a modal function in the conditional clauses? Consider the following examples:

(45) a. 壬子卜, 爭貞: 我其玠邑, 帝弗左若. 三月

rénzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wǒ qí zuò yǐ, Dì fú zuǒ ruò. sān yuè.

renzi day/ divine/, Zheng test/, we/ qí/ make/ settlement/, God/ not/ oppose/ approve

Divining on the *renzi* day, Zheng tested: If we make a settlement, God will

not oppose and approve. Third month.

b. 癸丑卜, 爭貞: 勿玠邑, 帝若.

rénzǐ bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wù zuò yǐ, Dì ruò. .

renzi day/ divine/, Zheng test/, not/ make/ settlement/, God/ approve

Divining on the *guichou* day, Zheng tested: If we do not make a settlement, God will

approve. (*Bingbian* 147: 1-2)

The interpretation of the sentences in this example is still open to debate. The above translation reflects our understanding of this example, in which we take the first clause as a conditional/topic clause. It seems the matter being divined about is to whether it is God's will to build the settlement or not to build the settlement. However, there are two more possible interpretations for the pair of charges, as in (46) and (47):

(46) a. "We shall (*qi*) build a settlement, (for) Di will not obstruct (but) will approve. Third moon"

b. "(We) should not (*wu*) build a settlement, (for) Di will approve." (Keightley 1993: 50).

(47) a. "We will be founding (or building) a settlement, (for) Di will not obstruct (but) will approve. Third moon"

b. "(We) should not (*wu*) build a settlement, (for) Di will approve."

(Takashima 1994: 526).

The differences between the three interpretations lie in the following the aspects: (i) the syntactic relation between the two clauses in each charge; and (ii) the function and meaning of *qi* used in the first clause in the positive charge. As to the syntactic relation between the two clauses, we suggest that the two clauses establish a dependent-main relation; in particular, the first is the protasis and the second is the apodosis, as shown in the translation in (45). Other scholars hold the same analysis (see Serruys 1974: 56). The alternative analysis is to take the two clauses are in main-dependent relation; in particular, the first is the main clause and the second is a cause

clause, as shown in translations in the (46) and (47). As to the second analysis (i.e., the two clauses are in main-dependent relation), Keightley suggests that the *qi* expresses “deontic modality.” He calls it “executive *qi*” and translates it as “shall.”²⁶⁷ For Takashima, the *qi* used in (45) indicate the “intention” side of the modal scale “intention/wish,” because it is associated with a verb that is controllable and “+will.” However, in our analysis, *qi* is treated as a nominalizing marker which is used to nominalize the following verb and mark the clause as dependent.

For the moment, it is difficult to determine which analysis is better. But if we maintain that the first clause is a protasis and the second is an apodosis, then we still need to consider whether the *qi* here only serves as a pure syntactic marker as a nominalizer or whether it also conveys some modal meaning. This is especially true when we compare (45) to the following example:

(48) a. 癸丑卜，爭貞：我宅茲邑大[甲]賓帝若。三月。

guǐchǒu bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: wǒ zhái zī yǐ Dà Jiǎ bīn, Dì ruò. sān yuè.

guichou day/ divine/, Zheng/ test/, we/ take up residence in / this/ settlement/ Da Jia/ treat someone as guest/, God/ approve/ three/ month

Divining on the *guichou* day, Zheng test: If we reside in this settlement, and Ancestor Da Jia is treated as guest, God will approve. Third month.²⁶⁸

b. 癸丑卜，爭貞：帝弗若

guǐchǒu bǔ, Zhēng zhēn: Dì fú ruò.

Divining on the *guichou* day, Zheng test: [If we reside in this settlement, and Ancestor Da Jia is treated as guest], God will not approve. (*Bingbian* 147: 3-4)

The paired charges in (48) occur in the same plastron as those in (45). We assume that the negative charge in (48) is an abbreviated form in which the first clause, as noted in the positive charge, is omitted. Based on the content, we can see that the divination in (48) is related to the one in (45). Moreover, the charges in both examples are composed with the similar sentence structure, namely, they can all be analyzed as conditional constructions. However, there is an obvious difference between the positive charge in (45) and that in (48): the former contains a *qi* in the protasis, while the latter does not. As we mentioned earlier, we might just take the presence and absence of *qi* in a conditional clause as marking syntactic difference, namely the one with *qi*

²⁶⁷ See Takashima (1994: 525-527) for the review of Keightley's analysis.

²⁶⁸ The character after Da 大 is assumed as Jia 甲 by Chang Bingquan (1957-1972). Following this opinion, we assume that the *bin*-ritual (the entertainment ritual) is directed to the Ancestor Da Jia.

is a nominalized construction, and the one without *qi* is an unnominalized one. However, we are not satisfied with this explanation for the following reason: the conditional/topic clauses with *qi* and those without *qi* do not seem to have identical semantic effects. That is, the ones without *qi* can be used to refer to a future, a present, or even a past situation, however, the ones with *qi* can only refer to a future event or state. Consider the following examples:

(49) a. 疾身，隹出咎。

jí shén, wéi yǒu tuò.

sick/ body/, be/ have/ mishap

Sick body (i.e., the situation of being sick), it is due to there being an (ancestral) mishap.

b. 疾身，不隹出咎。

jí shén, bù wéi yǒu tuò.

sick/ body/, not/ be/ have/ mishap

Sick body (i.e., the situation of being sick), it is not due to there being an (ancestral) mishap. (*Bingbian* 473: 3-4)

In this example, the topic clause refers to a current situation, and *qi* is not used. Below is an example in which *qi* is not used in a topic clause that refers to a past event:

(50) a. 戊午卜，𪚩貞：王出夢，其出咎。

wùwǔ bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng yǒu mèng, qí yǒu huò

wuwu day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ have/ dream/, qí/ have/ disaster

Divining on the wuwu day, Nan tested: The King had a dream; (this means that) there will perhaps be a misfortune.

b. 戊午卜，𪚩貞：王出夢，亡咎。

wùwǔ bǔ, Nán zhēn: wáng yǒu mèng, wáng huò

wuwu day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, king/ have/ dream/, not have/ disaster

Divining on the wuwu day, Nan tested: the King had a dream; (this means that) there will not be a misfortune. (*Bingbian* 411: 1-2)

Strictly speaking, the first clause in each charge of the above three examples can only be taken as a topic, but not a conditional, because what it expresses is not a hypothetical situation but a matter of known fact. This maybe the reason for the absence of *qi* from these examples.

Below are examples in which *qi* is not used in the conditional clause that refers to an uncontrollable future event:

- (51) a. 貞: 憂往來, 其出凶.

zhēn: Jiā wǎng lái, qí yǒu huò.

test/, Jia/ go/ come/, qí/ have/ misfortune

Tested: As for Jia's going and coming (or, when Jia goes and comes), there will perhaps be misfortunes.

- b. 癸丑卜, 爭貞: 憂往來, 亡凶. 王固曰: 亡凶.

zhēn: Jiā wǎng lái, wáng huò. wáng zhàn yuē: wáng huò.

test/, Jia/ go/ come/, not have/ misfortune/, king/ prognosticate/ say/, not have/ misfortune

Divining on *guichou* day, Zheng tested: As for Jia's goings and comings (or, when Jia goes and comes), there will be no misfortunes. The king, having prognosticated, said:

There will be no misfortune. (*Bingbian* 32: 26-27)

- (52) 貞: 婦姬媿, 其.

zhēn: Fù Huí miǎn, jiā.

test/, Lady/ Hui/ give birth/, good

Tested: As for Lady Hui's giving birth (or, when Lady Hui gives birth), it will be good.

婦姬媿, 不其其.

zhēn: Fù Huí miǎn, bù qí jiā.

test/, Lady/ Hui/ give birth/, not / qí / good

As for Lady Hui's giving birth (or, when Lady Hui gives birth), it may not be good. (*Bingbian* 347: 1-2)

The examples above demonstrate that the topic/conditional clauses not marked with *qi* can be used to express events/states of any temporal status. However, the *qi*-marked topic/conditional clauses can only express future events or states. Consider the following example:

- (53) 王占曰: 鳳其出, 惠丁. 其佳丁不出, 其出疾, 弗其凡.

wáng zhànyuē: Fèng qí chū, huì dīng. qí wéi dīng bù chū, qí yǒu jí, fú qí fán

king/ prognosticate/ say/, Feng/ qí/ go out/, be/ *dīng* day/, qí/ be/ *dīng* day/ not / go out/,

qí/ have/ ailment/, not/ qí/ recover

The king, having prognosticating, said: If Feng goes out, it should be on a *ding* day. If on the *ding* day (he) does not go out, Feng may have an ailment, and may have not recovered yet. (*Bingbian* 31: 1-2)

In this example, there are two complex sentences, each of which contains a protasis referring to a future event. Each of the protases is marked with *qi*. The following example also shows that *qi* can only be used in the protasis expressing future events or states:

(54) a. 辛酉卜，𠬪貞：乙丑其雨，不佳我囡。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: yǐchǒu qí yǔ, bù wéi wǒ huò

xinyou day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, *yichou* day/ qí/ rain/, not /be/ we/ misfortune

Divining on the *xinyou* day, Nan tested: If it rains on the *yichou* day, it is not the case (or: it does not mean) that God sends down misfortune upon us.

b. 貞：乙丑其雨，佳我囡。

xīnyǒu bǔ, Nán zhēn: yǐchǒu qí yǔ, bù wéi wǒ huò

test/, *yichou* day/ qí/ rain/, be/ we/ misfortune

Tested: If it rains on the *yichou* day, it is the case (or: it means) that God sends down misfortune upon us. (*Bingbian* 306: 6-7)

The first clause in each charge in (54) refers to a future state, which is indicated by the temporal sequence of the two time phrases. Namely, the day on which it is assumed it will rain is *yichou* (day 2), which is several days later than the divining day, *xinyou* (day 58) in the 60-day cycle.

Let us compare this example to the one in (55):

(55) a. 壬寅卜，𠬪貞：不雨，佳茲商出乍囡。

rén yín bǔ, Nán zhēn: bù yǔ, wéi zī Shāng yǒu zuò huò

renyin day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, not/ rain/, be/ this/ Shang/ have/ make/ misfortune

Divining on the *renyin* day, Nan tested: As for not raining (or: if it is not going to rain), (this) is the case (or: this means) that this city of Shang will have a misfortunes caused (by God).

b. 貞: 不雨, 不佳茲商出乍田.

rén yīn bǔ, Nán zhēn: bù yǔ, bù wéi zī Shāng yǒu zuò huò

renyin day/ divine/, Nan/ test/, not/ rain/, not/ be/ this/ Shang/ have/ make/ misfortune

Tested: As for not raining (or: if it is not going to rain), (this) is not the case (or: this does not mean) that this city of Shang will have a misfortune caused (by God). (*Bingbian* 204: 22-23)

This divination is somewhat similar to the one in (54), in that both were made to identify whether a weather condition—such as having rain or not having rain—is related to an undesirable situation. However, the temporal status of the protasis in (55) is ambiguous. The absence of *qi* seems to allow us to understand the temporal status in the protasis as present, immediately past, or future.

The above examples indicate that *qi* is closely related to future temporal status, which is compatible to its modal function of uncertain outcome marker. This seems to suggest that the presence of *qi* in a conditional clause is semantically motivated, rather than syntactically motivated. In other words, *qi* functions as a modal particle rather than a nominalizing marker in this context. However, whether this is a tenable interpretation is still to be explored. Consider example in (56):

(56) a. 王其往逐麋于虞, 其隻.

wáng qí wǎng zhú mí yú Kuí, qí huò.

king/ qí/ go/ chase/ *mi*-deer/ at/ Kui/, qí/ catch

If the king goes hunting *mi*-deer at Kui, perhaps he will catch some.

b. 王其往逐麋于虞, 不其隻.

wáng qí wǎng zhú mí yú Kuí, bù qí huò.

king/ qí/ go/ chase/ *mi*-deer/ at/ Kui/, not/ qí/ catch

If the king goes hunting *mi*-deer at Kui, perhaps he will not catch any.²⁶⁹ (*Bingbian* 216:5-6)

²⁶⁹ In Takashima (2004 a), the sentences in (56) are translated as follows:

a. "If His Majesty should go (chasing:) hunting *mi*-deer at Kuei (?), he will catch (some)."

b. "If His Majesty should go (chasing:) hunting *mi*-deer at Kuei (?), he may not happen to (be able to) catch (any)." (Takashima 2004 a: PP 216: 5-6)

It is noted in Takashima (2004 b: PP 216, Note 5) that the *qi* in second clause in charge (56a) is Chang Bingquan's reconstruction, but Serruys questions it. Takashima also considers that it is probably best omitted as Serruys does, since the negative has *qi*. It seems that Serruys' doubt about Chang's reconstruction is based on his "less desirable *qi*" theory. However, if *qi* is not a mark of undesirability in nature, then Chang's reconstruction is probably feasible.

Interestingly, in this example, *qi* occurs in each clause of the paired charges. The two charges are the same in the first clauses, and they are both marked with *qi*. The main clauses of the positive and negative charges express two possible uncontrollable situations. It is easy to explain that the use of *qi* in them is to mark the situations as uncertain outcomes. However, it is difficult to determine the function of *qi* in the first clauses, the conditionals in both charges. Clearly, what is expressed in the conditional clause is a controllable, intended, future event. Does *qi* in this context function as a pure nominalizer to mark a nominalized clause, or does *qi* function as a modal marker to encode a potential or hypothetical event? We tend to take it as a nominalizing marker.

8.5. The historical connection between the three grammatical functions of *qi*

8.5.1. The development of the uncertain outcome marker *qi*

So far, we have presented data to demonstrate the three uses of the particle *qi* in early classical texts and pre-classical texts OBI. Now let us look at the relation between these three functions of *qi*. The question to be considered is: Is this a case of polysemy or a case of homonymy?

It could be argued that although the three uses are quite distinct, they nonetheless do not indicate that they are functions belonging to two or three unrelated words. Rather, we claim that the three functions of *qi* are historically connected, assuming that the nominalizing function of *qi* is the extension of the genitive function of *qi* in the nominal genitive structures, and the modal function of *qi* in the main clause as a mark of uncertain outcome is a later development from its nominalizing function in the dependent clauses. In other words, the three different functions of *qi* is a case of polysemy.

We propose that the pathway along which *qi* developed from nominalizing marker to modal marker involves the following stages: Stage 1, the genitive marker *qi* is used as a nominalizing marker in dependent clauses; the nominalizing use provides the possibility for *qi* to be used in front of a verb. Stage 2, *qi*'s use in front of a verb in dependent clauses is extended to the environment of main clauses; this development is called "de-subordination." Stage 3, the nominalizing marker *qi* in the erstwhile dependent construction is reanalyzed with a new grammatical function— an uncertain outcome marker. As far as the semantic source of the epistemic-uncertain

function of *qi* is concerned, little can be said at present. However, the frequent use of *qi* in the nominalized conditional clauses might provide the basis for *qi* to acquire the epistemic connotation of uncertainty. Below we provide more details about the stages of development.

In Stage 1, the genitive marker *qi* is used as nominalizing marker in dependent clauses. The development from a genitive marker to a nominalizing marker is a natural extension. In fact, a genitive marker used between two nouns to establish a genitive relation (such as a modifier-head relation in which the modifier is usually the possessor, and the head is the possessee), can easily extend to be used between a noun and a verb to establish a genitive relation. In modern Mandarin, the genitive marker *de*, as in *Xiao Wang de Maozi*, “Xiao Wang’s hat,” can also be used to form a similar relation between a noun and a verb, as in *Xiao Wang de daolai*, “Xiao Wang’s coming.” For example, in English, the genitive marker ‘s can be used between two nouns to indicate a possessive relation as in “John’s hat,” and it can also be used between a noun and a de-verbal phrase, as in “John’s coming.” Usually, this type of structure is called subject-genitive structure.

However, one point worth noting is that the English genitive marker and the Mandarin one are different. The English genitive marker itself does not have the nominalizing function—the nominalizing source of a genitive structure like “John’s coming” comes from the gerundive form of a verb, in this case, “coming.” In other words, a form that is not de-verbal cannot be linked by the genitive marker ‘s in English. However, in Chinese, a form that is not de-verbal can be directly linked by the genitive marker—the nominalizing source of a genitive structure like *Xiao Wang de daolai*, “Xiao Wang’s coming” comes from the genitive marker *de*. Thus we may call *de* a nominalizing marker.

Returning to the case in early Classical Chinese, genitive markers *qi* and *zhi* possess the same nominalizing nature as their modern Chinese counterpart, namely they can also be used immediately in front of a verbal phrase to form a nominalized structure. It is reasonable to assume that historically, the nominalizing function of *qi* started with its genitive function.

In Stage 2, *qi*’s use in front of a verb in dependent clauses is extended to the environment of main clauses; this development is called “de-subordination;” that is, a dependent clause coming to be employed as an independent main clause. De-subordinating a dependent construction and

reanalyzing its function is a commonly seen phenomenon in many languages. The reader is referred to Aikhenvald (2004: 106-121) for examples of de-subordination in different languages. What is relevant to the case at hand is the de-subordination of French conditional clauses. According to Aikhenvald (2004: 106-7), a conditional clause which is normally a dependent, may also appear as an independent main clause. When used in a main clause, the French conditional has the following semantic features:

- (i) it expresses 'uncertainty' concerning the information conveyed;
- (ii) it indicates that the information has been taken from other source; and
- (iii) the speaker/writer takes no responsibility for the information.

The following example illustrates these features:

(57) La flotte britannique aurait quitté ce matin le port de Portsmouth.

"The British Navy would have left the port of Portsmouth this morning (we were told)."

(Aikhenvald 2004: 106)

According to Aikhenvald, in this main clause use, the underlined form has derived the epistemic meaning of "perhaps," along with a non-firsthand evidential sense.

Thus, it is also possible that the *qi*-marked nominalized dependent clauses in earlier stages of Chinese might have involved de-subordination, coming to be used as independent main clauses. Although in the absence of direct historical evidence, the details of the development of the modal function of *qi* from genitive/nominalizing marker cannot be determined, it is not implausible to assume that after *qi* acquired the status to be used in front of the verb in a dependent clause, *qi* began to be used in front of the main verb in a main clause as well, and this gave rise to the de-subordination of *qi*-marked dependent clauses. And after a *qi*-marked dependent clause began to be used as a main clause, the erstwhile nominalizing marker *qi* was reanalyzed as an uncertain outcome marker and was used as a linguistic device to encode an event or state as unreal, potential, or unrealized (i.e., an uncertain outcome).

Undoubtedly, this hypothesis needs further investigation, especially as to when and how this happened. But theoretically, it is quite possible that the erstwhile nominalizing marker *qi* developed into the modal marker *qi* via de-subordination. In this analysis, the three distinct

functions of the particle *qi* as a genitive marker, a nominalizing marker, and an uncertain outcome marker can be all connected, such that one can see how these functions developed from each other.

8.5.2. Evidence in a related language: the Qiang language

Even though there is no direct evidence to support this hypothesis, the relevant phenomena in other languages do provide some support. That is, in the languages that also make a modal distinction between Irrealis and Realis, the Irrealis distinction can be carried by grammatical categories such as the complementizer (Buckley 1988) or dependent clause suffixes (Miller 1990).²⁷⁰

A similar case is also seen in a language that has a closer relation to Chinese, the Qiang language, a member of the Qiangic branch of the Tibeto-Burman family of the Sino-Tibetan stock. It is reported in Lapolla (2003: 72) that in Qiang, for expressing a contingent ('it is possible that,' 'perhaps') situation, often a construction is used involving a clause nominalized by /-m/, plus [la-han > la-h'n] (definite marker + 'kind'), [ka-han > ka-h'n] (indefinite marker + 'kind'), or /tan/ ('appearance'), and the copula. For example, an expression like "S/he might be there" is expressed by a construction using the nominalizer /-m/ plus /tan/, and the question particle [luɕua] can be added to the end of the sentence to make the statement even more of an uncertainty, as in (58) below.

- (58) the: tha-ɬi-m-tan ŋuə
 3SG there-exist-NMIZ-appearance Cop
 ‘S/he might be there.’ (Example from Qiang, cited in Lapolla 2003: 72/27b)

This example is significant in that it shows that a nominalized construction used as an independent clause for expressing an uncertain situation is not an unusual phenomenon in languages. Moreover, that the combination of the nominalizing marker /-m/ and the final question particle [lu³ua] can make a statement more of an uncertainty also resembles the inferential constructions with *qi* plus the question final particle *hu* in early Classical Chinese (see inferential questions in Chapter 7).

²⁷⁰ As cited in Mithun (1995: 377) that Buckley (1988) describes an Irrealis/Realis distinction is carried in Alsea by complementizers; and according to Miller (1990: 119), in Jamul Dieguño, a Yuman language of southern California, there is an irrealis suffix -x which can appear with different kinds of irrealis expressions such as counterfactuals, conditionals, potentials, obligations, warnings, desideratives, and futures, as well as in adversative, purpose, and hypothetical relative clauses and nominalizations.

Thus, it is not impossible that in the Shang language, the earliest known form of Chinese, and in early Classical Chinese, the nominalized constructions with *qi* might also have been used as independent or main clauses to express contingent or hypothetical situations, similar to the nominalized construction with the nominalizer /-m/ in Qiang.

8.5.3. Internal evidence in OBI

There is no direct historical evidence which shows the development of the epistemic-uncertain modal marker *qi*. But there are cases in which it is far from easy to determine whether *qi* is used as nominalizer or a modal marker. Consider the following examples:

(59) 隹庚其吉.

weí gēng qí jí.

be/ geng day/ qí/ auspicious

A: It is on a *geng* day that it will (perhaps) be auspicious .

B: It is on a *geng* day; perhaps it may be auspicious. (*Bingbian* 66: 5)

The sentence in this example occurs in a prognostication context. It contains two verbs: the copula *wei*, “to be,” and the adjectival verb *ji*, “to be auspicious, lucky.” *Qi* occurs in front of the second verb *ji*. The sentence allows two possible interpretation. The first is to take it as a cleft-type sentence as a whole, in which the main verb is the copula *wei*, and *qi ji* is the relative clause that modifies the NP *geng* day, as seen in the interpretation A. It seems that in this analysis, we can take *qi* as a nominalizer which marks the clause *qi ji* as non-main/dependent. However, whether or not *qi* in this dependent contains an epistemic-uncertain meaning as well remains an open question. There is also an alternative analysis, in which the sentence can be treated as two independent clauses, and the function of *qi* can be understood as expressing uncertainty or possibility, as seen in interpretation B.

(60) 其隹庚吉.

qí weí gēng jí.

qí/ be/ geng day/ auspicious

A: If it is on a *geng* day, it will be auspicious

B: It might be on a *geng* day. It will be auspicious. (*Bingbian* 516: 10)

This sentence in (60) is quite similar to the one in (59) in that they contain the same lexical items. But different from (59), in the sentence in (60), *qi* occurs in front of the first verb, namely, the copula *wei*, “to be.” It also allows two interpretations. The first is to treat the part *qi wei geng*, “be a *geng* day” as a conditional clause, assuming *qi* as a nominalizer to mark the clause as dependent/non-main. The second is to view the sentences as two separate clauses: *qi wei geng*, “it might on a *geng* day,” and *ji*, “it will be auspicious.” In this analysis, *qi* is a modal marker. In OBI, it seems that whether a clause marked with *qi* is dependent or main is mostly determined by its position within a context. If it occurs as the first clause, it seems to allow a nominalizing analysis, but if it occurs as the second clause, or alone, then it can be taken as a main clause.

Consider the following examples:

(61) 其佳辛雨，弘吉。

qí wéi xīn yǔ , hóng jí.

qí/ be/ *xin* day/ rain/, greatly/ auspicious

If it is on the *xin* day that it rains, it will be greatly auspicious. (*Bingbian* 5 24: 4)

In this example, the first clause is marked with *qi*, and it seems possible to take it as a conditional clause. However, sometimes, a similar structure can occur independently, as in the following example:

(62) 其佳今夕雨。

qí wéi jīn xī yǔ

qí/ be/ present/ evening/ rain.

A: It might be in this evening that it will rain.

B: It might be in this evening. It will rain. (*Bingbian* 425: 7)

Compare this sentence to the first sentence in example (61), it seems that it is the evidence that shows a nominalized clause can be used as a main clause (i.e., a case of de-subordination). If we compare (62) to the one in (60), namely the sentence *qi wei geng ji* 其佳庚吉, then we see that (60) and (62) possess similar structure: both have the pattern “*qi* + *wei* (copula)+ time phrase + verb.” Thus, if we allow the sentence *qi wei geng ji* to have two interpretations, then the one in (62) is also possible to a second interpretation, as in B.

8.5.4. Internal evidence in early Classical Chinese

The following examples from early Classical Chinese also show that the nominalizing marker *qi* and the uncertain outcome marker *qi* are closely related.

- (63) 何其處也，必有與也！(詩經·旄丘)

hé qí chù yě, bǐ yǒu yǔ yě!

what/ qí/ stay/ yě/, certainly/ have/ to be with somebody/ yě

“Why does he stay, he certainly has somebody to be with!” (SJ, Mao qiu; Karlgren 1950a: 37/2)

We may consider that *qi chu* 其處, “(his) staying” in this example is a nominalized clause which serves as the subject clause of question sentence. The interrogative pronoun *he* 何, “what” is the predicate of the question sentence. The underlying structure of the sentence can be understood as *其處何也? “His staying is (for) what?”²⁷¹ The same analysis can be applied to example (64):

- (64) 既見君子，云何其憂？(詩經·揚之水)

jǐ jiàn jūnzǐ, yún hé qí yōu?

already/ see/ lord, you/, say/ what/ qí/ anxious

“When I have seen my lord, how should I be anxious?” (SJ, Yang zhi shui; Karlgren 1950a: 116/2)

The phrase *qi you* 其憂, “my being anxious” can be taken as a nominalized clause (note that in this case, the subject to which *qi* is linked is a first person). So the sentence *yun he qi you* can be analyzed as *其憂云何? “My being anxious is (due to / for) what?” Note the meaning of *yun* is literally “to say,” *he* 何 is the object, and *qi you* 其憂 is the nominalized subject clause.

The examples in (63)-(64) show that *qi* can be analyzed as a nominalizer, even though it occurs in front of the verb in sentences in which no other overt main verb is used. The question sentences above can be taken as noun predicate sentences. In other words, the question word can be treated as a noun predicate, and the *qi*-marked clause is the subject clause. In the following example, a copula is used between the question word and *qi*, clearly indicating that *qi* is used in front of a verb to form a nominalized clause in a question:

²⁷¹ Note that the English translation of *qi chu* 其處 as “his staying” does not mean that *qi* is a third-person possessive. Instead, we assume that grammatically, *qi* here is a nominalizing marker. The pronominal interpretation of this phrase comes from the contextual meaning, and it is the existence of an empty pronoun PRO in front of the this phrase that is responsible for this referentiality. This is the same as the case of null-subject clauses in which the null subject also has the pronominal interpretation contextually. We also assume that this is so because of the existence of the empty pronoun in the subject position (see Chapter 5 for more explanation for this analysis).

- (65) 心之憂矣，曷維其已？(詩經·綠衣)

xīn zhī yōu yǐ, hé wéi qí yǐ?

heart/ zhī/ worry/ yǐ/, when/ be/ qí/ stop

“The grief of the heart, when will it end” (SJ, Lü yi; Karlgren 1950a: 27/1)

Lit. The heart's being worried, when will be its ending?

Here *qi* is used in front of the verb *yi* 已, “stop,” and there is a copula *wei* between the question-word *he* 曷 and *qi yi* 其已. Literally, the sentence can be translated as “The ending of (my grief) will be when?” So we may say that *qi* here is used as a nominalizer in front of the verb to form a nominalized dependent clause.

It seems the *qi* in the following example (66) allows two analyses. The first is that *qi* is a modal particle used in front of the verbal phrase *shi zhi* 尸之. And the sentence *shui qi shi zhi* 誰其尸之 can be interpreted as “Who will probably set them forth?” The second is that *qi* marks the following verbal phrase as a nominalized clause, and this nominalized clause is the subject clause of the question sentence, namely * 其尸之 維誰, literally, “(The one) setting forth (the sacrificial offering) is who?”

- (66) 誰其尸之？有齊季女。(詩經·采蘋)

shuí qí shī zhī? yǒu zhāi jì nǚ.

who/ qí/ set forth (sacrificial offering)/ zhī/, there is/ reverent / young/ girl.²⁷²

“Who sets them forth? There is a reverent young girl.” (SJ, Cai pin; Karlgren 1950a: 15/3)

However, the use of *qi* as in the following example seems already a modal particle:

- (67) 心之憂矣，其誰知之？(詩經·甫田)

xīn zhī yōu yǐ, qí shuí zhī zhī?

heart/ zhī/ worry/ yǐ/, qí/ who/ know/ zhī

“For the grief of the heart, who can know it?” (SJ, Fu tian; Karlgren 1950a: 109/2)

Consider the following example from the *Shangshu*:

²⁷² According to Jin Qihua (1984: 33), the character 齊 is read as *zhai* 齋, meaning beautiful, good looking.

(68) 爽惟天其罰殛我，我其不怨。(尚書·康誥)

shuǎn wéi tiān qí fá jí wǒ, wǒ qí bù yuàn.

if, faulty/ be/ Heaven/ qí/ punish/ kill/ I/, I/ qí/ not/ resent

A: "If there is any fault, Heaven will punish and kill me, and I shall not resent it."

(Karlgren 1950b: 14/21)

B: "Then if Heaven punishes us, we will not resent it." (Qu Wangli 1973: 104)

The two different interpretations in (68) result from the different understandings of the word *shuang* 爽 which occurs in the beginning of the first sentence. For Karlgren, *shuang* is an adjective meaning "be faulty," and it serves as a conditional clause, namely "if there is fault." The following clause *tian qi fa ji wo* 天其罰殛我, is taken as a main clause on which the condition clause is dependent. However, Qu Wanli takes the first part of the example, *shuang wei tian qi fa ji wo*, as a conditional clause as a whole. Qu does not explicitly explain how he understands *shuang* in the sentence. But from his translation, he seems to take it as a conjunction like *name* 那麼, "and then." The reason for which Qu understands the first as a conditional is that he takes *wei* used there as a word expressing *jialing* 假令, "supposing; if." What is relevant for our purposes here is that Karlgren takes the first *qi*-marked clause as a main clause, while Qu takes it as a dependent clause.

The discussion above shows that some *qi*-marked clauses in the earlier Chinese texts seem to allow both a nominalizing analysis and a modal analysis. This suggests that *qi*'s modal use in the main clause is connected to its nominalizing function in the dependent clauses.

Lastly, there are two more questions to be considered. First, what is the semantic source for the nominalizer *qi* becoming a modal marker with an epistemic-uncertain meaning, being used to mark expressions of uncertain outcomes? Second, should we treat the *qi* used in main clauses as a modality marker, or a nominalizer with an epistemic-uncertain function? To put it differently, are the *qi*-marked clauses that express uncertain outcomes nominalized constructions or independent clauses? As for the first question, we do not have direct evidence for it, and the question remains open. As for the second question, our answer is that the main-clause *qi* should be treated as a modality marker, rather than a nominalizer with a modal function. The treatment of *qi* as a nominalizer with a modal use implies that all *qi*-marked clauses are not independent clause or

complete clauses, but just nominalized dependent clauses. This assumption requires both theoretical and empirical exploration. Moreover, whether the nominalizing function of *qi* can naturally be derived into the epistemic modal function, or whether *qi* is associated with an underlying epistemic meaning are questions to be explored. It is reasonable to assume that the semantic mechanism at play in the development of the modal meaning of *qi* from its nominalizing function involved some driving force. Cross-linguistically, it is common for nominalized constructions to acquire the status of main clause and to be reinterpreted as a form with new meaning. So we hypothesize that on the path of *qi* being reanalyzed as a modal marker, the nominalized clauses with *qi* began to be used as main clauses. This implies that the main clauses use is a precondition for acquiring the modal function for the nominalizer *qi* in the nominalized construction. It goes without saying that *qi* in the modal use is not already a nominalizer.

8.6. Conclusions

In this chapter, we have discussed the uses and various contexts of *qi* in OBI. The data described here suggest that the particle *qi* in OBI, as in early Classical Chinese, has been used in three different functions: as a genitive marker, as a nominalizing marker, and as a modality marker. Of interest is that the OBI data demonstrate that *qi*'s modal function can be also characterized as an uncertain outcome marker in the language. The presence and absence of *qi* in a main clause is sensitive to the semantic feature of controllability of the verb. In addition, the use of *qi* is also pragmatically motivated to indicate the diviner's attitude concerning the desirability of the situation expressed in the charge, or to differentiate the diviner's expectation of the actualization of an event. In the last section of the chapter, we investigated the historical connection between the three functions of *qi*. We hypothesize that the three functions of *qi* are historically related. Some internal evidence in OBI and early Classical Chinese is provided to show that *qi*'s modal function is closely related to its nominal function. In the absence of historical evidence, the details of the development cannot be determined, but by comparison with similar phenomena of the development of modality in other languages, in particular the case of the Qing language, it is not impossible to assume that the uncertain outcome maker *qi* developed from the nominalizing marker *qi* that was extended from the genitive marker *qi*, through the process of de-subordination.

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