

Shang ritual animals: colour and meaning (part 1)

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Abstract

This paper (to be published in two parts in subsequent issues of *BSOAS*) aims to explore the meaning of colour in Shang rituals. Operating within an established framework of Shang religion and archaeology, it offers a detailed analysis of the evidence found in oracle bone inscriptions. The oracle bone inscriptions from Yinxu, the late capital of the Shang dynasty, can be divided into different diviner schools and subgroups. Part 1 of the paper will examine the inscriptions of the various diviner groups under the kings' school, and will reveal regular patterns in the use of colour.

Introduction

In a previous paper on Shang colour terminology, I identified eight basic colour terms found in oracle bone inscriptions (OBI): *chi* 赤 (red), *xing* 騂 (red-yellow), *bai* 白 (white), *wu* 物 (multicolour), *zhi* 𠄎 (brown), *huang* 黃 (yellow), *hei* 黑 (black) and *you* 幽 (from *xuan* 玄, dark-red). My main observation was that the majority of the colour words were used predicatively to specify ritual objects, in particular ritual animals, and that these could serve as the basic model for colour configuration and colour naming in Shang times. On this basis, I attempted to reconstruct the underlying process of colour categorization.¹ The aim of the present paper is to explore the meaning(s) of colour in Shang rituals in more detail, by examining the context in which colour is specifically indicated; in other words, to decode the underlying colour symbolism and its development during the late Shang period.

In order to understand the context in which colour is perceived and activated, it is necessary first to describe the key features of Shang religion. Religion is a complex system, usually a combination of theology, dogma, ceremony and ritual, closely interconnected, in Durkheim's words, as "a sort of indivisible entity".² The Shang priests, however, did not have a

- 1 Wang Tao, "Colour terms in Shang oracle bone inscriptions", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* LIX/1 (1996), 63–101. The present paper is derived from my doctoral thesis "Colour symbolism in Late Shang China" (University of London, 1993), but has been revised and updated with evidence from new finds. I would like to thank Sarah Allan, Paul Thompson, Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 and Li Xueqin 李學勤 for their continued help and support, and Roderick Whitfield, Diana Matias and Zhang Hongxing 張宏星 for their constructive comments.
- 2 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, tr. Joseph Ward Swain (repr. London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), esp. 36.

liturgical book such as the Bible to narrate their belief system. For this reason, we must detect Shang beliefs through the remains of their religious activities. We therefore depend largely on archaeological evidence and, in particular, divinatory inscriptions found on animal bones. Oracle bone inscriptions are contemporary written records of rituals and divinations and thus play an essential role in the understanding of Shang history and religion.

In my interpretation of the Shang evidence, I have deliberately used some transmitted pre-Han texts. One may question the authenticity and the dates of these texts, since there is a perceived gap between the Shang inscriptions and the body of early texts known through textual transmission. Many scholars, influenced by the historiographical scepticism of the Gushibian School 古史辨派 in the 1920s and 1930s, have little confidence in the Xia, Shang or Zhou historical records transmitted in those works.³ In recent years, however, archaeology has brought to light more early Chinese texts than ever before, and the new evidence suggests that many transmitted records must be based on genuine early material, even if such documents were subsequently amended, inflected, or rewritten during the course of their transmission. It may be possible in the near future to attempt to bridge the gaps by studying the excavated materials; for example, new results have emerged from the use of Zhou bronze inscriptions to study classical texts such as *Zhouli* 周禮.⁴ The examination and evaluation of ancient texts is essential for a real understanding of early Chinese culture and the development of thought in ancient China.⁵ For now, though, we must adopt a more tentative position, and be aware that, while these documents were probably compiled later, they are likely to contain much information from earlier sources, or to be the transformation of an earlier tradition. When using these texts, I have treated them cautiously and analytically, by comparing them, wherever possible, with evidence from archaeological contexts.

In this paper, I will first discuss briefly the key elements of Shang rituals and divination, and then introduce two aspects that are crucial to this study: the idea of Shang colour symbolism, and the new classification and periodization of OBI. I will then focus on the evidence for colour symbolism in the OBI by examining each diviner group in turn. The results will be presented in the conclusions.

3 The Gushibian School, led by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 and others, was very influential in the first half of the twentieth century. Their studies are contained in *Gushibian* 古史辨 (7 vols, Shanghai and Beijing, 1926–41; repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982).

4 See Zhang Yachu 張亞初 and Liu Yu 劉雨, *Xi Zhou jinwen guanzhi yanjiu* 西周金文官制研究 (*Beijing: Zhonghua shuju*, 1986), esp. 111–44; and Chen Hanping 陳漢平, *Xi Zhou ceming zhidu yanjiu* 西周冊命制度研究 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1986), esp. 163–219.

5 See Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Dui gushu de faxian fansi” 對古書的發現反思, in *Li Xueqin ji* 李學勤集 (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989), 41–6; and “Kaogu faxian yu Zhongguo xueshu shi” 考古發現與中國學術史, in *Li Xueqin wenji* 李學勤文集 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2005), 30–31. The latter was first read at an international symposium at Hong Kong University in January 2001.

Shang rituals and divination

A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct Shang religion,⁶ and for analytical purposes, most agree that the Shang world of ancestors, spirits and gods can be divided into various categories on different levels (see figure 1).

It is clear that the ancestral cult prevalent in later Chinese history was already dominant in the Shang period. The Shang calendar evolved alongside the sacrifices made to the ancestors. The royal genealogy contains thirty-five historical ancestors, including the pre-dynastic rulers and the dynastic kings, and their main consorts. They have “temple-names” (*miaohao* 廟號),⁷ are worshipped frequently and are presented with regular offerings in various rites. And additionally to members of the royal genealogy, the Shang people also made sacrifices to historical figures who have been identified as important ministers to earlier rulers, such as Huang Yin 黃尹, Yi Yin 伊尹, Xian Wu 咸戊 and Xue Wu 學戊.⁸

There are also several Shang ancestors recorded in OBI who may be better understood as mythological than historical ancestors. They include Nao 夔 (or Kui 夔, or Jun 俊),⁹ Er 娥 and Wang Hai 王亥, who are sometimes called the *gaozu* 高祖 or “High Ancestors”. The names of these ancestors were usually written in pictographic forms,¹⁰ with no particular

6 Two major studies are Chen Mengjia’s 陳夢家 *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1956), esp. 561–603, and Shima Kunio’s 島邦男, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū* 殷墟卜辭研究 (Hirosaki: Hirosaki daigaku chūgoku kenkyūkai, 1958), esp. 55–348. The most important monographs since the 1970s are Chang Tsung-tung, *Der Kult der Shang-Dynastie im Spiegel der Orakelinschriften: eine paläographische Studie zur Religion im archaischen China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970); Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠, *Chugoku kodai no shukyo to bunka: in ocho no saishi* 中國古代の宗教と文化: 殷王朝の祭祀 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1977); Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990); Michiharu Itō and Ken-ichi Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization: Religion, Society, Language and Palaeography*, ed. Gary F. Arbuckle (Hirakata and Osaka: Kansai Gaidai University, 1996); and David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 BC)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000).

7 For a discussion of temple names, see Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 401–82; see also Ji Dewei 吉德璋 [David Keightley], “Zhongguo gudai de jiri yu miaohao” 中國古代的祭日與廟號, *Yinxu bowuyuan yuankan* 殷墟博物院苑刊, Inaugural issue, (1989), 20–32. Sarah Allan has also argued that the categorization of the direct ancestors of the Shang lineage into the “temple name system” is related to their creation myth of the ten suns; see Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, esp. ch. 2, 19–56.

8 For the identification of the old ministers, see Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 361–6; and Shima Kunio, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū*, 252–3.

9 For a discussion of various identifications of this Shang ancestor, see Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 51–2.

10 For example, the names of Er 娥 and Wang Hai 王亥 are sometimes written with a bird-element, suggesting an association with the creation myth in which the Shang people were born from the egg of a black bird. Indeed, Yu Xingwu has argued that the bird was a Shang totem; see Yu Xingwu 于省吾, “Lü lun tuteng yu zongjiao qi yuan he Xia Shang tuten” 略論圖騰與宗教起源和夏商圖騰, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 1959/11, 60–6; also Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 54–5.

<i>Supreme god(s)</i>	Di 帝
<i>Cosmic gods</i>	Fang 方 (Sifang 四方), Dongmu 東母, Ximu 西母
<i>Natural powers</i>	Sun 日, moon 月, stars 星, wind 風, thunder 雷, rain 雨
<i>Natural spirits/ mythical ancestors</i>	Tu 土 (She 社), Yue 嶽, He 河
<i>Mythical ancestors</i>	Nao 饒 (Jun 俊), Ji 季, Wang Hai 王亥, Wang Heng 王恆
<i>Pre-dynastical ancestors</i>	Shang Jia 上甲, Bao Yi 報乙, Bao Bing 報丙, Bao Ding 報丁, Shi Ren 示壬, Shi Gui 示癸
<i>Dynastic kings</i>	Da Yi 大乙 (Tang 唐), Da Ding 大丁, Da Jia 大甲, Bu Bing 卜丙, Da Geng 大庚, Xiao Jia 小甲, Da Wu 大戊, Lü Ji 呂己, Zhong Ding 中丁, Bu Ren 卜壬, Jian Jia 夔甲, Zu Yi 祖乙, Zu Xin 祖辛, Qiang Jia 羌甲, Zu Ding 祖丁, Nan Geng 南庚, Xiang Jia 象甲, Pan Geng 般庚, Xiao Xin 小辛, Xiao Yi 小乙, Wu Ding 武丁, Zu Ji 祖己, Zu Geng 祖庚, Zu Jia 祖甲, Lin Xin 廩辛 and Kang Ding 康丁, Wu Yi 武乙, Wen Wu Ding 文武丁, Di Yi 帝乙, Di Xin 帝辛
<i>Kings' consorts</i>	Bi Jia 妣甲, Bi Yi 妣乙, Bi Ding 妣丁, Bi Wu 妣戊, Bi Ji 妣己, Bi Geng 妣庚, Bi Xin 妣辛, Yu Bi Xin 毓妣辛, Bi Ren 妣壬, Bi Gui 妣癸
<i>Royal ministers</i>	Huang Yin 黃尹, Yi Yin 伊尹, Xian Wu 咸戊, Xue Wu 學戊, Jin Wu 盡戊, Mie 蔑

Figure 1. The reconstructed Shang pantheon in OBI

fixed order, and no temple names. It is difficult to identify them with figures in the traditional records, because the records can be very confusing. For example, the names Yue 嶽 and He 河 appear to be spirits of Mt Yue 岳 (modern Mt Songshan 嵩山) and Yellow River (Huanghe 黃河), yet they are offered sacrifices in the same manner as were the ancestors, and at times He is even called a *gaozu*, or “High Ancestor”. Altars and temples were built for these mythological ancestors, and there is no clear distinction between them and the direct historical ancestors. In this way, they seem always to be in transformation, as part-god and part-ancestor. Other recipients of Shang rituals are clearly natural powers rather than ancestors. For example, rituals were performed to the sun, moon, wind and thunder. The Shang people also worshipped Tu 土 (or She 社) and Fang 方, who probably represent the spirit(s) of the earth and the cardinal directions.

The most powerful god in Shang religion, towering above all the deities, is the Di 帝, conventionally understood as “Shang Di” 上帝 or the “Lord on High”.¹¹ We do not know for certain whether this term referred to an individual god or to several gods.

As the supreme and most powerful divinity, Di was placed at the very top of the Shang pantheon, and was expected to behave as a heavenly god. However, it is also true that the character *di* in OBI has different meanings, sometimes referring to a particular ritual (*di* 禘), and sometimes to an honorific title for the Shang kings: hence Di Yi 帝乙 and Di Xin 帝辛. To a degree, Di shared some of the same characteristics as the Shang ancestors.¹² Recently, Robert Eno has argued that the character *di* is probably a generic or corporate term and that it may refer to deceased (“one or more than one”) leaders of a lineage.¹³ Yet the language of the OBI suggests that Di seldom received sacrifices directly from the Shang people, preferring instead to be “entertained” (*bin* 賓) by the Shang ancestors.¹⁴

In oracle bone inscriptions, Di is more like a cosmic god; he could “command” (*ling* 令) natural powers such as clouds, wind, thunder and rain; he could “send down” (*jiang* 降) drought and other natural disasters; and he could also grant his approval (*ruo* 若), or disapproval (*bu ruo* 不若), of important state affairs, such as building a city or launching a military attack. In a more cosmological context, Di is closely associated with the *sifang* 四方, the cardinal directions, or the spirit of the four quadrates, who also received offerings from the Shang people. In later traditions, the deities of the *sifang* are also called Di. The origin of Di-worship may be associated with early astrology.¹⁵

For the Shang people, performing rituals and making sacrifices were of enormous importance. The majority of divination records are about the various rites and sacrifices, how they were to be performed, what the offerings were, and to whom they were addressed. The OBI are testament to

- 11 For a general study of Di in OBI, see Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, “Yin buci zhong de shangdi he wangdi” 殷卜辭中的上帝和王帝, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 1959/9, 23–50; 1959/10, 89–110.
- 12 Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 has already argued that the character *di* 帝 is related to *di* 嫡, meaning a lineal descent; see Qiu Xigui, “Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi yu guizu he pingmin liangge jieji de chubu yanjiu” 關於商代的宗族組織與貴族和平民兩個階級的初步研究, in Qiu Xigui, *Gudai wenshi yanjiu xintan* 古代文史研究新探 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1992), 296–342, esp. 298–302; [originally published in *Wenshi* 文史 17 (1983)].
- 13 Robert Eno, “Was there a high god Ti in Shang religion?”, *Early China* 15 (1990), 1–26.
- 14 Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳翰 has challenged the traditional view that Di is the “supreme god”, and argues that Di was a newly invented cosmic god in the Shang religion. He has also cited two inscriptions that may relate to the ritual for Di. See Zhu Fenghan, “Shang Zhou shiqi de tianshen chongbai” 商周時期的天神崇拜, *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 1993/4, 191–211.
- 15 For a recent study of the problem of Di, see Sarah Allan, “On the identity of Shang Di and the origin of the concept of a celestial mandate (*tianming* 天命)” (unpublished paper, first presented at the international symposium “The concept of space reflected in Chinese palaeography”, Paris, March 2004), in which she proposes that the worship of the Di might have derived from the Pole Star.

a rich variety of Shang ritual activity, and include holocaust, libation and exorcism.¹⁶ The nature of the sacrifices is also wide-ranging: the most common offerings are wine and food, followed by domestic animals, such as oxen, pigs, sheep and dogs.¹⁷ But human sacrifice also featured heavily in Shang rituals.¹⁸ The Shang kings frequently hunted, and wild species caught in hunting expeditions were also sacrificed: wild boars, deer, tigers and birds.¹⁹

Several theories of Shang religion and ritual have been put forward. For instance, K. C. Chang 張光直 has argued that shamanism played a central role in Shang religion and that the Shang kings, diviners, and sacrificial animals all served to communicate between different worlds. It would seem that the Shang ritual was the continuation of the earlier “shamanistic politics” of the Neolithic period.²⁰ On the other hand, David Keightley regards Shang religion as having the characteristics of a proto-bureaucratic nature, in which sacrifice was a form of “gift” exchange: “I give, in order that thou should give”. He pointed out that the aim of Shang ancestral worship was “to act as affirmation of holy kinship; and on the other hand, when practised directly by the royalty, it legitimized their political power and promoted psychological support for their right to rule”.²¹ Keightley has also observed that the making of the Shang sacrifice was in effect the “making of ancestors”, as this involved the conscious creation of a hierarchical system.²²

But even if the Shang people had a shamanistic worldview, and even if social politics played an important role in their religious practice, we cannot ignore the cosmological aspects of ritual and sacrifice. As Sarah Allan has argued, when the Shang kings and diviners offered sacrifices of animals and wine they were trying to influence the invisible forces of the cosmos. When the appropriate sacrifice was properly offered to the ancestors and gods, they were then obliged to pay benefits back to mankind. The aims of one individual divination and sacrifice might be complex and different from another, but the principle was probably similar: namely, that “Shang

16 See Chen Mengjia, “Guwenzi zhong zhi Shang Zhou jisi” 古文字中之商周祭祀, *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報 19 (1936), 91–154; Shima Kunio also lists over fifty different rituals that are recorded in OBI; see his *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū*, 258–348.

17 For an archaeological study of Shang sacrificial animals, see Okamura Hidenori 岡村秀典, “Shangdai de dongwu xisheng” 商代的動物犧牲, *Kaoguxue jikan* 考古學集刊 15 (2004), 216–35.

18 For further discussion on human sacrifice in early China, see Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳, *Zhongguo gudai de rensheng renxun* 中國古代的人牲人殉 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).

19 For a recent study of Shang royal hunting, see Magnus Fiskesjö, “Rising from blood-stained fields: royal hunting and state formation in Shang China”, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 73 (2001), 49–191.

20 K.C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

21 D. Keightley, “The religious commitment: Shang theology and the genesis of Chinese political culture”, *History of Religion* 17/3–4 (1978), 211–25.

22 David N. Keightley, “The making of the ancestors: late Shang religion and its legacy”, in *Religion and Chinese Society* Vol. I: *Ancient and Medieval China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong and Paris: Chinese University Press, 2004), 3–63.

divination was an attempt to verify that the ritual offerings were received and satisfactory and that there would therefore be no curse”.²³

The theories put forward by Keightley and Allan led to Michael Puett’s argument that the aim of the Shang ancestral cult was to transform the deceased royal members into proper ancestors who could then guide the Di-god and other mythological and natural spirits to bestow favours on their kings and their land; in other words, “to domesticate the spirits and thereby render them controllable”.²⁴ In this way, Shang divination can be seen to operate in the process of negotiation with, and domestication of, the spirits.

To understand the rituals and sacrifices of the Shang people, we need to look at the nature of Shang divination. We know that ox scapulae and turtle shells were used for pyromantic divination before the Late Shang period,²⁵ but while the tradition of using ox or sheep bones for divination or burial had a much longer history pre-dating the Shang dynasty, the use of turtle shells was comparatively rare. Most archaeological evidence shows that the custom of using turtle shells probably originated from areas along the east coast, and along the Changjiang (Yangtze River). These areas were within the range of the Dawenkou 大汶口, Daxi 大溪 and Majiabang 馬家浜 cultures, all three of which existed around 4000 BCE.²⁶

In the 1920s, from his observation of Shang oracle bones and from information from other sources, Dong Zuobin 董作賓 tried to reconstruct the procedure of Shang pyromantic divination and recording. Prior to divination, the bones and shells selected for divination were first cleaned, dried, polished and hollowed out. Any cartilage was sawn away. At the moment of divination, the diviners (or kings) applied heat to the scapulae and shells, which then cracked. The cracks were then interpreted as omens. In many cases, the topics and results of the divination were written or inscribed on the cracked bones.²⁷ Of course, not all inscriptions found on

23 Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 123.

24 Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), esp. 44–54.

25 For a recent discussion of the Shang divination custom and its predecessors, see Song Zhenhao 宋鎮豪, *Xia Shang shehui shenghuo shi* 夏商社會生活史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994), 514–32; see also Li Ling 李零, “‘Nanguai beigu shuo’ de zai renshi <南龜北骨說> 的再認識”, *Yuanwangji – Shaanxisheng kaoguyanjiusuo huadan sishi zhounian jinian wenji* 遠望集 – 陝西省考古研究所華誕四十周年紀念文集, Shaanxisheng kaoguyanjiusuo ed. (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998), 338–45.

26 Gao Guangren 高廣仁 and Shao Wangping 紹望平, “Zhongguo shiqian shidai de guiling yu quansheng” 中國史前時代的龜靈與犬牲, *Zhongguo kaoguxue yanjiu – Xia Nai xiansheng kaogu wushinian jinian lunwunji* 中國考古學研究 – 夏鼐先生考古五十年論文集, ed. Zhongguo kaoguxue yanjiu bianweihui (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), 57–63. K. C. Chang has argued that many important traditions of the Shang culture derived from the east-coast Shandong Dawenkou culture, and that the use of turtle shells for religious practice and writing link the religious ideas and practices of the Dawenkou culture with the Shang. See K. C. Chang, *Shang Civilization* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), esp. 345–7.

27 For a detailed reconstruction of Shang turtle divination, see Dong Zuobin, “Shangdai guibu zhi twice” 商代龜卜之推測, *Dong Zuobin xueshu lunzhu* 董作賓學

bones are divinations; some are records of historical events. Sometimes there are also marginal notations, recording who had offered the bone and turtle in tribute. Occasionally, calendars, and even casual writings, are inscribed on bones.²⁸ It is noticeable, however, that when an inscription concerns divination, it is usually written in accordance with a recognizable formula:

Preface + Charge + Prognostication + Verification.

Inscriptions in the full formula are rarely seen today since OBI are mostly fragments, and even in Shang times, regular omissions were allowed in certain contexts.²⁹ The divinatory “charge” is an essential part of the record. It is usually marked by the prefix *zhen* 貞 <*triajŋ (or *ding* 鼎 <*tejŋ),³⁰ which is traditionally understood as “to divine” or “to ask”, suggesting that all divinatory “charges” were presented as questions. However, in terms of grammar, most of the “charges” do not have an interrogative particle, except in the early Shi-group inscriptions. For this reason, some scholars have argued that *zhen* is better understood as “to test, to settle, to verify”, or “to determine what is correct”; and that the following sentence is a declaratory statement rather than an interrogative.³¹

The major themes of Shang divination appear to be concerned with royal activities, in particular their rituals and sacrifices. Allan has classified Shang divination themes into three main categories: (a) divinations about ritual offerings; (b) divinations about the future; and (c) divinations about calamities.³² The divinatory charges are often made in pairs (*duizhen* 對貞);

術論著 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962), 7–80 [first published in *Anyang fajue baogao* 安陽發掘報告 1 (1929)]; see also Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1978), 3–27.

- 28 A few examples also show that deer, tiger and even human bones were occasionally inscribed, but these inscriptions were not concerned with divination; see Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 44–6.
- 29 Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, 37–40. For details about the reconstruction of the fragments, see Xiao Liangqiong 肖良瓊, “Buci wenli yu buci de zhengli he yanjiu” 卜辭文例與卜辭的整理和研究, *Jiaguwen yu Yin Shang shi* 甲骨文與殷商史 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 24–63.
- 30 For phonetic reconstruction of Archaic Chinese, I have followed Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1991). There are a number of alternative systems, for example, Li Zhenhua 李珍華 and Zhou Changji 周長楫, *Hanzi gu jin yin biao* 漢字古今音表 (Beijing: Zhonghua shju, 1993), in which both *zhen* and *ding* have the *duan* 端 initial and *geng* 耕 final, which is reconstructed as <*tʃeŋ.
- 31 This view was first expressed by Keightley in “Shih cheng: a new hypothesis about the nature of Shang divination” (unpublished paper, 1972), and repeated in his *Sources of Shang History*, 29 n. 7. The question of how to read these divinatory “charges” has become the subject of heated debate in the study of OBI; *Early China* 14 (1989), 77–172, assembles the relevant discussions of leading scholars, including Qiu Xigui, D. Nivison, D. Keightley, E. Shaughnessy, J. Lefevre, Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, Fan Yuzhou 范毓周 and Wang Yuxin 王宇信.
- 32 See Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 112–23, where she summarizes the problems faced in the study of Shang divination.

and sometimes the charges are made in the chained-choice form (*xuanzhen* 選貞) in which the diviner was proposing divinatory charges in order to decide upon the appropriate sacrifice and proper procedures of various rituals. Keightley points out that, beyond all the other concerns, Shang divination was probably a symbolic activity with an instrumental function: “charges were precise and limited in the options they offered for consideration”. It was, according to Keightley, “like a case-by-case bargain”.³³

As Nivison has argued,³⁴ in order to appreciate fully the nature of Shang divination it is necessary to separate what the diviner says from what he is going to do. And additionally, of seeking information, the diviner might also want:

- (1) to attract the favourable attention of a spirit to a sacrificial rite being performed as the “divination” takes place, and in such cases, the diviner might simply describe what was being done;
- (2) to validate a policy that has already been decided. In such cases, the diviner might simply continue to repeat the rite, each time with a statement of what the king intends to do and what he hopes the result will be, until a favourable response is obtained;
- (3) to guarantee through ritual a desired future state of affairs, e.g. the recovery of a sick person, or the absence of difficulties during the next ten days;
- (4) to seek a favourable response to an entreaty to a spirit.

It is useful to compare Shang divination with other divination systems observed by anthropologists. The obvious concern of any divination is to resolve doubt. Divination has traditionally been regarded as a means of foreseeing the future and disclosing hidden supernatural knowledge, whether inspirational or non-inspirational. However, in his study of divination among the Ndembu of Africa, Turner argues that divination is not just a means of discerning the intentions of the spirits and diagnosing the cause of an affliction but also a phase in a social process. He noted that the Ndembu diviners work within the framework of their beliefs, and that the way they interpret their divination symbols reveals a deep insight into the structure of their own society and into human nature; the diviner knows that he is investigating within a particular social context. Divination of this sort is more a case of “discovering-the-truth” than “telling-the-future”. Thus, during a divination, the diviner not only communicates between the spirits and man but also expresses himself in a juxtaposition of the social value of the divination and his own psychological inspiration.³⁵

33 David N. Keightley, “Late Shang divination: the magico-religious legacy”, in Henry Rosemont Jr (ed.), *Explorations in Early Chinese Cosmology* (Monograph, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion Studies*, 50/2. Chicago: Scholars’ Press, 1984), 11–34.

34 D. Nivison, “The ‘question’ question”, *Early China* 14 (1989), 115–25.

35 Victor W. Turner, *Ndembu Divination: Its Symbolism and Techniques*, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper, 31 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961).

The Naskapi, a Native American Indian tribe living in the forests of the Labradorian Peninsula, also have a divination method of scapulamancy, similar to that of the Shang. They too apply heat to animal bones, and then read the cracks. A typical question about hunting would be: “What direction should hunters take in locating game?” But, as Moore argues, such divination is intended not only to control but also to provide a randomness which may avoid unwitting regularity by providing variety. It introduces a chance mechanism to human behaviour.³⁶

With this in mind, it is also useful to look at some of the linguistic aspects of the Shang divinatory language. In OBI, *hui* 惠 and *wei* 惟 are the most frequently used particles. In Archaic Chinese, their pronunciations are close: *hui* has the *xia* 匣 initial and *zhi* 脂 final, which is reconstructed as <*ɣwejh; *wei* has the *yu* 餘 initial and *wei* 微 final, and is reconstructed as <*jwi. They are often placed at the beginning of a sentence or noun-phrase, thus making it possible to single out particular members of the linguistic unit. Traditionally they have been interpreted as “interrogative” particles, but, as Paul Serruys has argued, it is not necessary to understand these two particles as “interrogatives” because they also appear in plain interpretive statements.³⁷ As Jean Lefevre suggests, when the alternative divinatory charges are preceded by these particles, it probably implies some desired preference, or maybe even a sacred meaning.³⁸ Recently, Ken-ichi Takashima has argued that these two particles are “copulas”; and that *hui* is “extroversive and controllable”, and can be translated as “should be”, showing the positive involvement of the Shang diviner in making a decision; whereas *wei* is “neutral”, a “non-model”, and introduces a judgement or interpretation.³⁹

Hui and *wei* are often matched in the *duizhen* counterpart by another particle, *qi* 其, which has the *qun* 羣 initial and *zhi* 之 final, and is reconstructed as <*gi. This word is also commonly found in OBI; however, translating it presents some difficulty. As Serruys argued, it usually indicates the “less desired alternative”, and represents some uncertainty in the future tense; it could, therefore, be translated as “perhaps” or “if”.⁴⁰ However, Zhang Yujin 張玉金 has argued against this view, and contends that the particle only indicates the subject’s will in the

36 O. K. Moore, “Divination – a new perspective”, *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957), 69–74.

37 Paul L.-M. Serruys, “Studies in the language of the Shang oracle inscription”, *T’oung Pao* 60 (1974), 24–5. See also M. V. Kryukov, *The Language of Yin Inscriptions* (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1980), 68.

38 Jean A. Lefevre, *Collections of Oracular Inscriptions in France* (Taipei and Paris: Ricci Institute, 1985), 292.

39 K. Takashima, “A study of the copulas in Shang Chinese”, *The Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture* 112 (1990), 1–92, esp. 63–6; also Michiharu Itō and Ken-ichi Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, esp. 457–65.

40 Paul L.-M. Serruys, “Studies in the language of the Shang oracle inscription”, 94 n. 8. For further discussion of its function in the Shang texts, see K. Takashima, “Subordinate structure in oracle-bone inscription, with particular reference to the particle *ch’i*”, *Monumenta Serica* 33 (1977), 36–61.

future sense.⁴¹ When dealing with the different contexts in which *qi* is used in OBI, I have translated it as “will” in order to convey this meaning.

A new classification and periodization of OBI

Since Dong Zuobin 董作賓 published his seminal work, “Jiaguwen duandai yanjiu li” 甲骨文研究斷代例 in 1933,⁴² the main focus for scholars of OBI has been the problem of classification and periodization. Dong divided OBI chronologically into five periods, to which he then assigned the royal reigns from Wu Ding to Di Xin. Dong was the first person to attempt a scientific dating of OBI, and his periodization greatly advanced the study of Shang inscriptions.⁴³ Later, in 1945, in his attempt to reconstruct the chronology of the Later Shang court, Dong again modified his old methodology of the “Five Periods”, this time dividing the diviners into two main schools: the old and the new.⁴⁴ According to Dong, the Old School (*jiupai* 舊派) worked under the reign of Wu Ding 武丁 and probably also under the Zu Geng 祖庚 reign. When Zu Jia 祖甲 succeeded Zu Geng, he reformed the ritual system and established the New School (*xinpai* 新派). The rulers after Zu Jia, Lin Xin 廩辛 and Kang Ding 康丁 continued to use the New School diviners. However, the Old School was revived during the subsequent reigns of Wu Yi 武乙 and Wen Ding 文丁, who preferred the old institutions and rejected the New School established by Zu Jia. At the end of the dynasty, Di Yi 帝乙 and Di Xin 帝辛 returned to the New School. Dong also pointed out that inscriptions from the old and new schools differed in many respects: the use of sacrifices, the recording of the calendar, the special usages and writing styles, and the divination topics. The two schools may also have had different methods of selecting and cracking the bones and shells.

However, in the early 1950s, the Japanese scholars Kaizuka Shigeki 貝冢茂樹 and Itō Michiharu 伊藤道治 began to notice that some of the inscriptions (with diviners’ names such as Shi, Zi and Wu) were quite distinguishable, both in content and calligraphy, from the rest of the OBI, and suggested that they might belong to an independent divination school under royal lineages (*wang zu* 王族) or indeed princely branch lineages

41 Zhang Yujin, *20 shiji jiagu yuyanxue* 20 世紀甲骨語言學 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2003), 201–3. He also gives a useful summary of various views on this topic, see esp. 182–92.

42 First published in *Zhongyang yanjiusuo jikan waibian 1* 中央研究所集刊外編 1 (1933); cf. Dong Zuobin, *Xueshu lunzhu*, 371–488.

43 See Wang Yuxin 王宇信, *Jiaguxue tonglun* 甲骨學通論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), esp. 154–214. Keightley has also discussed the problems of dating Shang inscriptions, and although his own dating is mainly based on Dong’s, he has taken the views of other scholars into account; see his *Sources of Shang History*, 91–133.

44 Dong Zuobin first expressed this view in *Yinlipu* 殷曆譜 (Zhongyangyanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo zhuankan 中央研究院歷史語言研究所專刊, Chongqing: Zhongyangyanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1945), then demonstrated it in the preface to his book *Yinxu buci yibian* 殷墟卜辭乙編 (Nanjing: Zhongyangyanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1949); see his *Xueshu lunzhu*, 1163–72.

(*wang zi zu* 王子族), as distinct from a school under the kings themselves. They also argued that the inscriptions of the royal lineages were probably made during the first period in Dong Zuobin's periodization, that is, during the Wu Ding reign, rather than the fourth period of the Wu Yi and Wen Ding reigns.⁴⁵

At about the same time, the Chinese scholar Chen Mengjia developed a similar method of periodization of OBI, by emphasizing the relationships between the diviners, in particular when they appeared together on the same bones or shells. Chen's dating coincided in many ways with that of Kaizuka and Itō; for example, he also assigned the Shi-, Zi- and Wu-diviner groups, dated by Dong Zuobin to the Wen Wu Ding 文武丁 periods, to the later phase of the Wu Ding reign.⁴⁶ But, at that time, Chen did not distinguish between the kings' school and the non-kings' school.

Since the 1980s, archaeological discoveries at Yinxu have raised many new questions for the study of OBI, and the traditional periodization is once again facing new challenges. Some Chinese scholars have begun to devise a new method of dating and classifying OBI: among them the leading innovators are Li Xueqin, Lin Yun and Qiu Xigui.⁴⁷ The new approach differs from Dong Zuobin's "Five Periods Method", by insisting, first, that OBI themselves are archaeological artefacts, many of them collected through archaeological excavations, and then that they can therefore be studied using archaeological records and methods. It is, for example, highly unlikely that the Shang deposited these inscribed bones in a random way. The locations and strata in which the inscribed bones have been found are therefore important evidence in the classification and dating of the inscriptions. Second, they believe it is impossible to assign one type of inscription or one diviner group to one royal reign, or to place them in a strictly linear narrative of development. Instead, when dating OBI from Yinxu, they recommend the following steps:

- (1) Re-classify all inscriptions, based on strict epigraphic typology.
- (2) Re-group them under the old conventional names of diviners, such as the Bin-group and Chu-group, but with the additional support of archaeological evidence.
- (3) Date them to the appropriate reign by identifying the ancestral titles and personal names found in the inscriptions.

45 Kaizuka Shigeki and Itō Michiharu, "Kokotsubun dandai kenkyūho no saikento" 甲骨文斷代研究の再検討, *Toho Gakuho* 東方學報 (Kyoto) 23 (1953), 1–78.

46 Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 145–72. Chen's study was first published in *Kaogu xuebao* 6 (1953).

47 There are a few recent detailed introductions to the new theory, such as Li Xueqin 李學勤 and Peng Yushang 彭裕商, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu* 殷墟甲骨分期研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996); also Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu duandai* 殷墟甲骨斷代 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuixue chubanshe, 1994); and Huang Tianshu 黃天樹, *Yinxu wangbuci de fenlei yu duandai* 殷墟王卜辭的分類與斷代 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1991). For a brief summary in English of the OBI periodization, see Edward Shaughnessy, "Recent approaches to oracle-bone periodization: a review", *Early China* 8 (1981–82), 1–13.

The results of this approach prove that different types of inscriptions may be allocated to the same king, and that a particular diviner group may have been active over several reigns.

According to the new method, OBI from Yinxu can be divided into two main schools: the kings' diviners (*wang buci* 王卜辭) and the non-kings' diviners (*feiwang buci* 非王卜辭), and each group can be further divided into a number of subgroups. The divisions may vary between scholars, but here I have followed the one most generally accepted, namely the division into seven main groups for the kings' school, and for the non-kings' school, three groups, and additionally of the newly discovered inscriptions from the Huayuanzhuangdongdi (see figure 2 below).

The inscriptions of the so-called kings' diviner school probably came under the direct supervision of the Shang kings themselves; indeed the divinations mostly concern activities of the royal family. This school can be subdivided into many subgroups; for example, Huang Tianshu has classified the inscriptions of the kings' school into 20 diviner groups.⁴⁸ But there are two main branches: the north and the south. This distinction is mainly based on archaeological evidence: the "south branch" inscriptions were found mostly in pits at Locus South and Centre, and the "north branch" inscriptions at Locus North. Of course, there are exceptions, but these are few in number and do not adversely affect the overall theory.

The Kings' Diviner School

Shi-Group 師組

North Branch

Bin-group 賓組

Chu-group 出組

He-group 何組

Huang-group 黃組

South Branch

Li-group 歷組

Wuming-group 無名組

The Non-Kings' Diviner School

Huayuanzhuang Zi-group 花園莊子組

Wu-group 午組

Zi-group 子組

Feiwang wuming-group 非王無名組

Figure 2. Diviners' groups of OBI from Yinxu

48 Huang Tianshu, *Yinxu wangbuci*.

In the kings' diviner school, the Shi-group inscriptions are considered to be the common ancestor of both the north and south branches. Shi-group inscriptions are found in both Locus North and Locus South, mostly from storage pits that are dated to the early Yinxu period.⁴⁹ Judging by the linguistic and archaeological evidence, the inscriptions of this group are probably the earliest we have been able to identify. They belong mostly to the early phase of the Wu Ding's reign.⁵⁰

In the north branch, four groups have been identified: the Bin-group, the Chu-group, the He-group and the Huang-group. The Bin-group was the most active diviner group during the Wu Ding reign, and probably lasted into the following Zu Geng reign. On the basis of the content and calligraphic styles of the inscriptions, the Bin-group can be further divided into two subdivisions: A-type and B-type. The Li-group in the south branch derived from the A-type; and the B-type was the direct source of the Chu-group in the north branch. Within the Chu and He groups, there were also several subdivisions which lasted over a long period.

In the south branch, there were two main diviners' groups: the Li-group and the Wuming-group. Both were mostly unearthed in Locus Centre and South.⁵¹ The Li-group inscriptions were previously placed by Dong Zuobin and Chen Mengjia in the fourth period, that is, in the Wu Yi and Wen Ding periods. But, as early as the 1940s, James Menzies had already noted that these inscriptions could be placed together with those of the Bin-group.⁵² In the mid-1970s, at the time of the discovery at Yinxu of Fu Hao's tomb, Li Xueqin again argued that the Li group was probably active during the Wu Ding and Zu Jia periods, and that it may have co-existed with the Bin group of the north branch.⁵³ Li's argument inspired others, who followed it and refined it.⁵⁴ But the new dating has not been

49 For example, YH006, B17, 30, F36, 103, 104, H104, 107 and T53 (42). The periodization of the Yinxu culture is based on Zou Heng 鄒衡, "Shilun Yinxu wenhua fenqi" 試論殷墟文化分期, in his *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwenji* 夏商周考古學論文集 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980), 31–92. See also Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學研究院考古研究所, *Yinxu de faxian yu yanjiu* 殷墟的發現與研究 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1994), 25–39.

50 Some of the Shi-group inscriptions may date to even earlier than the pre-Wu Ding period; see Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu*, 328–32. This theory was first proposed by Hu Houxuan in his preface to *Zhanhou Jing Jin xin huo jiagu ji* 戰後京津新獲甲骨集 (Shanghai: Qunlian chubanshe, 1954).

51 The inscriptions excavated at Xiaotun nandi 小屯南地 in 1973 contain many examples of the Li and Wuming groups.

52 Menzies's notes were not published until the 1980s when Li Xueqin included them in his article, "Xiao Tunnandi jiagu yu fenqi" 小屯南地甲骨與分期, *Wenwu* 1981/3, 27–33.

53 Li Xueqin, "Lun <Fu Hao> mu de niandai ji youguan wenti" 論<婦好>墓的年代及有關問題, *Wenwu* 1977/11, 32–7.

54 For example, see Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Lun 'Lizu buci' de shidai" 論<歷組卜辭>的時代, in his *Guwenzi lunji* 古文字論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 277–320; [first published in *Guwenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 6 (1981)]; also Lin Yun 林澧,

universally accepted and there remains some resistance as well as counter-arguments.⁵⁵

The Li-group inscriptions are directly derived from the earlier Shi-group. Judging from the contents, the Li-group may have co-existed with the Bin-group of the north branch. The inscriptions from both groups share many common topics, although they differ in their calligraphic styles. Later, the Wuming-group succeeded the Li-group in the south branch. In terms of dating, the majority of scholars agree that the Wuming-group inscriptions are of the Kang Ding and Wu Yi reigns, and that they overlap with some of the inscriptions of the He-group in the north branch.

The Huang-group is dated to the late Yinxu period, and is apparently the common end of both the north and south branches of the kings' school. The names of the diviners Huang, Pai and Li appear frequently in the inscriptions of the Huang-group. The contents and calligraphic style indicate that this group must have been a combination of the He-group and the Wuming-group. In the Huang-group inscriptions, the writing is small and close, often in vertical columns, and the content is mostly about war expeditions, hunting and the performance of regular sacrifices to certain ancestors. Some of the finest examples of carved animal bones with long inscriptions concern ceremonial events rather than divination.

And additionally to OBI, we have other dated written material from this period, such as inscribed bronze vessels. Three different ritual calendars found in the Huang-group inscriptions suggest that they might belong to the Wen Ding, Di Yi and Di Xin reigns.⁵⁶ But it is also noticeable that the *zhouji* (weekly sacrifice) which had been established by Zu Jia was more or less abandoned by the last king, Di Xin.⁵⁷

The new approach developed by Li Xueqin and others in the 1980s has also made significant breakthroughs in the dating of the inscriptions of the non-kings' school. These have been unearthed in both Locus South and North, and are often found together with the Bin- or Chu-group of the kings' school. Diviners' names, such as Zi 子 or Wu 午, are sometimes identified in the preface of divinatory records. In such cases, the related inscriptions are classified as belonging to the Zi-group or Wu-group. There

“Xiaotun nandi fajue yu jiagu fenqi” 小屯南地發掘與甲骨分期, in his *Lin Yun ueshu wenji* 林澧學術文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaikequanshu chubanshe, 1998); [first published in *Guwenzi yanjiu* 9 (1984)].

55 For counter-arguments, see Luo Kun 羅琨 and Zhang Yongshan 張永山, “Lun Lizu buci de niandai” 論歷組卜辭的年代, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 3 (1980), 80–103; Xiao Nan 肖楠, “Lun Wu Yi, Wen Ding buci” 論武乙, 文丁卜辭, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 3 (1980), 43–79, and “Zai lun Wu Yi, Wen Ding buci” 再論武乙文丁卜辭, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 9 (1984), 155–88; and Chen Weizhan 陳偉湛, “‘Lizu buci’ de taolun yu jiaguwen duandai yanjiu” ‘歷組卜辭’的討論與甲骨文斷代研究, in *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 出土文獻研究, ed. Wenhuaabu Wenwuju guwenxian yanjiushi (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), 1–21. For a summary of the debate, see Wang Yuxin, *Jiaguxue tonglun*, esp. 194–203.

56 See Chang Yuzhi 常玉芝, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu* 商代周祭制度 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), 8–16.

57 See Wang Hui 王暉, *Guwenzi yu Shang Zhou shi xinzheng* 古文字與商周史新証 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2003), 274–306.

is also a group of inscriptions for which no diviners' names have been found; these are known as the Feiwang wuming-group 非王無名組. A striking, and important, feature of inscriptions of the non-kings' school is that they relate how rituals and sacrifices are frequently performed to ancestors who have not attained the throne, and also to certain unusual spirits who may be associated with private cults.

The exact dates of the non-kings' diviner groups are still problematic. At first, Dong Zuobin placed them in the fourth period, but Kaizuka Shigeki 貝冢茂樹 and Itō Michiharu 伊藤道治, as well as Chen Mengjia, have since argued that they should be dated to the Wu Ding period, as they share the same ancestral titles and have mostly been found in early pits. Although there remains some opposition, in particular among Dong's students,⁵⁸ the majority of scholars now agree that the non-kings' inscriptions were mostly made during the middle of the Wu Ding reign, and that some may have lasted into the Zu Jia period.⁵⁹

It is also worth noting that the name Zi 子 is usually rendered as "prince" when it appears as a proper name or title. But Zi does not necessarily refer to the same person in OBI. In Shang inscriptions, we find terms such as Duo Zi 多子 ("many princes"), Da Zi 大子 ("elder prince"), Zhong Zi 中子 ("second prince"), and Xiao Zi 小子 ("young prince"). For this reason, Lin Yun 林澧 has suggested that the Zi might also be the heads of different royal clans.⁶⁰ In 1991, over 1,000 oracle bones were discovered at Huayuanzhuang dongdi 花園莊東地 in Locus South, and of these, 579 are inscribed turtle shells and ox scapulae.⁶¹ In the inscriptions the Zi's position is prominent. He appeared to be the head of the clan, and frequently acted as the prognosticator who made religious prayers. The inscriptions probably date to the early or middle Wu Ding period.⁶² But the

58 For example, Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 insists that the inscriptions of the Wu- and Zi-groups belong to the Fourth Period; see his *Jiaguxue* 甲骨學, vol. 2 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1978), esp. 1112–1209.

59 Li Xueqin arranged the non-kings' inscriptions into five groups in his article "Di Yi shidai de feiwang buci" 帝乙時代的非王卜辭, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 1958/1, 43–74. At the time, Li followed Dong Zuobin's periodization and dated them to the fourth period. Li has subsequently changed his view, and now dates the non-kings' inscriptions to the Wu Ding reign; see Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu*, esp. 313–27. For further discussion of the date and the classification of the non-kings' school, see Xie Ji 謝濟, "Wu Ding shi lingzhong buci fenqi yanjiu" 武丁時另種卜辭分期研究, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 6 (1981), 322–44; also Peng Yushang, "Feiwang buci yanjiu" 非王卜辭研究, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 13 (1986), 57–81.

60 Lin Yun, "Cong Wu Ding shidai de jizhong 'Zi buci' shilun Shangdai jiazou xingtai" 從武丁時代的幾種子卜辭試論商代家族形態, *Lin Yun xueshu wenji*, 46–59; [first published in *Guwenzi yanjiu* 1 (1979)]; see also Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚, *Shang Zhou jiazou xingtai yanjiu* 商周家族形態研究 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1990), esp. 35–241.

61 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu* 殷墟花園莊東地甲骨 [hereafter *Huayuanzhuang*], (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2003).

62 See Liu Yiman 劉一曼 and Cao Dingyun 曹定雲, "Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu buci xuanshi yu chubu yanjiu" 殷墟花園莊東地甲骨卜辭選釋與初步研究, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 1999/3, 251–310; see also, Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚, "Du

contents and calligraphic style of the inscriptions differ substantially from the Zi-group above. To avoid confusion, I shall call these inscriptions the “Huayuanzhuang Zi-group”.

Colour of Shang ritual animals

I will now examine the use of colour in sacrifices as presented in the inscriptions of the different diviner groups. As colour is an integral element of the Shang ritual system, it is important to look at the evidence in the Shang ritual system in as close to chronological order as possible. Although the new classification and periodization are by no means universally accepted, colour throws new light on our understanding of Shang inscriptions. My research has drawn strength from the new methodology, and my results seem to reinforce the new theory. By tracing the use of colour in the different diviners’ groups, this study begins to reveal the complex layers of the Shang ritual system and how it developed as a whole during the Yinxu period.

The Shi-group

I shall start with the Shi-group, from which the north and south branches probably derived. The Shi-group is the earliest recognized diviner group that was under the supervision of King Wu Ding himself. The main diviners of this group are Fu 扶, Shi 師, Ye 業 and Shao 勺, although the majority of inscriptions do not mention the diviner. The king (*wang*) himself sometimes acted as diviner. The form and content of the Shi-group inscriptions are much more complex than those of the other diviner groups.

First, linguistically speaking, it has some early characteristics, such as the combining of both the positive and negative questions into a single formula, and the use of final interrogative particles.⁶³ Second, in terms of the style of calligraphy, the Shi-group inscriptions are divided into the “big character” and “small character” types, with some graphs written in a very pictorial manner. There are certain differences between the two divisions. In the “big character” type, the usual recipients of sacrifices include Fu Yi 父乙, Mu Geng 母庚, Yang Jia 陽甲, Pan Geng 般庚, Xiong Ding 兄丁, Xiong Wu 兄戊 and the old minister Xian Wu 咸戊. In the “small character” type, the ancestors include Fu Jia 父甲, Fu Yi 父乙, Fu Geng 父庚, Fu Xin 父辛, Mu Geng 母庚 and Xiong Ding 兄丁. It appears that these subdivisions of the Shi-group subsequently split further into the Bin-group of the north branch and the Li-group of the south branch. This split probably occurred later in the reign of Wu Ding.

Anyang Yinxu Huayuanzhuangdongdi chutu de feiwang buci” 讀安陽殷墟花園莊東地出土的非王卜辭, in Wang Yuxin 王宇信, Song Zhenghao 宋鎮豪 and Meng Xianwu 孟宪武 (eds), *2004 nian Anyang Yinshang wenming guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 2004 年安阳殷商文明国际学术研讨会论文集 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004), 211–9. For a summary of different views on this problem, see Liu Yuan 劉源, “Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiaguwen yanjiu gaikuang” 殷墟花園莊東地甲骨文研究概況, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 2005/2, 180–4.

63 The use of the final interrogative particles occurs only in the early diviners’ groups; see Li Xueqin, “Guanyu Shizu buci de yixie wenti” 關於師組卜辭的一些問題, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 3 (1980), 32–42.

There are several inscriptions in the Shi-group which make particular mention of the colour of ritual animals. The first example reads:

Heji: 19999⁶⁴

乙卯 ... 師 ... 庚 ... 婦... /... 午卜: 王侑白豮...

yimao/.../Shi/.../Geng/.../lady/.../... *wu*/crack/king/offer⁶⁵/ ... /white/hog⁶⁶

On *yimao* (day 52): "...Shi...Geng...lady..."

Cracking ... *wu* day: "The king makes an offering of white hogs to ..."

This inscription is an incomplete fragment, but the diviner's name, Shi, and an ancestral title Geng, are still legible. The divination shows that the sacrificial rite was performed by the king himself for one of his ancestors, and that the offering included white hog(s). In Shang rituals, pigs are one of the most popular sacrifices. The graph depicts a castrated boar, indicating that domesticated pigs were used. It is interesting to note that by this time, castration was already widely practised in domesticated animals.⁶⁷

The second example mentions the use of multicoloured oxen:

Heji: 19911

癸卯卜: 王惠勿牛用𠄎 [甲] ...

guimao/crack/king/hui/multicolour/ox/use⁶⁸/Tu [Jia]⁶⁹/ ...

Cracking made on *guimao* (day 40): "The king should use multicoloured oxen for Tu Jia ..."

This inscription does not have the regular prefix *zhen* 貞 "to divine", but the intention of the divination is clear. The sacrificial rite here was conducted by the king directly for his ancestor, Tu Jia 兔甲 (= Yang Jia 陽甲),⁷⁰ the twenty-third king in the Shang royal chronology. The particle *hui*

64 Where ever possible the citing of OBI is from Zhongguo shehuikexueyuan lishiyanjiusuo, Hu Huoxuan and Guo Moruo (eds in chief), *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 [hereafter *Heji*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978–82).

65 The original graph is written as 𠄎, and here is read as *you* 侑, which is broadly understood as "to sacrifice", "to offer". For further discussion of the functions of the character *you*, see D. Nivison, "The pronominal use of the verb *yu* (*giug*)", *Early China* 3 (1977), 1–17; and Ken-ichi Takashima, "Decipherment of the word *yu* 𠄎/又/有 in the Shang oracle bone inscriptions and in pre-classical Chinese", *Early China* 4 (1978), 19–29; see also his "The early archaic Chinese word *yu* in the Shang oracle-bone inscriptions: word-family, etymology, grammar, semantics and sacrifice", *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale* 8 (1980), 81–112.

66 The graph depicts a castrated boar; for various decipherments of the graph see Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (ed. in chief), *Jiaguwenzi gulin* 甲骨文字詁林 [hereafter *JGWZGL*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 1061. I have followed Wen Yiduo's 聞一多 interpretation here.

67 For a discussion of the domestication of animals in the Late Shang period see Yang Shengnan 楊升南, *Shangdai jingji shi* 商代經濟史 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1992), 227–30.

68 The character *yong* 用 "to use" may be better understood here as "used in a sacrifice". For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 3338.

69 For different decipherments of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 1660.

70 For further discussion on Yang Jia in OBI, see Qiu Xigui, "Yinxu buci suojian Shi Jia Tu Jia ji Yang Jiashuo" 殷墟卜辭所見石甲兔甲即陽甲說, *Guwenzi lunji*, 231.

惠 (“should be”) in the divinatory charge is used to draw special attention to the “multicoloured” oxen.

Although we have limited evidence, and therefore cannot be certain that colour or, more precisely, the colours of the animals mentioned in the inscriptions, had particular meaning(s) for the Shang diviner, it is significant to note that *bai*-white and *wu*-multicolour are two colours singled out in the divinatory charges of the Shi-group.⁷¹ The distinction could not be purely accidental or, at least, the diviner was making a special note on the colour of ritual animals. The ritual contexts of the two inscriptions cited above are clearly related to ancestral or fertility cults.

The Bin-group

The Bin-group is the most active diviner group in the Yinxu period. It probably emerged during the reign of Wu Ding, and continued into the Zu Geng period. On the basis of their content and graphic styles, the Bin-group inscriptions can be divided into two main sub-types: A-type and B-type. The A-type is related to the Li-group in the south branch; and the B-type becomes the direct source of the Chu-group in the north branch. The Bin-group has at least sixteen regular diviners, including Bin 寶, Que 穀, Zheng 爭, Nei 內 and Gu 古. The formula of paired charges was commonly used by the Bin-group, and the kings often performed the prognosticating themselves. In terms of subject matter, the range of divinatory topics in the Bin-group is very broad, and includes ancestral sacrifice, rituals for various spirits, hunting, weather, military campaign, dreams and the well-being of the royal households.

The ancestors who received regular sacrifices in the Bin-group include Fu Jia 父甲, Fu Geng 父庚, Fu Xin 父辛, Fu Yi 父乙, Mu Geng 母庚 and Xiong Ding 兄丁. Compared with the other diviners' groups, the Bin-group has a greater number of inscriptions containing reference to colour and the contexts in which the coloured animals were used. This rich information in the Bin-group inscriptions allows us to make a more detailed analysis.

The sacrifice of pigs, sheep and oxen of white colour is very popular in ancestral cults. For example:

Heji: 2051

乙未卜, 侑于祖 ... 三羊, 又白豕

yiwei/crack/offer/to/grandfather/ ... /three/penned sheep⁷²/have⁷³/white/pig

71 The *wu*-multicolour category probably covers all non-white colours, as well as brindled animals. For a further discussion, see Wang Tao, “Colour symbolism in Late Shang China”, esp. 80–84, 96–101.

72 This character is read as *lao* 牢, which is traditionally understood as a combination of different ritual animals, but in OBI the word is probably a compound character (*hewen* 合文), meaning “penned animals”. The sheep-element (*yang* 羊) may indicate that the penned animal here is a sheep, but it is sometimes a cow (*niu* 牛) or another animal. For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 1548. For a further discussion, see Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂, “Lao lao kaobian” 牢羊考辨, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 9 (1984), 25–36.

73 The meaning of *you* 又 here is “there is”, “to have” or “plus”. I have translated it as “additionally”.

Cracking made on *yivei* (day 32), we will make an offering to Grandfather ... of three penned sheep, and additionally of white pigs.

Heji: 203v

五白牛, 又穀

five/white/ox/have/piglet⁷⁴

[To make sacrifice of] five white oxen, and additionally of piglets.

Sometimes, the ritual animals are wild species, rather than domesticated:

Heji: 15943

戊寅卜, 貞: 𪛗畀𪛗/...寶, 貞: ...白𪛗...子侑...

wuyin/crack/divine/X⁷⁵/give⁷⁶/wild pig .../Bin/divine/white/wild pig⁷⁷/
Zi/offer...

Cracking on *wuyin* (day 15), divining: “X offers wild pigs”.

Bin, divining: “... [an offering of] white wild pigs, the prince makes sacrifice...”.

Heji: 11225

...惠白𪛗...毓有佑

... /hui/white/wild pig/ ... /ancestor⁷⁸/have/assistance

... it should be white wild pigs ... ancestors will grant us assistance.

Yingcang: 79

貞: 侑于父乙白𪛗, 新穀

divine/offer/to/Fu Yi/white/wild pig/fire⁷⁹/piglet

Divining: “To make an offering to Father Yi of white wild pigs, and to burn piglets in fire”.

In the Shang ancestral cult, larger animals such as oxen seemed to have been valued more highly than other smaller animals:

Heji: 14724

貞: 侑于王亥, 惠三白牛

74 The character here reads *gu* 穀 referring to piglets. For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 2863.

75 The graph is undeciphered; here it is likely to be a personal name.

76 The character was previously deciphered as *shi* 矢 𠄎 “arrow”, but, as Qiu Xigui has argued, this graph has a different graphic form and should be read as *bi* 畀, meaning “to give”, “to present”; see his *Guwenzi lunji*, 90–98. For other decipherments, see *JGWZGL*: 2575.

77 The original graph depicts ‘a pig shot with an arrow’. Here the arrow element also seems to act as the phonetic sign. The character probably refers to a wild pig; see *JGWZGL*: 1604.

78 This is the original graph for *yu* 育, depicting a woman giving birth. But it is used here as a general pronoun referring to “lineal ancestors”. For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 0461.

79 The graph can be transcribed as *xin* 新, and in many cases it is used with its original meaning, “new”. But it can here be better understood as a verb, for example *xin* 薪, meaning “to set on fire”. For different explanations of this character, see *JGWZGL*: 2528, 2529.

divine/offer/to/Wang Hai/hui/three/white/ox

Divining: “To make an offering to Wang Hai, it should be three white oxen”.

Heji: 1423

... 𧇧... 兕侑大甲白牛。用

... /Que/ ... /X⁸⁰/offer/Da Jia/white/ox/use

... Que ... “X makes an offering to Da Jia of white oxen. Used”.

Jinbun: 0001⁸¹

辛酉卜，賓，貞：燎于饗白牛

xinyou/crack/Bin/divine/burn⁸²/to/Nao?/white/ox

Cracking made on *xinyou* (day 58): Bin, divining: “To make the burning-rite to Nao? of white oxen”.

In the real world, oxen of pure white colour are extremely rare. But the divination is quite specific: white oxen should be offered, to be used, to be burned, in sacrifice to some of the most important ancestors in the Shang genealogy, such as Wang Hai 王亥 and Da Jia 大甲, who usually carried the title *gaozu* or “high ancestors”.⁸³ The identity of Nao 饗 is not entirely clear yet, but this name is likely to be related to the high ancestor Nao 饗.⁸⁴

On some occasions, the ritual performance and offerings are richly varied. For example:

Heji: 995

... 巳，酏，伐，六牢，惟白豕

... *sil*/cutting-rite⁸⁵/beheaded human⁸⁶/six/penned sheep/*wei*/white/pig

80 This graph has not been deciphered; it appears to be a personal name.

81 *Kyōto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo zō kōkotsu moji* 京都大學人文科學研究所藏甲骨文字, [hereafter *Jinbun*], (Kyoto: Kyōto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1960).

82 The *liao* ritual is one of the most common sacrificial rites performed by the Shang, and probably involved using fire and burning offerings. For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 1526.

83 For a discussion of Wang Hai, see Luo Kun 羅琨, “Yin buci zhong gaozu Wang Hai shiji xun yi” 殷卜辭中高祖王亥史跡尋繹, in *Hu Hengxuan xiansheng jinian wenji* 胡厚宣先生紀念文集, ed. Zhang Yongshan 張永山 and Hu Zhenyu 胡振宇 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1998), 48–63.

84 For further discussion of this mythical ancestor, see Shimo Kunio, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū*, 241–5; see also Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 345. For a more recent study, see Liu Huan 劉桓, “Shuo gaozu Nao – jianlun Shangzu zuyuan wenti” 說高祖饗 – 兼論商族族源問題, in *Jiaguzhengshi* 甲骨征史 (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 267–303.

85 This is one of the rites most frequently performed by the Shang kings to their ancestors, but the interpretation of the character varies. Many scholars read it as *jiu* 酒, referring to a kind of wine offering, but other scholars, including Guo Moruo 郭沫若, argue that it should be rendered as *you* 燹, referring to a burning sacrifice; see *JGWZGL*: 2733. Takashima has argued that it is etymologically related to *diao* 彫 meaning “to injure” or “to cut”; see Itō and Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, vol. 1, 355, see also the note in vol. 2, 110–11. David Keightley seems to have followed this new interpretation and has translated it as a “cutting-ritual”; see Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, OBI example 22, p. 23.

86 For different readings of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 2410. It is probably used here as a noun, meaning “human victim”.

... *si*-day, in performing the cutting-rite, we will sacrifice beheaded human victims and six penned sheep, and there will be white pigs.

Here, together with the burning or cutting sacrifices, sacrifices included human victims, penned sheep and pigs. The use of the particle *wei* 惟 indicates that the diviner was particularly concerned about the colour of the pigs.

It is worth giving a brief note on human sacrifice in the Shang ritual at this point. The OBI character 𠄎 (*fa* 伐) depicts a decapitated man. Archaeological evidence has shown that human sacrifice was practised extensively throughout the Yinxu period, and that beheading was a very common method. Human sacrifice was a widespread ritual practice in the ancient world, perhaps best known from the ancient Mesoamerican cultures, the ancient Maya culture in particular. Although no direct links can be established between the ancient Maya and Chinese cultures, the treatment of sacrificial human victims is strikingly similar in both, with the common use of captive warriors, and similar methods of beheading, immolation and dismemberment.⁸⁷

With regard to Shang human sacrifice, there is a controversial question concerning the reading of the “white man (*bairen* 白人)”. In the Bin-group we read several inscriptions where the adjectival word *bai* 白 “white” is used attributively for humans. For example:

Heji: 1039

乙丑卜, ...貞: ...白人/燎白人

yichou/crack/ ... /divine/ ... /white/man/burn/white/man

Cracking made on *yichou* (day 2), ... divining: “... white men”.

To make the burning rite of white men.

Heji: 293

壬子卜, 寶, 貞: 惠今夕用三白羌于丁. 用

renzi/crack/Bin/divine/*hui*/this/evening/use/three/white/Qiang/to/Ding/
use

Cracking made on *renzi* (day 49), Bin, divining: “It should be this evening when three white Qiang-men who will be sacrificed to Ding.”
(Verification) Used.

Some scholars have read the character *bai* 白 here as *bai* 百, meaning “hundred”. However, orthographically, the Shang scribes usually tried to make some distinction between the colour term *bai* (white) and the number *bai* (hundred). As Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂 argues, the “white men” and “white Qiang-men” here probably refer to people who could be distinguished by

87 For a general discussion on human sacrifice in the ancient world, see E. O. James, *Sacrifice and Sacrament* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 77–103. On human sacrifice in the Maya culture, see L. Schele and M. Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), esp. 110, 216–20.

their light skin colour.⁸⁸ We also know that in both ancient and modern times, colour terms are often used for naming ethnic peoples.⁸⁹

The majority of OBI are fragmentary, and only rarely is an inscription found in good condition. *Bingbian*: 197 (+ v. 198) is a cracked turtle plastron with inscriptions on both sides that has survived in its entirety. It is a typical example of the Bin-group which allows us a fuller appreciation of the ritual context. The following is inscribed on the reverse:

癸卯卜，殼/于來乙卯侑祖乙/廌羊二/乙卯卜/三旬，來甲申.../惠乙亥酏/勿彘乙亥酏/侑犬于咸戊/... 學戊/于娥禦. X /于娥/翌丁，勿于祖丁/祖丁/事人于妣己，辭/惠白豕/辛卜，殼/勿侑下乙/下乙/牢，又二牛/庚申卜/殼子商入

guimaol/crack/Que/on/next/yimaol/offer/Zu Yi/antelope⁹⁰/sheep/two/yimaol/crack/three/week⁹¹/next/jiashen/ ... /hui/yihail/cutting-rite/not/hastily⁹²/yihail/cutting-rite/offer/dog/to/Xian Wu/ ... /Xue Wu/to/Er/exorcism⁹³/X⁹⁴/to/Er/next/ding/not/to/Zu Ding/Zu Ding/serve/man/to/Bi Ji/nie-rite⁹⁵/hui/white/pig/xin/crack/Que/not/offer/Xia Yi

- 88 Yao Xiaosui, “Shangdai de fulu” 商代的俘虜, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 1 (1979), 337–90, esp. 378. In the collection of the Tenri University (Japan), there is an OBI (Tenri 300), of which I failed to obtain a copy. Instead I cite from Yang Shengnan, *Shangdai jingji shi* (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1992), which reads: “丙午卜，御方九羊，百白豕。Cracking made on *bingwu* (day 43), the exorcist rite is performed to Fang with nine sheep and a hundred white boars”. Here *bai* 百 and *bai* 白 are used together, which gives credibility to the reading 白 as a colour term. For further discussion on the Qiang people, see Luo Kun 羅琨, “Yin Shang shiqi de Qiang he Qiangfang” 殷商時期的羌和羌方, *Jiaguwen yu Yin Shang shi* 3 (1991), 405–26; see also Gideon Shelach, “The Qiang and the question of human sacrifice in the late Shang period”, *Asia Perspective* 35/1 (1996), 1–26.
- 89 For example, the name “Bai Di” 白狄 or the White Di-people is found in ancient texts, and today the Yi people in south-western China are also called the “Bai Yi” (White Yi-people) and “Hei Yi” (Black Yi-people).
- 90 The graph depicts a sheep with long horns, probably an antelope or ibex. In this inscription it may be read as *yuan* 羴, forming a single character together with *yang* 羊; see *JGWZGL*: 1655.
- 91 The *xun*-week in the Shang calendar is ten days. See Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 37–43.
- 92 This word is used as an adverb in OBI, but its exact meaning and function are not clear. I have deciphered this character as *guai* 乖, and since it is often used together with negatives, I have tentatively translated it as “hastily”. Takashima, however, reads it as *xiang* 詳, meaning “specifically”; see his “Negatives in the King Wu Ting bone inscriptions” (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1973), 389–92; see also Itō and Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, vol. 2, 144, n. 38.
- 93 In OBI, it refers to a ritual, but scholars’ interpretation of the meaning of this character varies; I have followed Yang Shuda’s 楊樹達 interpretation, namely, that it is basically an exorcism ritual (see *JGWZGL*: 0351). For further discussion, see Shima Kunio, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyū*, 331–3; and Qiu Xigui, *Guwenzi lunji*, 332–5.
- 94 This graph has not been deciphered yet, but it can be understood here as either a rite or a personal name.
- 95 For the decipherment of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 2496–9; some scholars argue that the character implies a meaning of “misfortune”, but it seems to refer to a rite here.

Xia Yi/penned sheep/have/two/ox/*gengshen*/crack/Que/Zi Shang/send
Cracking made on *guimao* (day 40). Que: “On the next *yimao* (day 52) we will make an offering to Grandfather Yi, which is two antelopes”. Cracking made on *yimao* (day 52), in three weeks’ time (30 days), on the coming *jiashen* (day 21) ... it should be on *yihai* (day 12) we perform the cutting-rite; or not hastily on the *yihai* day we perform the cutting-rite.

We make an offering of dogs to Xian Wu ... to Xue Wu.

“To Er we perform the exorcist ritual, and X?

To Er.”

On the next *ding*-day, we do not make any sacrifice to Grandfather Ding.

To Grandfather Ding.

We serve men unto Ancestress Ji in the *nie*-ritual.

It should be white pigs.

Cracking made on *xin* day, Que: “We do not make any offering to Xia Yi.

To Xia Yi.

Of penned sheep, in addition to two oxen”.

Cracking made on *gengshen* (day 57), Que: “Prince Shang sends in the goods”.

This divination is complicated. It is intended to test a series of divinatory charges: to decide to which ancestor and on which day a certain rite should be performed, and which particular ritual animal should be offered; and additionally to sacrificing to the regular ancestors, Zu Yi 祖乙, Zu Ding 祖丁, Xia Yi 下乙 and Bi Ji 妣己, old ministers such as Xian Wu 咸戊 and Xue Wu 學戊 are also listed among the recipients of the sacrifice. The exorcist ritual was performed to the mythological ancestor Er 娥. A rich selection of animals was offered to the ancestors, including antelopes, penned sheep, oxen and white pigs. Again, we see that human victims were sacrificed together with animals.

On rare occasions, white animals such as white oxen also appeared in unusual circumstances, for example in the king’s dreams. There is one inscription in the Bin-group showing that King Wu Ding was intrigued by a white ox that appeared in his dream; a special divination was then made to determine what sort of omen it could be:

Heji: 17393

庚子卜，寶，貞：王夢白牛，惟憂

gengzi/crack/Bin/divine/king/dream/white/ox/*wei*/worry⁹⁶

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), Bin, divining: “The king dreamt of white oxen, it will be a worry”.

96 This character has many different readings, such as *huo* 禍 (trouble), *jiu* 咎 (fault) and *you* 憂 (worries); see *JGWZGL*: 2240. For a further discussion of the character, see Qiu Xigui, *Guwenzi lunji*, 105.

Dreams are a very common subject in OBI and many divinations sought to determine the omens in the king's dreams. King Wu Ding often dreamt of people, including his wives, relatives and ministers. He also saw deceased ancestors in his dreams, and sometimes special animals or objects.⁹⁷ The aim of the divination in such cases was probably to assure the king that the dream and the white oxen he dreamt of would not bring him misfortune.

And additionally to sacrifices, white animals were also selected for other uses, such as the Shang kings' white chariot-horses. Although white horses were probably more common than white bovines, it seems that the Shang kings attributed a special significance to his white horses.⁹⁸ For example:

Heji: 9176

貞：憂不我其來白馬

divine/Jia/not/me/qi/bring/white/horse

Divining: "Jia will perhaps not bring me any white horses".

Heji: 9177 bears another, similar, inscription:

甲辰卜，殼，貞：奚來白馬...王繇曰：吉，其來/甲辰卜，殼，貞：奚不其來白馬五

jiachen/crack/Que/divine/Xi/bring/white/horse/ ... /king/prognosticate/say/auspicious/qi/bring/*jiachen*/crack/Que/divine/Xi/not/qi/bring/white/horse/five

Cracking made on *jiachen* (day 41), Que, divining: "Xi brings with him white horses ..." The king prognosticated, and said: "Auspicious; he will bring with him the horses".

Cracking made on *jiachen*, Que, divining: "Xi will perhaps not bring with him five white horses".

Again, the divinatory charges are about white horses. The divination seeks to determine whether the tribesman would bring in white horses, and the king himself actually made the prognostication.

Heji: 945 is a similar inscription on a large turtle plastron. The inscription on the reverse says that Que, the most active diviner at the court of Wu Ding, cracked the shell. The inscription and the divinatory charges on the front read:

97 In the 1940s, Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 wrote an important paper on the Shang divination of dreams. Many of his observations are still of interest; see his *Jiaguxue Shangshi luncong chujī* 甲骨學商史論叢初集 (Qilu daxue guoxue yanjiu suo zhuankan 齊魯大學國學研究所專刊, Chengdu: Wenyoutang shudian, 1944), vol. 3.

98 In OBI there are many words referring to the colours of horses, such as "white horse", "dark-coloured horse", "horse with a striped pattern"; for further discussion, see Wang Yuxin, "Shangdai de ma he yangmaye" 商代的馬和養馬業, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中國史研究 1980/1, 99–108.

貞: 古來犬/古不其來犬/貞: 𠄎呼取白馬以/不其以/古來馬/不其來馬
 divine/Gu/bring/dog/Gu/not/qi/bring/dog/divine/X⁹⁹/call/take/white/
 horse/send¹⁰⁰/not/qi/send/Gu/bring/horse/not/qi/bring/horse

Divining: Gu brings dogs.

Gu will not bring dogs.

Divining: X called for white horses to be sent in.

The horses will not be sent in.

Gu brings horses.

He will not bring the horses.

The divinatory charges in this inscription are in pairs (*duizhen*): one is affirmative, the other negative. The first pair seeks to determine whether Gu would bring dogs for sacrifice; in the second pair, 𠄎 (personal name) demands that white horses should be sent in; and the third pair again seeks to determine whether the horses desired by the Shang king could be brought in by Gu. The diviner was trying to test the series of charges. Since white horses were such a desirable item, it seems that the king wanted more of them.

In a recent paper, Qiu Xigui has analysed a number of inscriptions of the Bin-group which demonstrate the importance of horses, and in particular, the importance of white horses at the Shang court.¹⁰¹ Divinations were also made concerning unborn horses, to inquire whether they might, by any chance of good fortune, be white. For example:

Heji: 3411

小駟子白. 不白

small/mare/birth¹⁰²/white/not/white

“The foal born to the little mare will be white.” (Verification) It was not white.

Heji: 5729

丙辰卜, ...貞: 𠄎...馬子白

bingchen/crack/ ... /divine/Cha¹⁰³/ ... /horse/birth/white

Cracking on *bingchen* (day 53) ... divining: “Cha ... the foal born to the horse will be white”.

Heji: 18271

騶...𠄎...白

xi-horse¹⁰⁴/ ... /produce/ ... /white

- 99 This graph has not been deciphered yet, but appears to be a personal name here.
 100 The decipherment of this graph differs greatly; see *JGWZGL*: 0022. I have followed Qiu Xigui’s decipherment, reading it as *yi* 以, meaning “to lead”, “to send”, or “to bring”; see Qiu Xigui, *Guwenzi lunji*, pp. 106–10; also Serruys, “Language of the Shang”, 98 n. 3.
 101 Qiu Xigui, “Cong Yinxu buci kan Yinren dui baima de zhongshi” 從殷墟卜辭看殷人對白馬的重視, *Guwenzi lunji*, 232–5 [first published in *Yinxu bowuyuan yuankan*, Inaugural issue, 1989].
 102 The character *zi* 子 here should be read as the verb “to give birth”.
 103 In OBI this character is used as both a place name and a personal name.
 104 This character refers to a “black horse with a yellow mane”; see *JGWZGL*: 1641.

The black horse with yellow mane ... produces a [foal] of white colour.

Previously, many scholars read the charge with the phrase “*bai bu bai* 白不白” as a question: “Is the foal born to the little mare white or not white?” But, as Qiu Xigui points out, the last two words “*bu bai*” should be understood as the verification rather than as part of the charge.

Some divinations try to determine the cause of illness or death of horses. In such cases the horses concerned are always white. For example:

Heji: 10067

丙午卜，爭，貞：七白馬殤；惟丁取

bingwu/crack/Zheng/divine/seven/white/horse/die¹⁰⁵/wei/Ding/take

Cracking made on *bingwu* (day 43), Zheng, divining: “Seven white horses are dead – it is Ding who took them away”.

Another, similar, inscription bears the same date and identical calligraphic style, and probably came from the same original set:¹⁰⁶

丙午卜，貞：惟子弓害白馬

bingwu/crack/divine/wei/Zi Gong/harm¹⁰⁷/white/horse

Cracking made on *bingwu* (day 43), divining: “It is Prince Gong who harms the white horses”.

This further suggests that white horses were of particular significance in the Shang ritual, or in the mind of the Shang kings. The significance of the white horse persisted and is also seen in later Chinese traditions. White horses are mentioned in several Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, where they were part of the gift exchanges between the Zhou kings and their subjects and ministers.¹⁰⁸ In the *Shanhaijing* 山海經, we read of a mythological figure named “white horse” who is a descendant of the Yellow Lord (Huangdi 黃帝).¹⁰⁹

As in the Shi-group, *wu*-multicolour also appeared in a number of Bin-group inscriptions. The Shang kings paid great attention to multicoloured ritual animals, in particular oxen, and divinations aimed to determine where the Shang king could find multicoloured oxen. For example:

Heji: 11153

庚子卜，互，貞：勿牛于敦/貞：勿牛于敦

105 The graph depicts a dead body in a coffin, but the decipherments of this character differ; most scholars now agree that it means “death” or “bury”; see *JGWZGL*: 0053.

106 This inscription is in the collection of the Peking University Library; cited by Qiu Xigui in his “Cong YinXu buci kan Yinren dui baima de zhongshi”, 233.

107 I have followed Qiu Xigui’s decipherment of the character; see Qiu Xigui, *Guwenzi lunji*, 11–16.

108 Shanghai bowuguan (ed.), *Shang Zhou qingtongqi mingwen xuan* 商周青銅器銘文選 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), no. 99: “Zhao zun” 召尊 / no. 100: “Zhao you” 召卣 / no. 165: “Zuoce Da fangding” 作冊大方鼎.

109 See Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Shanhaijing jiaozhu* 山海經校註 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 465.

gengzi/crack/Gen/divine/multicolour/ox/at/Dun/divine/multicolour/ox/at/Dun

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), Gen, divining: “Multicoloured oxen are at Dun”.

Divining: “Multicoloured oxen are at Dun”.

The divination is about the availability of multicoloured oxen at Dun. Zheng Jiexiang 鄭傑祥 has identified the name Dun as a place some 50 kilometres south of Xiaotun.¹¹⁰

Heji: 11154

庚子卜, 古, 貞: 勿牛于𠄎

gengzi/crack/Gu/divine/multicolour/ox/at/X

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), Gu, divining: “Multicoloured oxen are at X”.

𠄎 is not identified, but it is clearly a place name too.

Liu Huan 劉桓 rendered the character *wu* 勿 as a verb in these examples, meaning “to select” (rather than “multicolour”) oxen at various places;¹¹¹ but this reading does not take into consideration those other examples in which the word is clearly used as an adjective to describe the colour of ritual animals.

Heji: 11156¹¹²

允出/求勿牛/求凍牛

indeed/out/seek¹¹³/multicolour/ox/seek/*dong*¹¹⁴/ox

The king indeed goes out,

– to ask for multicoloured oxen;

– to ask for *dong*-oxen.

Heji: 11181

去束/貞: 𠄎勿牛/王往省從西/王往出省/王去束/王往省

leave/Ci/divine/see¹¹⁵/multicolour/ox/king/go/inspect/from/west/king/go/out/inspect/king/leave/Ci/king/go/inspect

110 Zheng Jiexiang, *Shangdai dili gailun* 商代地理概論 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1994), 81–4.

111 See Liu Huan, “Buci wuniu shuo” 卜辭勿牛說, *Jiagu zhengshi*, 162–87, [originally published in *Yindu xuekan* 1990/4].

112 *Heji*: 11154, 11155, 11163 and 11157 record the same activities.

113 This character is written as 𠄎, and many scholars read this graph as 崇; see *JGWZGL*: 1540. But, as Qiu Xigui argues, it is better deciphered as the verb *qiu* 求, “to seek”; see Qiu Xigui, *Guwenzi lunji*, 59–69.

114 The meaning of the character *dong* 凍 here is not certain. In the *Erya* 爾雅 (“Shitian diba 釋天第八”), it is said to be an adjective, *dongyu* 凍雨, “stormy rain”; see Xu Chaohua 徐朝華, *Erya jinzhu 爾雅今注* (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1987), 203. But sometimes it could also be understood as a name for Zhang River 漳水; see Gui Fu 桂馥 (1736–1805), *Shuowenjiezi yizheng* 說文解字義証 (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1987), 917.

115 Several scholars have deciphered it as *shi* 視 <*dzi, “to look”, but others have rendered it as *meng* 蒙 <*məwŋ; see *JGWZGL*: 0614. In my view, it is probably used in this context as the original form for *mi* 覓 <*mejɰ, meaning “to look for”.

Leaving Ci, divining: “To look for multicoloured oxen”.

The king goes from the west to inspect.

The king goes out to inspect.

The king leaves Ci.

The king goes to inspect.

Heji: 11182

... 卜, 覈, 貞: 王往去/ ... 貞: 毋勿牛/...王往...

.../crack/Que/divine/king/go/leave/ ... /divine/seek/multicolour/ox/ ... /king/go/ ...

... cracking on ... Que, divining: “The king goes to ...”

... divining: “To look for multicoloured oxen”.

... the king goes ...

Although the above examples are incomplete, they probably all relate to the same divination and show that multicoloured animals were particularly sought after as ritual animals.

In later texts, such as in the *Zhouli* (“Diguan Niuren 地官牛人”), we read that the ritual animals were specially selected and fed prior to the sacrificial rites:¹¹⁶

牛人掌養國之公牛，以待國之政令。凡祭祀，共其享牛、求牛，以授職人而芻之....充人掌繫祭祀之牲牲。祀五帝，則繫于牢，芻之三月。享先王亦如之。凡散祭祀之牲，繫于國門，使養之。展牲則告牲。碩牲則贊。The Keeper of Oxen is in charge of keeping the oxen for public affairs and takes orders from the state. For all rituals, he supplies oxen that are specially sought out for sacrifice; he gives them to the assistants to be fed; ... the Warden of the Pen looks after the sacrificial animals of pure colour; when the ritual is performed to the Five Lords, the animals are tied up in the pen and fed with grass for three months. The same treatment is given to the sacrificial animals for the ancestors. Animals used for other random rituals may be tied up by the city gate, and fed there. At the display of the sacrificial animals the Warden will make an announcement that the animals are of pure colour; and will give praises if the animal is plump.

In the *Liji* 禮記 (“Jiyi 祭儀”), an explanation is given of why the ritual animals have to be selected and their colour is significant:¹¹⁷

古者天子、諸侯必有養獸之官，及歲時，齊戒沐浴而躬朝之。犧牲祭牲，必於是取之，敬之至也。君召牛，納而視之，擇其毛而卜之，吉，然後養之。君皮弁素積，朔月，月半，君巡牲，所以致力，孝之至也。

In ancient times, the Son of Heaven, dukes and lords, all have officials who are responsible for looking after animals. At the festivals, they

116 *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏, *juan* 13 (ed. *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [hereafter *SSJZS*], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 1980, 723).

117 *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, *juan* 48 (*SSJZS*, 1597).

fast and take baths, and present themselves respectfully. Ritual animals of pure colour must be selected to show the utmost respect. When the lord calls for oxen [for sacrifice], he takes the animals and examines them. The choice is made regarding the colour of the animal, and a divination is carried out. If it is auspicious, the animals are taken to be fed. The lord wears a leather cap and is clothed in plain colours; at every new month, and in the middle of the month, he must go to inspect the ritual animals. Such efforts are made with the intention of representing the king's most genuine filiality.

In the Bin-group inscriptions, there are many examples in which multicoloured oxen were sacrificed in ancestral rites, particularly in the slaughtering and burning rites, and the blood-offering:

Heji: 8973

貞：王以勿牛四于用...

divine/king/bring/multicolour/ox/four/to/use/ ...

Divining: "The king brings four multicoloured oxen for sacrifice ...".

Heji: 836

貞：尸卯，惠勿牛

divine/Shi/cut¹¹⁸/hui/multicolour/ox

Divining: "Shi performs the cutting-rite, and the sacrifice should be multicoloured oxen".

Heji: 39

貞：燎告，眾步于丁 ... / 貞：翌丁未醕燎于丁，十小牢，卯十勿牛

divine/burn/announce¹¹⁹/group¹²⁰/march¹²¹/to/Ding/ ... /divine/next/
dingwei/cutting-rite/burn/to/Ding/ten/small/penned sheep/cut/ten/multicolour/ox

Divining: "To make the burning-rite and make a ritual announcement, the people perform the marching-ritual for Ding ..."

Divining: "On the next *dingwei* (day 44), we perform the cutting-rite and the burning-rite to Ding, to use ten small penned sheep, and cut open ten multicoloured oxen".

- 118 The graph which I transcribe as *mao* 卯 refers to a kind of ritual killing, probably "to cut an animal in half"; see *JGWZGL*: 3355. For further discussion of the character, see Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, 427–33, where he reads it as *liu* 劉.
- 119 The character *gao* 告 means "to report" or "to announce", and refers to a ritual announcement; see *JGWZGL*: 0720.
- 120 *Zhong* 眾 probably refers to the "commoners" who did not belong to particular aristocratic clans; see Qiu Xigui, "Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi", *Gudai wenshi yanjiu*, esp. 320–30. Keightley has translated *zhong* as "dependent labor"; see his book *The Ancestral Landscape*, 24 n. 23.
- 121 The exact meaning of the word *bu* 步 is not certain, but it probably refers to a ritual procession for ancestors. For explanations of this character, see *JGWZGL*: 0801.

Heji: 15616¹²²

癸巳卜，殼，貞：燎十勿牛，又五鬯

guisi/crack/Que/divine/burn/ten/multicolour/ox/have/five/aromatic-wine

Cracking made on *guisi* (day 30), Que, divining: “We perform the burning rite of ten multicoloured oxen, and additionally of five jars of aromatic wine”.

Sometimes, the colour and sex of the ritual animals is also specifically indicated:

Heji: 15090

甲...貞：翌...侑于...勿牛...勿牝...十月

jia.../divine/next/ ... /offer/to/ ... /multicolour/ox/ ... /multicolour/cow/ ... /ten/month

... *jia* day ... divining: “On next ... make an offering to ... of multicoloured oxen and multicoloured cows ... Tenth month”.

Heji: 938f.

貞：侑于示壬妻妣庚牟，惠勿牡

divine/offer/to/Shi Ren/wife/Bi Geng/penned sheep/hui/multicolour/bull

Divining: “We will make an offering to Shi Ren’s wife, Ancestress Geng, of penned sheep; we should sacrifice multicoloured bulls”.

In this case, the recipient of the multicoloured bulls was the female ancestor Bi Geng.

In some cases, multicoloured oxen were not only used as blood sacrifice, but were also pledged as the promised offering:

Heji: 10116

甲子卜，爭，貞：禱年于丁，盟十勿牛，冊百勿牛

jiazi/crack/Zheng/divine/supplicate¹²³/harvest/to/Ding/blood¹²⁴/ten/multicolour/ox/record¹²⁵/hundred/multicolour/ox

122 *Heji*: 15617 bears a similar inscription.

123 This graph is written as 𠄎, which is transcribed as 𠄎. Previously many scholars read it as *qiu* 求, meaning “to beg”; but although its meaning is close to *qiu*, there is a clear graphic distinction between the two characters in OBI; see *JGWZGL*: 1533, 1540. Here, I have used a modern word to translate the meaning; see Qiu Xigui’s *Guwenzi lunji*, 59–69.

124 This character has two different readings: *xue* 血 and *meng* 盟. Both relate to the blood sacrifice in OBI. According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, *xue* means “animal blood used in sacrifice” and is derived from a vessel and the element representing blood; *meng* means “to convenant by killing a ritual animal and drinking its blood from a red plate and jade container; using an ox ear”. See Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815), *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字註 (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981), 213, 315.

125 There are different interpretations for the character *ce* in OBI: (a) *ce* 箒 “a written record”, (b) *shan* 刪 “to cleave”; see *JGWZGL*: 2935, 2937. Here, I have followed the former explanation and translated it as “written pledge”.

Cracking made on *jiazi* (day 1), Zheng, divining: “To supplicate for a good harvest from Ding, we make the blood offering of ten multicoloured oxen, and make a written pledge of one hundred multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 10117 bears a similar inscription, in which Ding again receives the blood sacrifice of multicoloured oxen, but the number of multicoloured oxen is three, with a pledge of thirty more. Blood sacrifice is commonplace in all early religions and its significance is important in various ways, for example as a covenant, or as purification, and it is thought to have a reciprocal effect upon fertility in general.¹²⁶ Another example is *Heji*: 6947, where the ancestor is Xia Yi:

辛酉卜, 爭, 貞: 今日侑于下乙一牛, 冊十勿宰/貞: 今日侑于下乙宰, 冊十勿宰 / 貞: 今日侑于下乙一牛

xinyou/crack/Zheng/divine/today/offer/to/Xia Yi/one/ox/record/ten/multicolour/penned sheep/divine/today/offer/to/XiaYi/penned sheep/record/ten/multicolour/penned sheep/divine/today/offer/to/Xia Yi/one/ox

Cracking made on *xinyou* (day 58), Zheng, divining: “Today, we make an offering to Xia Yi of one ox, and a written pledge of ten multicoloured penned oxen”.

Divining: “Today, we make an offering to Xia Yi of penned sheep, and a written pledge of ten multicoloured penned sheep”.

Divining: “Today, we make an offering to Xia Yi of one ox”.

In these rituals, the ancestors who received the sacrifice include Ding, Shi Ren, Bi Geng and Xia Yi. The inscriptions also describe the particular ways in which the ritual animals were burned, cut up, and used for blood-sacrifice, together with other offerings such as aromatic wine. The blood offering was made to ancestors in order to gain a good harvest. It is worth noting that in *Heji*: 10116, the diviner first proposed making a blood offering of a certain number of multicoloured oxen, then made the pledge of more animals of the same type and colour. The promised number of animals was often ten times the number of animals actually sacrificed.

White and multicoloured were not the only colours of interest to the Shang ritual specialist. In the Shang colour system, *huang* 黃, yellow, represents another important category and is probably associated with cosmic rituals. In the Bin-group, several inscriptions have been found in which yellow oxen are used in a very particular context:

126 For a general study of blood sacrifice, see E. O. James, *Sacrifice and Sacrament*, 60–76. For a discussion of the blood-rite in OBI, see Lian Shaoming 連邵名, “Jiagu keci zhong de xueji” 甲骨刻辭中的血祭, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 16 (1989), 49–66. For a discussion of the role of the blood covenant in the Warring States period, see M. E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany: SUNY, 1990), 43–50.

Heji 14313 (front)

貞：禘于東，陷𤝵犬，燎三牢，卯黃牛

divine/*di*-rite/to/east/bury/dark¹²⁷/dog/burn/three/penned sheep/cut/
yellow/ox

Divining: “In performing the *di*-rite to the East, we bury dogs of dark colour, and burn three penned sheep, cut open yellow oxen”.

In the late Shang period, the *di*-rite is particularly related to the worship of the directions, probably with some cosmological implications.¹²⁸ In the sacrifice to the direction, animals were burned, and yellow oxen were slaughtered.

Heji: 14314 also records the same procedure and sacrifices:

壬申卜，寶，貞：燎于東，三犬，三羊，𤝵犬，卯黃牛

renshen/crack/Bin/divine/burn/to/east/three/dog/three/sheep/dark/dog/
cut/yellow/ox

On *renshen* (day 9), cracking, Bin, divining: “In performing the burning-rite to the East, we use three dogs, three sheep, and dogs of dark colour, and cut open yellow oxen”.

Yingcang: 1289¹²⁹

乙丑卜，寶，貞：...犬，卯十黃牛

jichou/crack/Bin/divine/.../dog/cut/ten/yellow/ox

Cracking made on *jichou* (day 26), Bin, divining: “... dogs, to cut open ten yellow oxen”.

Heji: 14315

貞：燎東西南，卯黃牛/燎于東西，侑伐，卯南黃牛

divine/burn/east/west/south/cut/yellow/ox/burn/to/east/west/sacrifice/
beheaded human/cut/south/yellow/ox

Divining: “In performing the burning-rite to the East, West, and South, we cut open yellow oxen”.

“In performing the burning-rite to the East and West, we make an offering of beheaded human victims, and cut open yellow oxen unto the South.”

127 The meaning of the character is not entirely certain. Chen Mengjia read it as a colour word, meaning “dark”; see Chen Mengjia, “Guwenzi zhong zhi Shang Zhou jisi”, esp. 132. Chang Tsung-tung followed Chen’s decipherment in his German translation of the inscription; see Chang Tsung-tung, *Der Kult der Shang-Dynastie*, 199.

128 See Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, esp. 75–84. In later literature, however, the *di*-rite became the summer-rite (*xiasi* 夏祀), and could also be performed to ancestors. For a detailed discussion of its implication in the pre-Han texts, see Cui Dongbi 崔東壁 (1740–1816), “Jing zhuang disi tongkao” 經傳禘祀通考, *Cui Dongbi yishu* 崔東壁遺書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 496–512.

129 The inscription is included in Li Xueqin, Qi Wenxin and Ai Lan (Sarah Allan), *Yingguo suocang jiagu ji* 英國所藏甲骨集 [hereafter *Yingcang*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

Here, and in addition to animal sacrifice, human sacrifice was made at the same time. The term *huangniu* 黃牛 also needs some explanation. It is used today as a collective noun, referring to domesticated cattle (*Bos Taurus*) in northern China, which differs from another bovine subfamily *shuiniu* 水牛 “water-buffalo” (*Bubalus*). The name *huangniu* probably implies at first instance the dark/yellowish skin of the cattle, and in OBI it is most probably still an adjective-noun phrase. This observation is supported by other evidence found in OBI. Occasionally, animals of wild species were also sacrificed to the directions or cosmological gods, and in one case an antelope is predictively described as *huang*-yellow.

Heji: 5658

甲子卜, 殼, 貞: 妥以巫/貞: 妥不其以巫/丙寅卜, 爭, 貞: 今十一月, 帝令雨/貞: 今十一月, 帝不其令雨/翌己巳, 燎一牛/貞: 其延雨/不其延雨

jiazi/crack/Que/divine/Tuo/sent/*wu*-magician¹³⁰/divine/Tuo/not/*qi*/sent/*wu*-magician/*bingyin*/crack/Zheng/divine/this/eleven/month/Di/order/rain/divine/this/eleven/month/Di/not/*qi*/order/rain/next/*jisi*/burn/one/ox/divine/*qi*/continue/rain/not/*qi*/continue/rain

Cracking made on *jiazi* (day 1), Que, divining: “Tuo will send in magicians”.

Divining: “Tuo will perhaps not send in magicians”.

Cracking made on *bingyin* (day 3), Zheng, divining: “In the present eleventh month, the High Lord will order rain”.

Divining: “In the present eleventh month, the High Lord will perhaps not order rain”.

On the next *jisi* (day 6): “We shall perform the burning rite of one ox”.

Divining: “Rains will perhaps continue”.

“Rains will perhaps not continue”.

This is a large turtle plastron which has survived almost in its entirety. The divinatory charges are about whether Di will order rains in the eleventh month. Significantly, on the reverse of the plastron, the divinatory charge reads:

燎東黃廌

burn/east/yellow/antelope¹³¹

“We perform the burning rite to the East of yellow antelope.”

130 For the decipherment of character *wu*, see *JGQZGL*: 2909. In a more recent paper, Victor Mair argues that the Chinese word *wu* < **muð* is probably related to the *magi* in Old Persian, although the *magi* performs a religious role that is very different from that of the Siberian shaman; see V. Mair, “Old Sinitic *Myag, Old Persian Magus, and English ‘magician’”, *Early China* 15 (1990), 27–47. There is, however, an absence of any hard evidence that shamanism was diffused from Siberia into China as early as the Shang period.

131 The character standing for the animal *zhi* 廌, and depicts an animal with huge eyes and horns. It is probably an antelope.

Here, the yellow antelope was burned to the spirit of the east (or “eastern quadrante”). *Zhi* 麋 probably refers to the *xiezhi* 獬豸 found in later texts, and is a mythical animal in Chinese literature.¹³²

The context in which the yellow animal was used is significant. The divination first indicates that the *wu* 巫 magician is employed here for the rain-making ritual. Many scholars believe that the role of *wu* is like that of a shaman who acts as intermediary between the human and the spiritual worlds,¹³³ but others, including Keightley, disagree with this interpretation.¹³⁴ In the Shang ritual, however, there is a special connection between the *wu*-magician and the magical ritual, such as rain-making, probably because the *wu*, as a religious practitioner had the unique knowledge and skill to influence the natural powers. In OBI, particularly in the early diviner groups such as the Shi and Li groups, as Sarah Allan has observed, the character *wu* can sometimes be rendered as *fang* 方 “direction”.¹³⁵ Sometimes, in the rain-making ritual, the *wu* are victims offered in the burning rites, probably because their physical abnormality was a significant element of the magic.¹³⁶

In OBI, names such as Dongmu 東母, “Mother of the East”, and Ximu 西母, “Mother of the West”, are frequently found.¹³⁷

Heji: 14342

貞: 燎...東母...黃[牛]¹³⁸

divine/burn/ ... /east/mother/ ... /yellow [ox]

Divining: “In performing the burning sacrifice to¹³⁹... Mother of the East ... of yellow oxen”.

132 For a discussion of the significance of the *xiezhi* 獬豸 in late traditions, see Yang Shuda, *Jiweiju xiaoxue jinshi luncong* 積微居小學金石論叢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 82–3.

133 For example, K. C. Chang has argued that the *wu* priest in the Shang and Zhou periods played a role similar to that of a “shaman”; see K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), esp. 44–5. For a survey of the *wu* in early Chinese records, see Li Ling 李零, “Xian Qin liang Han wenzi shiliao zhong de wu” (shang) & (xia) 先秦兩漢文字史料中的巫(上)(下), in his *Zhongguo fangshu xukao* 中國方術續考 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2001), 41–79.

134 D. Keightley, “Shamanism, death, and the ancestors: religious mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000–1000 BC)”, *Asiatische Studien* 52/3 (1998), 783–831. For a comparative discussion on shamanism in the Chinese and Greek contexts, see Puett, *To Become a God*, esp. 81–107.

135 Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, esp. 77.

136 See Qiu Xigui, “Shuo buci de fen wu wang yu zuo tulong” 說卜辭的焚巫尪與作土龍, *Guwenzi lunji*, 216–26. For a discussion of its late tradition, see E. H. Shafer, “Ritual exposure in ancient China”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14 (1951), 130–84.

137 For example, *Heji*: 14335, 14337 (front).

138 Here the character after the colour term *huang* is missing, but in the light of the inscriptions examined above, the missing character is likely to be *niu*, meaning “ox”.

139 Again, the character after the colour term *huang* is missing, but in the light of the inscriptions examined above, the missing character here too is likely to be *niu*, meaning “ox”.

Heji: 14344

貞：侑于西母，𤙴犬，燎三羊，三犬，卯三牛

divine/sacrifice/to/west/mother/dark/dog/burn/three/sheep/three/dog/
cut/three/ox

Divining: “To make an offering to Mother of the West of dark dogs, and in performing the burning sacrifice of three sheep and three dogs, cut open three oxen”.

In these inscriptions, we read that rituals were performed to the “mothers” of the West and East who are clearly recipients of Shang sacrifice, and the sacrificial animals offered to them were yellow oxen and dogs of dark colour. Chen Mengjia once thought that the “Mother of the East” and “Mother of the West” might refer to the spirits of Sun and Moon.¹⁴⁰ But, as Ding Shan 丁山 has argued, they were more likely to be the spirits of the directions, and therefore earthly rather than heavenly spirits.¹⁴¹ It is particularly interesting to note that the deities here are indicated as female (“mothers”). The worship of the Earth-Mother is a feature that is common to many other cultures. As Eliade pointed out, it is probably associated with the mythical concept of the goddess of fertility, and may have originated in agricultural cults.¹⁴²

In another Bin-group inscription, we see that sacrifice of yellow colour was used for the Altar of Qi (Shi Qi 示齊):

Heji: 14356

己亥卜，貞：不...示齊黃[牛]

jihai/crack/divine/not/ ... /shi-altar/Qi/yellow [ox]

Cracking made on *jihai* (day 36), divining: “There is no (sacrifice to) the Altar of Qi of yellow oxen”.

Here, yellow [oxen?] were probably sacrificed to the Qi-altar (or Qi-spirit). If we accept Yu Xingwu’s interpretation that *qi* 齊 is interchangeable with *zi* 粢 or *ji* 稷,¹⁴³ the latter is the name given to the legendary inventor of agriculture. It is likely that the popular belief in the spirit of cultivation had already emerged in the Shang period, as we know that Shang society was very much agriculture based. The question is whether the worship of the god of cultivation (Hou Ji 后稷) was already in existence then.¹⁴⁴ The following textual reference from *Shiji* and *Zhouli* may throw some light on this issue.

140 Chen Mengjia, “Guwenzi zhong de Shang Zhou jisi”, 131–3; *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 574.

141 Ding Shan, *Zhongguo gudai zongjiao yu shenhua kao* 中國古代宗教與神話攷 (Shanghai: Longmen lianhe shuju, 1961), 163.

142 See Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, tr. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed & Ward, 1958; first published Paris, 1949), 239–62.

143 *Qi* is written 𤙴 and is usually used as a place name in OBI. As Yu Xingwu 于省吾 has argued, it may well be the original form of the character *ji* 稷, and phonetically, their reconstructions are very close in Archaic Chinese; see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin* 甲骨文字釋林 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 244–6.

144 In the *Zhouli*, it is recorded that the Lesser Minister of Rites (*xiaozongbo* 小宗伯) arranges the locations of worship in the state; the ancestral temple is built on the left side, and the altars of *she* and *ji* on the right; see *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 19; (*SSJZS*, 766).

In the late tradition, worship of the spirit of the earth and the directions continued to be dominant both in the state ritual and popular religion, and the idea that sacrifice to them must be of the appropriate colour persisted in later ritual practice. In the *Zhouli* (“Diguan Muren” 地官牧人),¹⁴⁵ we read:

凡陽祀，用騂牲毛之；陰祀，用黝牲毛之；望祀，各以其方之色牲毛之。
When performing the Yang-sacrifice, select ritual animals of reddish colour. For a Yin-sacrifice, the ritual animals should be darkish. When the sacrifice is for the inspection-ritual (of the directions), select the ritual animal with the colour that corresponds to the appropriate direction.

And, in *Maoshi*: 291, a text which concerns the Zhou sacrifice performed to the god of agriculture Ji 稷 during the autumn harvest, we read a similar description:¹⁴⁶

殺時惇牡，有球其角。以似以續，續古之人。
They kill that yellow bull with black muzzle, curved are his horns; and so they imitate and they continue; they continue from the ancient people.

This Western Zhou tradition is about the sacrifices to the spirit of agriculture. According to Mao Heng’s 毛亨 commentary, *chumu* 惇牡 is “a yellow bull with a black muzzle”. Because the rite was performed to the earthly spirit, the ritual animal was a yellow one with a black muzzle. The methods of sacrifice and the colours of ritual animals indicated here remind us of what we have seen in the Shang divinatory records presented above.

Again, *Maoshi*: 212¹⁴⁷

曾孫來止，以其婦子，饁彼南畝；田峻至喜。來方禋祀，以其騂黑，與其黍稷，以享以祀，以介景福。

The descendant comes, with his wives and children; the food is brought to the southern acres; the Commander of the Land is pleased; the burning sacrifice is performed to the Directions, with reddish oxen and black pigs and sheep, and millet and grains; this is the offering and rite, so as to increase our great felicity.

In later traditions, the earth is always associated with the colour yellow. For example, Huangdi 黃帝 or the “Yellow Lord”, who has been

145 *Zhouli zhushu*, juan 23; (SSJZS, 723).

146 *Maoshi zhengyi*, juan 19/4; (SSJZS, 603), where Kong Yingda 孔穎達 also explains that the sacrifice to the *she* and *ji* usually uses darkish oxen. B. Karlgren’s translation of the phrase *chunmu* 惇牡 as “bull that is seven feet high” is a little odd; see his *The Book of Oddes: Chinese Text, Transcription and Translation* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1974).

147 *Maoshi zhengyi*, juan 14/1; (SSJZS, 477). The translation is largely based on Karlgren’s, but with some modifications.

consistently worshipped by the Chinese as their first ancestor, is associated with the earth.¹⁴⁸ Sarah Allan has argued that the myth of the “Yellow Lord” may have originated from the worship of the spirit of the underworld, because the colour of the soil and the spring which runs beneath it were easily conceived of as yellow by the people who lived in the central plain of China.¹⁴⁹ However, in pre-Han mythology the spirit of the soil is not Huangdi, but rather Hou Tu 后土, also known as Gou Long 勾龍. In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (twenty-ninth year of the Duke Zhao, 513 BCE), it is said that the Commander of Soil is Hou Tu, who is a son of the Gong Gong 共工 clan; and that Hou Tu can be identified as *she* 社 or the Spirit of the Soil.¹⁵⁰ Many scholars have argued that this story should be regarded as a kind of transformation,¹⁵¹ and that there is indeed a difference between the Spirit of Soil and Hou Tu. The identification of these two deities as one is the result of later theorization.¹⁵² According to Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (b. 145 BCE) *Shiji* 史記, by the eighth century BCE, when Duke Xiang of Qin 秦襄公 built the Western Temple 西時 to worship the White Lord 白帝, he used yellow oxen for sacrifice.¹⁵³ This record indicates that in the mind of the people of that time, the cosmic spirits of the directions are indeed “earthly” gods, and that the use of ritual animals of yellow colour is partly a legacy from the Shang.¹⁵⁴

The Chu-group

The Chu diviners’ group probably emerged in the later years of the reign of Wu Ding, and became most active during the Zu Geng and Zu Jia reigns. The calligraphy of the Chu-group inscription is distinctive, neat and regular, and its style allows us to divide the inscriptions into subgroups. The regular diviners include Chu 出, Da 大, Ji 即, Xiong 兄, Xi 喜, Xian 先, Xing 行, Zhu 逐 and Lü 旅. In many inscriptions, the king himself was in charge of divinations. In terms of the content, the Chu-group inscriptions reveal a new development, namely, the establishment of the regular ritual cycle (*zhouji* 周祭), wherein certain rituals (*ji* 祭, *zai* 畝, *xie* 協, *rong* 彤, *yi* 翌) were performed to certain ancestors on pre-determined days.¹⁵⁵ The

148 See Chen Pan 陳槃, “Huangdi shiji yanbian kao” 黃帝事跡演變攷, *Guoli Zhongshan Daxue yuyan lishi yanjiusuo zhoukan* 國立中山大學歷史研究所週刊 3 (1928), 921–35.

149 Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 64–7.

150 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義, *juan* 53; (SSJZS, 2123–24).

151 For further discussion of this problem, see Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 19–25.

152 Several Qing dynasty scholars noted this problem; for example, Dai Zhen 戴震 (1723–77) pointed out that in the *Zhouli* the *she* 社 was different from Hou Tu, but they became identical in the *Zuozhuan*. Dai’s view was quoted by Gui Fu 桂馥 in his *Shuowen jiezi yizheng*, 19. See also Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623–1717), “Jiao, she, di, xia wen”, in *Huang Qing jingjie xubian* 皇清經解續編, *juan* 22, ed. Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1917) (Jiangyin, 1888).

153 *Shiji*, *juan* 28, “Fengshanshu 封禪書”, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959, 1355–1404).

154 See Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 587.

155 For a detailed study of the *zhouji* system in the Late Shang Dynasty, see Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouji*; see also Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 47–53.

usual ancestors receiving sacrifices are Zu Yi 祖乙, Zu Xin 祖辛, Fu Ding 父丁, Mu Xin 母辛 and Xiong Geng 兄庚. There is a marked decrease in the frequency of sacrifices to the mythological ancestors before Shang Jia. The method of cracking bones or shells is also different from the other groups.

In the Chu-group inscriptions, the preference for white and multi-coloured animals in ritual sacrifice is well documented, and accords with what we have seen in the Bin-group. Ritual animals of white colour, in particular pigs and oxen (bulls), were frequently sacrificed in ancestral cults; for example:

Heji: 26030

貞: 惟白彘

divine/wei/white/pig

Divining: “It should be white pigs used for the sacrifice”.

Heji: 23165

... 白牛其用于毓祖乙, 馘

... /white/ox/qi/use/to/ancestor/Zu Yi/zhi-roast (?)¹⁵⁶

... white oxen perhaps to be used to ancestor Grandfather Yi in the roasting rite.

Heji: 22575

丁卯... 貞: 般... 侑羌... 白牡

dingmao ... /divine/Ban/ ... /offer/Qiang/ ... /white/bull

... *dingmao* (day 4) ... divining: “Ban ... makes an offering of Qiang-men ... and white bulls”.

Heji: 26027

甲子卜, 旅, 貞: 翌乙丑斫, 惠白牡

jiazil/crack/Lü/divine/next/*yichou*/dismember¹⁵⁷/*hui*/white/bull

Cracking made on *jiazi* (day 1), Lu, divining: “On the next *yichou* (day 2), in performing the dismemberment sacrifice, we should use white bulls”.

Heji: 22904

... 王... 乙丑, 其侑彘歲于祖乙白牡. 王在||卜

156 This character is multi-functional; for its decipherment see *JGWZGL*: 2415. According to Yu Xingwu, it refers to a sacrificial rite (*zhi* 臚) in which the animals were roasted or exposed to the sun; Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 182–84.

157 The character is written as 𠄎, and is transcribed as 斫: 3271. According to Yu Xingwu, it could be understood as the *zhe* 磔 ritual mentioned in the late texts, meaning “to dismember (ritual victims)”; see his *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 167–72.

... /king/ ... /yichou/qi/sacrifice/x-rite¹⁵⁸/slaughter¹⁵⁹/to/Zu Yi/white/
bull /king/at/X¹⁶⁰/crack

... the king... on *yichou* (day 2), we will perhaps perform the ascending
(?) rite and slaughtering sacrifice to Grandfather Yi of white bulls.
The king made the cracking at X.

Here, white pigs and bulls were used for the ancestral cult. The Qiang-men were also used as human sacrifice. The inscriptions record the specific ways by which the ritual animals were used: chopping, dismemberment and roasting, the last of which is frequently seen in Shang rituals, but is particularly common in the Chu-group inscriptions.

Multicoloured oxen also continued to be mentioned in many inscriptions. These inscriptions have a few distinctive characteristics, however: graphically, the two characters *wu* and *niu* are written very close together, like a *hewen*, and occasionally, when the context is clear, the character *niu* is omitted in the second sentence. More significantly, the “*wu*-multicoloured” oxen now appear frequently in paired charges and choice-type charges, which suggests that the colour was chosen deliberately. For example:

Heji: 23218

貞: 二宰/貞: 三宰/貞: 翌丁亥父丁歲勿牛/弜勿牛

divine/two/penned sheep/divine/three/penned sheep/divine/next/*dinghai*/Fu Ding/slaughter/multicoloured-ox/not¹⁶¹/multicoloured-ox

Divining: “We will sacrifice two penned sheep”.

Divining: “We will sacrifice three penned sheep”.

Divining: “On the next *dinghai* (day 24), to Father Ding we will slaughter multicoloured oxen”.

“We will not sacrifice multicoloured oxen.”

Heji: 23002

庚子卜，行曰，貞: 翌辛丑其侑¹⁶²歲于祖辛/貞: 毋侑在正月/貞: 翌辛丑其侑祖辛牢/貞: 二牢/貞: 翌辛丑祖辛歲勿牛/貞: 弜勿

gengzil/crack/*Xing*/say/divine/next/*xinchuo/qi*/offer/x-rite/slaughter/to/
Zu Xin/divine/not/offer/in/first/month/divine/next/*xinchou/qi*/offer/Zu
Xin/penned sheep/divine/two/penned sheep/divine/next/*xinchou*/Zu
Xin/slaughter/multicolour/ox/divine/not/multicolour [-ox]

158 This character appears frequently in OBI, in particular in the Chu-group, and is usually understood as a ritual name. Several scholars have read it as *sheng* 升, meaning “to ascend”, or *jiu* 灸 “to brand”; see *JGWZGL*: 3335. Liu Huan has recently deciphered it as the verb *ba* 巴 (把) “to hold”; see his *Jiagu zhengshi*, 209–27.

159 In OBI, the character is a representation of an axe attached to a handle [𠄎]. It has several meanings: (a) year, (b) the planet Jupiter and, more commonly, (c) it is used as a transitive verb, “to slaughter”, “to kill”. It is also sometimes used in a noun phrase as a ‘ritual name’; see *JGWZGL*: 2429. See also Itō and Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, 418–25, where Takashima reads it as *gui* 𠄎.

160 It is probably a place name here.

161 It is used as a negative in OBI; see Qiu Xigui, “Shuo jiang” 說弜, *Guwenzi lunji*, 117–21. For other explanations of the character, see *JGWZGL*: 2630.

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), Xing said, divining: “On the next *xinchou* (day 38) we will perhaps make an offering of the x-rite and slaughtering sacrifice unto Grandfather Xin”.

Divining: “We will not make the offering in the first month”.

Divining: “On the next *xinchou*, we will perhaps make an offering to Grandfather Xin of penned sheep”.

Divining: “We will make the offering of two penned sheep”.

Divining: “On the next *xinchou*, to Grandfather Xin we will make the slaughtering sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Divining: “We will not make the sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 23163

... 貞: 毓祖乙砣勿牛/貞: 弜勿

... /divine/ancestor/Zu Yi/dismember/multicoloured-ox/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]

... divining: “To ancestor Grandfather Yi, we will perform the dismemberment sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Divining: “We should not make the sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 23189

丙戌卜, 行, 貞: 王賓父丁, 夕, 歲, 亡憂/貞: 弜勿牛

bingxu/crack/Xing/divine/king/host¹⁶²/Fu Ding/evening/slaughter/blessing¹⁶³/no/worry/divine/don't/multicoloured-ox

Cracking made on *bingxu* (day 23), Xing, divining: “The king will perform the hosting ritual to Father Ding, in the evening, to make the slaughtering sacrifice and the blessing rite. There will be no trouble”.

Divining: “We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 23367

庚子卜, 喜, 貞: 妣庚歲其勿牛/貞: 弜勿/庚子卜, 喜, 貞: 歲, 惠王祝/惠

gengzi/crack/Xi/divine/Bi Geng/slaughter/qi/multicoloured/ox/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]/*gengzi*/crack/Xi/divine/slaughter/hui/king/pray¹⁶⁴/hui/blessing

162 The word *bin* 賓 has different meanings, and various interpretations, see *JGWZGL*: 2065. Here it refers to a ritual, and probably means “to host” or “to have an audience” with ancestors. For a further study of *bin* and other related words in OBI, see Lei Huanzhang 雷煥章 [J.A. Lefevre], “Shuo ‘an’” 說 <安>, *Rong Geng xiansheng bainian danchen jinian wenji* 容庚先生百年誕辰紀念文集 (古文字研究專號), Guangdong yanhuang wenhua yanjiuhui 廣東炎黃文化研究會 *et al.*, (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1998), 156–63.

163 This character refers to a ritual, but there are several different readings of it; see *JGWZGL*: 1122. Some scholars have read the meaning purely on the basis of its graphic form, for example, Serruys, in his “Studies in the language of Shang” (see 108 n. 41), translated it as “burning twigs”. However, as Yu Xingwu has argued, it is better to understand it as the *sai* 塞 or *saibao* 賽報 rite in the late texts, meaning “to make an offering and receive blessings”, *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 35–7.

164 The graphic form of the character depicts a man making a prayer in front of an altar. For its decipherment, see *JGWZGL*: 0303.

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), Xi, divining: “To Ancestress Geng we will perhaps perform the slaughtering sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Divining: “We will not make the sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”.

Cracking made on *gengzi*, Xi, divining: “In performing the slaughtering sacrifice, it should be the king who makes a prayer”.

“It should be the blessing rite.”

Heji: 23732

乙酉卜，行，貞：王賓藝裸亡憂/貞：勿牛/貞：弼勿

yiyou/crack/Xing/divine/king/host/yi-rite¹⁶⁵/libation¹⁶⁶/no/trouble/divine/multicolour/ox/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]

Cracking made on *yiyou* (day 22), Xing, divining: “The king will perform the hosting rite, the temple (?) rite, and make the libation. There is no trouble”.

Divining: “We will sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Divining: “We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 24557

己丑卜，王曰：貞：于甲辰己丑卜，王曰：貞：勿牡

jichou/crack/king/say/divine/on/*jiachen*/*jichou*/crack/king/say/divine/multicolour/bull

Cracking made on *jichou* (day 26), the king said, divining: “We will make a sacrifice on *jiachen* (day 41)”.

Cracking made on *jichou*, the king said, divining: “We will sacrifice multicoloured bulls”.

Yingcang: 1953

丙午卜，旅，貞：翌丁未父丁，暮，歲其勿牛/...卜，旅...丁未父丁，暮，歲其牡，在八月

bingwu/crack/Lü/divine/next/*dingwei*/Fu Ding/evening/slaughter/*qi*/multicolour/ox/.../crack/Lü/.../*dingwei*/Fu Ding/evening/slaughter/*qi*/bull/at/eight/month

Cracking made on *bingwu* (day 43), Lü, divining: “On the next *dingwei* (day 44), to Father Ding, we shall perhaps make the slaughtering sacrifice of multicoloured oxen in the evening”.

Cracking on ... Lü ... “On... *dingwei*, to Father Ding, we shall perhaps make the slaughtering sacrifice of bulls in the evening; it is in the eighth month”.

165 The graph depicts a man holding a torch, or a branch, and probably refers to a ritual. It is the original form of the character *yi* 藝, but scholars' readings of it vary greatly: Tang Lan interprets it as “burning-rite”, while Yu Xingwu interprets it as *ni* 禰 “temple-rite”; see *JGWZGL*: 0386. For a different interpretation, see also Itō and Takashima, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization*, vol. 2, 16–17.

166 This character was previously read as *fu* 福, but the majority of scholars now agree that it should be read as *guan* 灌, meaning “libation”; cf. *JGWZGL*: 1123.

A rare example in the Shanghai Museum collection further demonstrates the complexity of colour categorization of the Shang people.¹⁶⁷ This inscription not only contains phrases such as “oxen of dark-reddish multicolour” and “oxen of yellowish multicolour”, but also indicates the methods and contexts of the sacrifice:

癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅其斫于毓祖乙勿。茲用。于宗三牢.../貞：弼勿牛

癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅毓祖乙歲，惠幽勿牛。茲用/貞：惠黃勿牛

癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅醜。茲用/貞：于乙卯醜

癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅毓祖乙歲，朝，醜。茲用/貞：暮，惟醜

癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅毓祖乙歲二牢/貞：三牢。茲用

guichou/crack/Xing/divine/next/jiayin/qi/dismember/to/ancestor/Zu Yi/multicolour [-ox]/this/used/at/temple/three/penned sheep/ ... /divine/not/multicolour/ox/guichou/crack/Xing/divine/next/jiayin/ancestor/Zu Yi/slaughter/huil/dark-red/multicolour/ox/this/use/divine/huil/yellow/multicolour/ox/guichou/crack/Xing/divine/on/next/jiayin/cutting-rite/this/use/divine/on/yimao/cutting-rite/guichou/crack/Xing/divine/next/jiayin/ancestor/Zu Yi/slaughter/morning/cutting-rite/this/use/divine/evening/weil/cutting-rite/guichou/crack/Xing/divine/next/jiayin/ancestor/Zu Yi/slaughter/two/penned sheep/divine/three/penned sheep/this/use

Cracking made on *guichou* (day 50), Xing, divining: “On the next *jiayin* (day 51), to ancestor Grandfather Yi, we should perhaps perform the dismembering sacrifice of multicoloured oxen”. This is used. At the temple, three penned sheep ...

Divining: “We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, Xing, divining: “On the next *jiayin*, to ancestor Grandfather Yi, we will sacrifice dark-red multicoloured oxen”. This is used.

Divining: “We will sacrifice yellowish multicoloured oxen”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, Xing, divining: “On the next *jiayin*, we will perform the cutting-rite”. This is used.

Divining: “The *you*-rite will be performed on *yimao* (day 52)”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, Xing, divining: “On the next *jiayin*, to ancestor Grandfather Yi we will perform the slaughtering sacrifice; and in the morning, the cutting-rite will be performed”. This is used.

Divining: “In the evening we will perform the cutting-rite”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, Xing, divining: “On the next *jiayin*, to ancestor Grandfather Yi we will make the slaughtering sacrifice of two penned sheep”.

Divining: “We will sacrifice three penned sheep”. This is used.

167 See Shen Zhiyu, 沈之瑜, “Jiagu buci xin huo” 甲骨卜辭新獲, *Shanghai bowuguan jikan* 上海博物館集刊 3 (1989), 157–79; see also Wang Tao, “Colour terms in Late Shang China”, esp. 84.

On the same bone, a number of divinatory charges were made on the same day. They are all concerned with the way the ritual animals are used (slaughtering or dismembering), the dates (*jiayin* or *yimao*), the time of day (morning or evening), the types of sacrificial animal (penned sheep or oxen), the colour of the sacrificial animal (multicolour, dark-red multicolour, or yellowish multicolour), and the number of animals (two or three). Clearly, the diviner was trying to determine what should be the most appropriate ritual for the ancestor Zu Yi. The distinction made here between “dark-red multicolour” and “yellowish multicolour” is a rare case. We can only speculate that the difference lies in brightness.

To sum up, in the Chu-group inscriptions,¹⁶⁸ ritual animals of white colour were mentioned particularly in the context of ancestral cults. The kings themselves often conducted the divinations. The divinatory charges were commonly concerned with ritual matters such as the times of ritual, the methods of killing animals, and the colour and sex of the ritual animals. It is worth noting here that the charges concerned with the multicoloured oxen are often in the paired formula: affirmative/negative, proposing that the multicoloured oxen should, or should not, be used in sacrifice. This shows that the multicoloured ritual animals had become the main concern of the Shang king and his diviners.

The He-group

In the north branch of the kings' diviners' school, the Chu-group was succeeded by the He-group. Inscriptions of the He-group are mostly unearthed from Locus North. From their calligraphic style, the ancestral titles used, and the different ways in which bones and shells were cracked, they can be further divided into several subdivisions. Some inscriptions are clearly related to those of the contemporary Wuming-group of the south branch. The regular diviners found in the He-group include He 何, Peng 彭, Ning 寧, Zhi 臧, Kou 口 and Xian 覲.¹⁶⁹ Compared with the other groups, the He-group's inscriptions are more complicated in terms of dating; they probably covered a long period, lasting throughout the Wu Ding, Zu Geng, Zu Jia, Lin Xin, Kang Ding, and even into the reigns of Wu Yi and Wen Ding.¹⁷⁰

In the He-group, there are many inscriptions concerned with ancestral cults. The diviners clearly followed the ritual cycle (*zhouji*) for ancestors, and on some occasions, sacrifices were also made to mythical ancestors such as He and Nao. The colour of ritual animals is mentioned but, surprisingly, there are no examples recording ritual animals of white colour in the He-group. The reason for this may be twofold: (a) perhaps we have yet to find the main corpus of inscriptions made by the

168 There are many similar inscriptions in this group, such as *Heji*: 23215, 23217, 24580, 25160, 22985, 23584, 22889, 22994, 23219, 23220 and 23331.

169 See Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu buci fenqi yanjiu*, esp. 139–73.

170 See Fan Yuzhou 范毓周, “Shilun Hezu buci de shidai yu fenqi” 試論何組卜辭的時代與分期, in *Hu Houxuan xiansheng jinian wenji*, 87–95.

He-group diviners; (b) the task for the diviners of this group was substantially different from that of the other diviners. In view of the vast number of OBI being processed today, the latter possibility seems more plausible.

However, there are a number of He-group inscriptions to record the use of animals of multicolour in ancestral worship.¹⁷¹ This is quite similar to what we have seen in the Chu-group. For example:

Heji: 27186

甲子...𠄎歲于祖乙三牢/弜勿牛

jiazi ... /X-rite/slaughter/to/Zu Yi/three/penned-ox ... /not/multicolour/ox

... *jiazi* (day 1) ... “We will perform the x-rite and the slaughtering sacrifice to Grandfather Yi of three penned oxen”.

“It should not be multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 27042 reads:

癸丑卜, 何, 貞: 其牢, 又一牛/癸丑卜, 何, 貞: 弜勿[牛]/癸丑卜, 何, 貞: 惠勿牛/癸丑卜, 何, 貞: 弜勿[牛]/癸丑卜, 何, 貞: 惠勿[牛]

guichou/crack/He/divine/*qi*/penned sheep/have/one/ox/*guichou*/crack He/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]/*guichou*/crack/He/divine/*hui*/multicolour[-ox]/*guichou*/crack/He/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]/*guichou*/crack/He/divine/*hui*/multicolour[-ox]

Cracking made on *guichou* (day 50), He, divining: “We will perhaps sacrifice penned sheep, and additionally of one ox”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, He, divining: “It should not be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, He, divining: “It should be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, He, divining: “It should not be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.

Cracking made on *guichou*, He, divining: “It should be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.

Here, the diviner first divined whether in the sacrificial rite an ox should be used and additionally of the penned sheep; he then proposed the paired charges about the multicoloured ox. We can discern some negative discrimination that might have emerged against multicolour, perhaps owing to its impurity.

In the He-group, there are also a number of divinations that are concerned with hunting and warfare. A few of these mention horses, or more precisely, the colour of the king's chariot horses:

171 *Heji*: 27387, 29499, 29500, 30910, 30935 and 27042.

Heji: 28195

乙未卜，睨，貞：舊乙左駛，其俐不爾/乙未卜，睨，貞：[豕史]入駛，其俐不爾/乙未卜，睨，貞：今日子入駛，乙俐/乙未卜，睨，貞：師賈入赤駟，其俐不爾。吉

yiwei/crack/Xian/divine/old/Yi¹⁷²/left/chariot-horse/*qi*/good¹⁷³/not/wild/*yiwei*/crack/Xian/divine/Shi-official/send/male-chariot-horse¹⁷⁴/*qi*/good/not/wild/*yiwei*/crack/Xian/divine/present/day/prince/send/male-chariot-horse/Yi/good/*yiwei*/crack/Xian/divine/officer Gu/send/red/sturdy-horse/*qi*/good/not/wild/auspicious

Cracking made on *yiwei* (day 32), Xian, divining: “Old Yi the left chariot horse, it will be tame, not wild”.

Cracking made on *yiwei*, Xian, divining: “Shi-official sends in a male chariot horse, it will be tame, not wild”.

Cracking made on *yiwei*, Xian, divining: “Today the prince sends in a male chariot horse, Yi will be tame”.

Cracking made on *yiwei*, Xian, divining: “Officer Gu sends in a reddish sturdy horse, it will perhaps be tame, not wild”. Auspicious.

Another inscription probably belongs to the same set:

Heji: 28196

乙未卜，...貞：左[駛]...其俐不.../乙未卜，睨，貞：在甯田，駛黃，右赤馬...其俐.../乙未卜，睨，貞：辰入駛...其俐...

yiwei/crack/ ... /divine/left/[chariot-horse]/ ... /*qi*/good/not/wild/not.../*yiwei*/crack/Xian/divine/at/Ning/hunt/chariot-horse/yellow/right/*chi*-red/horse/*qi*/good/ ... /*yiwei*/crack/Xian/divine/Chen/send/chariot-horse/.../*qi*/good/...

Cracking made on *yiwei*, ... divining: “The left [chariot-horse] will be tame, not (wild)”.

Cracking made on *yiwei*, Xian, divining: “Hunting at Lin, the chariot-horses are yellow, and the reddish horse on the right side will be tame ...”

Cracking made on *yiwei*, Xian, divining: “Chen sends in chariot horses, they will be tame ...”.

Heji: 29418 is related, by the same diviner on the same topic, but with a different date:

癸丑...貞：右...馬.../癸丑卜，睨，貞：左赤馬，其俐不爾

guichou ... /divine/right/ ... /horse/.../*guichou*/crack/Xian/divine/left/red/horse/*qi*/good/not/wild

Cracking made on *guichou* (day 50), Xian, divining: “The horse on the right side”.

172 Here two elements, 一 and 乙, are written together. The meaning is not clear, but it is probably the name of a horse.

173 The meaning of the word is not clear, and I have followed Yu Xingwu’s interpretation here; see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 328–9.

174 The character is written as a *hewen* or joined character, consisting of the character *shi* 駛 and an added element indicating the sex of the chariot-horse.

Cracking made on *guichou*, Xian, divining: “The reddish horse on the left side of chariot will be tame, not wild”.

Here, the divination is not about animal sacrifice, but is concerned with whether the horses for driving the king’s chariots were good and tame. The examples show that the diviner was concerned about colour, but in a different way. I have noted elsewhere that the colour term *chi* 赤 “red” is very rare in OBI; these inscriptions are the only examples in which horses are described as *chi*-red.¹⁷⁵ The *chi* refers to the bright-red category in modern Chinese. But, as a bright-red horse would be extremely rare in reality, it would seem that the Shang colour category *chi*-red was substantially different from the colour we associate with *chi* today.

It is also worth noting that in *Heji*: 28195 the chariot-horses were specially sent in by various people and were described as “left” and “right”. A number of chariots have been excavated at Yinxu, and reconstruction has shown that the Shang chariot was driven by two horses, one on the left and one on the right.¹⁷⁶ The origin of the Shang chariot remains a topic of heated scholarly debate,¹⁷⁷ but more recent zooarchaeological research shows that the domestication of the horse and chariot was probably introduced into Shang territory by nomadic people in Central Asia.¹⁷⁸ The use of chariots was mainly ceremonial and was limited to the Shang royal court.

The Li-group

In the south branch, the inscriptions of the Li-group come mostly from Locus Centre and South. They can be divided into two main types: Type-I, where the writing is comparatively small, and the ancestors who commonly received sacrifices are Fu Yi 父乙 and Mu Geng 母庚; and Type-II, where the writing is larger and thicker and the ancestral titles include Fu Yi 父乙, Xiao Yi 小乙, Fu Ding 父丁 and Xiong Ding 小丁. This shows that the Li-group, and the Type-II inscriptions in particular, may well have lasted from the Wu Ding period to the Zu Jia reigns.

In the Li-group inscriptions, ritual animals are mentioned in ways similar to those of the contemporary diviner groups of the north branch, in particular the Bin- and Chu-groups, and ritual animals such as white pigs

175 Wang Tao, “Colour symbolism in Late Shang China”, esp. 68–72.

176 See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogusuo, *Yinxu de faxian yu yanjiu*, 138–47.

177 For example, Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫, “Chugoku senshin jidai no basha” 中國先秦時代の馬車, *Tōhō gakuhō* 東方學報 29 (1959), 276–80, Edward Shaughnessy, “Historical perspectives on the introduction of the chariot into China”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48/1 (1988), 189–237, and Wang Wei 王巍 “Shangdai mache yuanyuan lice” 商代馬車淵源蠡測, *Zhongguo Shang wenhua guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 中國商文化國際學術討論會論文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabai-kequanshu chubanshe, 1998), 380–88, which all argue that Shang chariots were likely to be derived from the Central Asian model, while Yang Baocheng’s 楊寶成 “Yindai chezi de faxian yu fuyuan” 殷代車子的發現與復原 *Kaogu* 考古 1984/6, 546–55, insists that the Shang chariot is from an indigenous tradition.

178 See Yuan Jing 袁靖, “Henan Anyang Yinxu dongwu kaoguxue yanjiu de lingdian renshi” 河南安陽殷墟動物考古學的兩點認識, *Kaoguxue jikan*, 15 (2004), 236–42, esp. 238–41.

and oxen were frequently used in sacrificial rites. In the following examples white oxen and pigs were burned.

Heji: 34462

... 燎惠白穀

... /burn/huil/white/piglet

“... in performing the burning sacrifice, we should use white piglets”.

Heji: 34463

乙亥卜, 燎白豕

yihai/crack/burn/white/pig

Cracking made on *yihai* (day 12): “We will make the burning sacrifice of white pigs”.

Tunnan: 231¹⁷⁹

庚午卜, 惠今夕.../惠白牛燎

gengwu/crack/huil/this/evening/ ...

huil/white/ox/burn

Cracking on *gengwu* (day 47): “It should be this evening ...”.

“It should be white oxen that are to be used in the burning sacrifice.”

Several other inscriptions reveal in vivid detail the exorcist rite held in ancestral temples, in which white boars, in particular, were used in the blood-sacrifice. For example:

Heji: 32330

甲辰, 貞: 其大禦王自上甲...盟用白豶九.../丁未, 貞: 其大禦王自上甲
/盟用白豶九; 下示刂牛, 在父丁宗卜/丁未, 貞: 惠今夕酹, 禦, 在父丁宗
卜/癸丑, 貞: 其大禦, 惠甲子酹

jiachen/divine/*qi*/big/exorcism/king/from/Shang Jia/ ... / blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/ ... /*dingwei*/divine/*qi*/big/exorcism/king/from/Shang Jia//blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/low/altar¹⁸⁰/blood-sprinkling¹⁸¹/ox/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack/*dingwei*/divine/*wei*/this/evening/cutting-rite/exorcism/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack/*guichou*/divine/*qi*/big/exorcism/*huil*/*ji*azil/cutting-rite

179 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xiaotunnandi jiagu* 小屯南地甲骨 [hereafter *Tunan*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980–83).

180 The interpretations given to the character *shi* vary: (a) the celestial phenomena, (b) the god of fertility, (c) the high god, (d) the representation of a totem pole; but the more plausible interpretation is that it is a representation of an ancestral tablet or altar, usually erected in ancestral temples; see *JGWZGL*: 1118, 1119. The name *xiashi* or Lower Altar is used as a collective title referring to a particular group of ancestors; see Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, esp. 460–68; and Serruys, “Language of the Shang oracle inscriptions”, 49.

181 It is interesting to note that in these inscriptions the character is a visual depiction of blood smeared around the altar, probably referring to the blood offering, and is here understood as “blood-sprinkling”. See *JGWZGL*: 3284.

On *jiachen* (day 41), divining: “We will perhaps perform the great exorcist rite for the king; starting from Shang Jia ... the blood offering of nine white boars ...”.

On *dingwei* (day 44), divining: “We will perhaps perform the great exorcist rite for the king, starting from Shang Jia, of the blood-offering of nine white boars, and sprinkle blood of oxen on to the Lower Ancestral Altar; cracking bones at the temple of Father Ding”.

On *dingwei*, divining: “It should be this evening we perform the cutting-rite and the great exorcist ritual; cracking bones at the temple of Father Ding”.

On *guichou* (day 50), divining: “We will perhaps perform the great exorcist ritual, and it should be *jiazi* (day 1) for the cutting-rite”.

Here, to expel the king’s misfortune, the exorcist rite and the blood-offering rite were performed to a group of ancestors, and the blood of ritual animals was sprinkled upon the ancestral altar or tablet. It was also recorded that the divination took place in the ancestral temple of Father Ding. *Heji*: 34103 is a similar inscription, in terms of both its content and writing style. It probably comes from the same original divination set.

Tunnan: 2707 is another very similar inscription, but it is written vertically and its wording differs slightly:

... 醜, 大禦王自上甲, 其告于大乙, 在父丁宗卜/... 大禦王自上甲, 其告于祖乙, 在父丁宗卜/... 貞: ... 其大禦王自上甲, 盟用白豮九; 下示刂牛, 在大乙宗卜/... 自上甲, 盟用白豮九... 在大甲宗卜/... 卯, 貞: 其大禦王自上甲, 盟用白豮九; 下示刂牛, 在祖乙宗卜/丙辰, 貞: 其醜, 大禦王自上甲, 其告于父丁

... cutting-rite/big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qi/report¹⁸²/to/Da Yi/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack ... /big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qi/report/to/Zu Yi/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack ... divine/ ... /qi/big/exorcism/king/from/Shang Jia/blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/low/altar/blood-sprinkling/ox/at/Da Yi/temple/crack/ ... /from/Shang Jia/blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/ ... /at/Da Jia/temple/crack ... /mao/divine/qi/big/exorcism/king/from/Shang Jia/blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/low/altar/blood-sprinkling/ox/at/Zu Yi/temple/crack/bingchen/divine/qi/cutting-rite/big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qi/report/to/Fu Ding

“[We will perhaps perform] the cutting-rite and the great exorcist ritual, starting from Shang Jia, and perhaps make an announcement to Da Yi; cracking bones at the temple of Father Ding.”

“[We will perhaps perform] the great exorcist ritual, starting from Shang Jia, and perhaps make an announcement to Grandfather Yi; cracking bones at the temple of Father Ding.”

“[We will] perhaps perform the great exorcist ritual for the king, starting from Shang Jia of the blood-sacrifice of nine white boars, and to sprinkle the blood of oxen on the Lower Ancestral Altar; cracking made at the temple of Da Yi.”

182 For the interpretation of the character *gao* 告, see *JGWZGL*: 0720.

“... starting from Shang Jia of the blood-sacrifice of nine white boars
... Cracking bones at the temple of Da Jia.”

... *mao*, divining: “We shall perhaps perform the great exorcist ritual for the king, starting from Shang Jia of the blood-sacrifice of nine white boars, and to sprinkle the blood of oxen on the Lower Ancestral Altar; cracking bones at the temple of Grandfather Yi.”

On *bingchen* (day 53), divining: “We will perhaps perform the cutting-rite and the great exorcist ritual, starting from Shang Jia, and perhaps to make an announcement to Father Ding.”

The rituals described here are similar: the great exorcist rite was performed for the king; the recipients of the sacrifices include all the ancestors starting from Shang Jia. Special announcements or reports were made to certain ancestors such as Da Yi, Zu Yi and Fu Ding in the temples devoted to them. The ritual procedure is complex. Apart from the cutting sacrifice, it was most often accompanied particularly by the blood-sacrifice of white boars. Blood of oxen was also sprinkled or smeared on the ancestral altars. Blood, as in many other cultures,¹⁸³ was seen as having the power to purify, and perhaps for that reason, was employed as a means of exorcism in the Shang ritual.

We also read in the Li-group inscriptions that divinations were made about the ritual animals for the fertility rite in which white boar, ram and bull in particular were selected for sacrifice. For example:

Heji: 34080

乙巳, 貞: 丙午醜, 禱生于妣丙, 牡, 羖, 白[羴]

yisi/divine/*bingwul*/cutting-rite/supplicate/childbearing/to/Bi Bing/bull/ram/white/[boar]

On *yisi* (day 42), divining: “In performing the cutting-rite on *bingwu* (43), we supplicate for childbearing to Ancestress Bing and offer bulls, rams and white boars”.

Heji: 34081

辛巳, 貞: 其禱生于妣庚妣丙, 牡, 羖, 白羴/...貞: ...禱生...庚...牝羊, 豕

xingsi/divine/*qi*/supplicate/childbearing/to/Bi Geng/Bi Bing/bull/ram/white/boar ... /divine/ ... /pledge/childbearing/ ... /Geng/ ... /ewe/sow

On *xingsi* (day 18), divining: “In praying for childbearing to Ancestress Geng and Ancestress Bing, we will perhaps sacrifice bulls, rams and white boars”.

... divining: “... in praying for childbearing to ... Geng ... ewes and sows”.

Heji: 34082 is an almost identical inscription where the divination was made on *gengchen* (day 17) and the cracking of the bones takes place in

183 One can, for example, read a very similar description in the Bible, Leviticus 4: 5–7 (Revised standard edition, London, 1966), 86.

Grandfather Yi's temple. The animals are offerings to female ancestors. The paired divinatory charges in *Heji*: 34081 are concerned with the sex of the ritual animals, and seek to determine whether male or female should be used in the fertility rite.

In the fertility rite, the use of white boars might also have other implications. The graphic form of the character *jia* 豕 has a strong phallic representation. So, the boar was chosen here probably for its strong sexual symbolism.¹⁸⁴ These inscriptions indicate that the sex as well as the colour of the ritual animals was significant in Shang fertility rites.

There are few Li-group inscriptions that are concerned with hunting. One remarkable example concerns a fox that has been caught, and special note is made of its white colour:

Tunnan: 86

...寅卜, 王其射 𤝵 白狐, 湄日亡灾

... *yin*/crack/king/*qi*/shoot/X¹⁸⁵/white/fox/sunny/day/no/misfortune

Cracking made on *yin* ... the king will perhaps shoot white foxes at X; the day will be sunny, and without any misfortune.

With limited evidence, it is difficult to say whether the colour of the fox had any particular significance. But in the later groups, especially the Huang-group, we find many examples in which special mention was made of the colour of the hunted animals.

Moreover, some inscriptions show that the king and his diviners' interests in white colour might have extended to various kinds of ritual objects, including grains offered as sacrifice. For example:

Heji: 32014

于祖乙醎, 牧來羌/惠白黍烝

to/Zu Yi/cutting-rite/shepherd¹⁸⁶/bring/Qiang/*hui*/white/millet/offer¹⁸⁷

To Grandfather Yi the cutting-rite is performed, Shepherd will bring in some Qiang-men.

"It should be white millet that is to be offered."

This inscription is about the human sacrifice (sent in by the shepherd) and vegetable offering offered to ancestor Yi. *Heji*: 34601 and *Yingcang*: 2431 also bear similar inscriptions in which "white millet" is recorded as the offering. The term "white millet" may be merely a genetic term, referring to

184 In later traditions, boars are always regarded as a metaphor for sex or wantonness, for example, in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (the 14th year of Duke Ding 定公十四年), it is recorded that the people of the Song State 宋國 used the allegory of the boar to criticize the illicit affair between Nanzi 南子 and the Duke of Song 宋公; see *SSJZS*: 2151.

185 This is an undeciphered character, used as a place name here.

186 The term *mu* 牧 "shepherd" is also an official title in OBI.

187 The character depicts two hands holding up a food container, and is used as a verb here, probably referring to the offering of new crops, *zheng* 烝; see *JGWZGL*: 1032. Alternatively, it can also be read as *deng* 登, meaning "to offer"; see *JGWZGL*: 0858.

a kind of cereal.¹⁸⁸ But it is also possible that the new crops were specially processed to meet the ritual requirements, with white being the preferred colour in the ancestral sacrifice.

A number of inscriptions found in the Li-group also show that the way the multicoloured animals were used is close to that of the Chu-group of the north branch. For example:

Heji: 32377

癸亥, 貞: 甲子...上甲三勿牛

guihai/divine/jiazil ... /Shang Jia/three/multicolour/ox

On *guihai* (day 60), divining: “On *jiazil* (day 1) ... to Shang Jia we sacrifice three multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 33602

戊子卜, 九勿牛

wuzi/crack/nine/multicolour/ox

Cracking made on *wuzi* (day 25): “Nine multicoloured oxen for sacrifice”.

Heji: 33604 (and *Heji*: 34096)

甲戌, 貞: 大示勿牛

jiaxu/divine/big/altar/multicolour/ox

On *jiaxu* (day 11): “To the Great Ancestral Altar we sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 33691

丙午卜, 裸...牢 茲用/弜勿牛

bingwu/crack/libation/x-rite¹⁸⁹ ... /penned-ox/this/use/not/multicolour/ox

Cracking made on *bingwu* (day 43), in performing the libation and x-rite, we will sacrifice penned oxen. This is used.

We should not use multicoloured oxen.

Heji: 34504

弜勿[牛]/癸酉, 其醜祝, 惠乙亥

Not/multicolour[-ox]guiyou/qi/cutting-rite/pray/huil/yihai

We should not use multicoloured [oxen].

On *guiyou* (day 10), we will perhaps perform the cutting-rite and make a prayer, and it should be on *yihai* (day 12).

Tunnan: 2308

丁酉卜, ...來乙巳醜歲伐十五, 十勿牢

188 Like the term *huangliang* 黃梁, the term *bailiang* 白梁 is also found in later texts; cf. *Cihai* 辭海 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979), 2269.

189 The meaning of the character is not clear. Some scholars read it as a *hewen* of 木 and 口 (=丁), which is probably an ancestral name. Others render it as a ritual; see *JGWZGL*: 1403.

dingyou/crack/ ... /come/*yisi*/cutting-rite/slaughter/beheaded human / fifteen/ten/multicolour/penned-ox

Cracking made on *dingyou* (day 34): ... on the coming *yisi* (day 42), we will perform the cutting-rite and the slaughtering sacrifice of fifteen human victims and ten multicoloured penned oxen.

There is very little difference, in terms of both content and language, between these inscriptions and those of the Bin- and Chu-groups, which suggests that these groups overlapped in date.

The Wuming-group

As mentioned earlier, the Wuming-group belonged to the south branch and derived directly from the Li-group. In this group, no diviners' names are recorded in any divinatory formula. The inscriptions of the Wuming-group probably covered a long period – from Lin Xin and Kang Ding to Wu Yi and Wen Ding – and are largely contemporary with the He-group of the north branch. However, there is a transitional type between the Li and Wuming groups (*Li-wuming jian lei* 歷無名間類),¹⁹⁰ and towards the end of the Yinxu period it was eventually incorporated in the Huang-group.

The evidence of the use of colour in the Wuming-group is very significant. Oxen of various colours were used in sacrifice, and the context in which colour was mentioned suggests that the colour of ritual animals had gradually become an important element. For example:

Heji: 27470

弱勿[牛]。茲用/癸巳卜，父甲𠄎勿牛/弱勿[牛]

not/multicolour[-ox]/this/use/*guisi*/crack/Fu Jia/x-rite/multicolour/ox/
not/multicolour[-ox]

We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen. This is used.

Cracking made on *guisi* (day 30), to Father Jia we perform the x-rite of multicoloured oxen.

We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen.

Another inscription from Xiaotunnandi is probably related to the same set:

Tunnan: 3778

己亥卜，父甲𠄎勿牛/弱勿[牛]

yihai/crack/Fu Jia/X-rite/multicolour/ox/not/multicolour[-ox]

Cracking made on *guisi* (day 30), to Father Jia we perform the x-rite of multicoloured oxen.

We should not sacrifice multicoloured oxen.

Heji: 29491

惠勿牛，王受有佑。用

190 See Lin Yun, “Wumingzu buci zhong fuding chengwei de yanjiu” 無名組卜辭中的父丁稱謂研究, *Lin Yun xueshu wenji*, 129–42 (first published in *Guwenzi yanjiu* 13, (1986)); see also Huang Tianshu, *Yinxu wangbuci de fenlei yu duandai*, 241–7.

hui/multicolour/ox/king/receive/have/assistance/use

We should sacrifice multicoloured oxen, the king will then receive assistance. This is used.

Heji: 27591

惠勿牛,有正 /王賓母戊...有正

hui/multicolour/ox/have/correct¹⁹¹/king/host/Mu Wu/ ... /have/correct

We should sacrifice multicoloured oxen; this is correct.

The king will perform the hosting ritual for Mother Wu ... this is correct.

Heji: 29506

...白牛...正...

... /white/ox/ ... /correct/ ...

... white oxen ... correct ...

Heji: 31178

惠黃牛, 有正

hui/yellow/ox/have/correct

We should sacrifice yellow oxen; this is correct.

Heji 36350

乙卯, 其黃牛, 正, 王受有佑

yimao/qilyellow/ox/correct/king/receive/have/assistance

On *yimao* (day 52), we shall perhaps sacrifice yellow oxen; correct, the king will receive assistance.

Sometimes, the divinatory charges are particularly concerned with both the colour of the animal and the number of animals to be sacrificed. For example:

Heji: 29504

白牛, 惠二, 有正/白牛, 惠三, 有正/弜用/其延/惠白牛九, 有正

white/ox/hui/two/have/correct/white/ox/hui/three/have/correctnot/use/qi/continue¹⁹²/hui/white/ox/nine/have/correct

We make a sacrifice of white oxen, it should be two; this is correct.

We make a sacrifice of white oxen, it should be three; this is correct.

We should not use this sacrifice.

We should perhaps continue this sacrifice.

It should be nine white oxen; this is correct.

In these inscriptions we can see a noticeable change in the linguistic formula of the divinatory charges: the prognostications now often contain phrases

191 In OBI, the phrase *youzheng* may have several meanings. I have tentatively translated it as “this is correct”. For further discussion, see *JGWZGL*: 0821.

192 This character is written as 𠄎, which is transcribed as 延, meaning “to continue the sacrifice”; see *JGWZGL*: 2290.

such as “this is correct”; and “the king received assistance”. Special notations such as “auspicious” or “greatly auspicious” are often found by the cracks on the bones.

The colour indication of ritual animals found in the Wuming-group is rich, and includes white, yellow and multicolour. However, the most significant change regarding the colour of ritual animals is the appearance of the term *xing* 騂 “red-yellow”. For example:

Heji: 27122

... 登洋牛, 大乙白牛, 惠元 ...

... offer/red-yellow¹⁹³/ox/Da Yi/white/ox/huil/first ...

... offering of red-yellow oxen, white oxen to Da Yi; it should be the first ...

Heji: 29512

丁丑卜, 王其𠄎洋牛于...五牢

dingchou/crack/king/qil/x-rite/red-yellow/ox/to/ ... /five/penned-ox

Cracking made on *dingchou* (day 14), the king will perhaps perform the x-rite of red-yellow oxen to ... of five penned oxen.

These two examples are of the transitional type between the Li and Wuming groups, which suggests that the trend of choosing “red-yellow” probably first began in the south branch during the late Wu Ding and early Zu Jia period.

Later, in the Wuming-group, the *xing* “red-yellow” ox became the most common ritual animal in Shang ancestral worship, as well as the most favoured one. This may indicate that the ritual system on the whole had probably undergone some changes. For example:

Heji: 32564

騂牛新祖乙

... red-yellow-ox/fire/Zu Yi

[We make sacrifice of] red-yellow oxen in the fire to Grandfather Yi.

Heji: 29514

惠騂牛...吉

huil/red-yellow-ox/ ... /auspicious

We should sacrifice oxen of red-yellow colour ... auspicious.

193 The character is written with the water radical and 華-elements in this instance, which probably reads as *yang* 洋 < **jiang* and is the early form of the character *xing* 騂 < **siajn*. For a further discussion of its usage as a colour term, see Wang Tao, “Colour symbolism in Late Shang China”, esp. 74. However, Rao Zongyi has rendered it as a proper name, that is the Han River; see Rao Zongyi, “Buci ‘yang’ ji Yangshui, Hanshui shuo” 卜辭‘洋’即漾水、漢水說, in *Zhou Shaoliang xiansheng xin kai jiu zhi qingshou wenji* 周紹良先生欣開九秩慶壽文集, ed. Zhou Shaoliang xiansheng xin kai jiu zhi qingshou wenji bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 1–3.

Tunnan: 694

庚申卜，妣辛砣牢，王受佑/牢，又一牛/惠駢牛

*gengshen/crack/Bi Xin/dismember/penned-ox/king/receive/assistance/
penned-ox/have/one/ox/huil/red-yellow-ox*

Cracking made on *gengshen* (day 57), to Ancestress Xin we shall perform the dismemberment sacrifice of penned oxen, the king will then receive assistance.

We make the sacrifice of penned oxen, and additionally of one ox. It should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

Heji: 27575

日，于妣癸，其砣，王受祐/惠駢牛，王受祐

*day/to/Bi Gui/qi/dismember/king/receive/assistance/huil/red-yellow-ox/
king/receive/assistance*

On the day, to Ancestress Gui, we shall perhaps perform the dismemberment sacrifice; the king will then receive assistance.

It should be oxen of red-yellow colour; the king will then receive assistance.

The recipients in the sacrificial rites are Zu Ding, Pi Xin and Pi Gui. The divination charges here indicate the colour of the ritual animals, and the types of sacrifice in which they were killed. The paired divinatory charges of *Heji*: 27575 show that the diviner first proposed the method of killing the ritual animal; and then proposed which type and colour should be selected. It is worth noting that the methods of killing animals are described as “cutting” and “dismembering”. More vivid and explicit details of these methods are found in several Zhou ritual hymns in the *Shijing* (Book of Songs):

Maoshi: 210¹⁹⁴

祭以清酒，從以駢牡，享于祖考。執其鸞刀，以啟其毛，取其血膋。

Sacrificed with clear wine, and followed with a red-yellow bull; he offers them to the ancestors, he holds his bell-knife; with that he cuts open the fur, and takes the blood and fat.

Maoshi: 239 and 300 also mention the use of “red-yellow oxen” in ancestral cults.¹⁹⁵ Although the Zhou ritual is the context of the hymns, it is important to note that the conduct of the rites and, more significantly, the underlying pattern, does not appear to have changed very much from the Shang.

In the Wuming group, the red-yellow ox often appears in choice-type divinatory charges, in marked contrast to the other types of offerings, in particular that of multicolour. For example:

194 *Maoshi zhengyi, juan* 13.2; (SSJZS, 471).

195 *ibid.*, *juan* 16.3, 20.2; (SSJZS, 516, 615).

Tunman: 2304

惠駢牛, 王受佑/惠勿牛, 王受佑

hui/red-yellow-ox/king/receive/assistance/*hui*/multicolour-ox/ king/
receive/assistance

It should be oxen of red-yellow colour, the king will then receive assistance.

It should be multicoloured oxen, the king will then receive assistance.

Heji: 29519

三牢, 王受佑/惠駢牛/惠勿牛

three/penned-ox/king/receive/assistance/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multi-
colour-ox

[We will make a sacrifice of] three penned oxen, the king will then receive assistance.

It should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be multicoloured oxen.

Heji: 27441

辛卯卜, 妣辛禱, 惠駢牛/惠勿(牛)

xinmao/crack/Bi Xin/supplicate/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox

Cracking made on *xinmao* (day 28), to Ancestress Xin we make a supplication rite – it should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be multicoloured oxen.

Tunman: 2710

妣辛歲, 惠駢牛/惠勿牛

Bi Xin/slaughter/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicoloured-ox

To Ancestress Xin we perform the slaughtering sacrifice – it should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be multicoloured oxen.

Heji: 27060

祝上甲...駢牛.../惠勿牛

pray/Shang Jia/ ... /red-yellow-ox/ ... /*hui*/multicoloured-ox

In making a prayer to Shang Jia ... we sacrifice oxen of red-yellow colour ...

It should be multicoloured oxen.

Heji: 27013

父己歲, 惠駢牛/惠勿牛

Fu Ji/slaughter/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicoloured-ox

To Father Yi we perform the slaughtering sacrifice – it should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be multicoloured oxen.

In the above examples, there is a marked contrast between *wu* “multi-colour” and *xing* “red-yellow”. Furthermore, in a number of inscriptions ritual animals of various colours also appear in the form known as

chain-choice-type charges, where similar charges of the ritual animals are repeated, thereby presenting options. For example:

Heji: 29508

惠黑牛/... 騂牛

hui/dark-ox/ ... /...red-yellow-ox

We should make the sacrifice of dark-coloured oxen.

... oxen of red-yellow colour.

Tunnan: 139

庚子卜，祖辛歲... 吉。不用/惠騂牛/惠幽牛/惠勿牛

gengzi/crack/Zu Xin/slaughter/ ... /auspicious/not/use/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/dark-red-ox/*hui*/multicoloured-ox

Cracking made on *gengzi* (day 37), to Grandfather Xin we perform the slaughtering sacrifice ... Auspicious. This is not used.

It should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be oxen of dark-red colour.

It should be multicoloured oxen.

Tunnan: 2363

丁丑卜，妣庚爭，惠黑牛，其用惟/惠騂牛/惠幽牛/惠黃牛/惠龜至/用至

dingchou/crack/Bi Geng/serve/*hui*/black-ox¹⁹⁶/*qi*/use/*wei*/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/dark-red-ox/*hui*/yellow-ox/*hui*/turtle/*zhi*-rite¹⁹⁷/use/*zhi*-rite

Cracking made on *dingchou* (day 14), to Ancestress Geng we make the service rite, it should be oxen of dark colour; perhaps use it – probably.

It should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

It should be oxen of dark-red colour.

It should be oxen of yellow colour.

It should be the turtles to be used in the *zhi*-rite.

To use the *zhi*-rite.

On these occasions, the divination charges clearly proposed different alternatives in order to determine whether “red-yellow oxen”, “multicoloured oxen”, “dark-red oxen”, “yellow oxen” or “black oxen” should be chosen for sacrifice. But the most frequent colour is the *xing*-red-yellow, which was often deliberately contrasted to other colours. The aim of the divination was to ensure that the ritual sacrifice was done properly, that the results were auspicious, and that the king would receive assistance from the ancestors to whom he performed sacrifices.

196 The rubbing of this inscription is not clear. The authors of the *Xiaotun* have transcribed this *hewen* as *huang-niu* or “yellow oxen” (p. 1008), but, according to its facsimile (p. 1425), the phrase should be *hei-niu* or “black oxen”, as I have transcribed it here.

197 The character *zhi* 至 means “to arrive”; but it has also been read as a ritual name; see *JGWZGL*: 2560.

Finally, several inscriptions found in the Wuming-group also provide interesting evidence for studying the rain-making ritual of the Shang court. In such a context, the colour of ritual animal is specifically mentioned:

Heji: 30022

禱雨，惠黑羊用，有大雨/惠白羊，有大雨

supplicate/rain/*hui*/black/sheep/use/have/big/rain/*hui*/white/sheep/
have/big/rain

In a supplication rite for rains, we should use black sheep, and there will then be heavy rain.

It should be white sheep, and there will then be heavy rain.

Heji: 30552¹⁹⁸

弔用黑羊，亡雨/惠白羊用于之，有大雨

not/use/black/sheep/no/rain/*hui*/white/sheep/use/to/this/have/big/rain

We should not use black sheep, and there will then be no rain.

It should be white sheep that are used for this, and there will then be heavy rain.

In these divinations, sheep were sacrificed in the rain-making ritual and, significantly, two colours are particularly contrasted: black and white. In Shang rain-making rituals, the weather could be influenced by certain elements, and the way in which the ritual was carried out, such as by burning, praying, dancing, exposing shamans to the sun and making dragon images, was meaningful. The ritual sacrifice was carefully selected, including both animals (namely, oxen, pigs, sheep) and human victims (such as Qiang-tribesmen), and sometimes even priests themselves (such as a shaman).¹⁹⁹ Rain-making was, of course, a ritual of magic, with coded behaviour and much symbolism. In this context, the choice of colour was very meaningful and was probably one of the most important elements which made the magic work.

In traditional Chinese mythology, the colour black is associated with water. The deity in charge of water (Shuizheng 水正) in early texts is called Xuan Ming 玄冥, literally meaning “dark and obscure”, and is also associated with the north. A direct reference to Xuan Ming is also found in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (twenty-ninth year of the Duke of Zhao 昭公二十九年, 513 BCE): “水正曰玄冥, The Commander of Water is called Xuan Ming”.²⁰⁰ Another reference in the *Zuozhuan* (Fourth year of the Duke of Zhao 昭公四年, 538 BCE) reads: “黑牡秬黍, 以享司寒; Black bulls and *ju*-millet are used to sacrifice to Si Han”. Du Yu 杜預 (c. 222–84 CE) commented on this reference: “Black bulls are sacrificial animals of dark colour; *ju* is a sort of

198 *Tunman*: 2623 bears the same inscription as *Heji*: 30552. In fact, these three inscriptions were probably made at the same time in the same place.

199 For a detailed discussion of the Shang rain-making ritual, see Wang Tao 汪濤, “Guanyu Yindai yuji de jige wenti” 關於殷代雨祭的幾個問題, *Hua Xia wenming yu chuanshi cangshu* 華夏文明與傳世藏書, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan lishi yanjiusuo (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996), 333–59.

200 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, *juan* 53, (SSJZS, 2123).

black millet. Si Han, also known as Xuan Ming, is the Spirit of the North, and therefore, the offerings for it are all black in colour”.²⁰¹ Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (c. 574–648 CE), the Tang commentator, makes his point even more explicitly: “The reason for using the black bull and black millet is that the sacrifice is made to the Spirit of Water; so, black colour is preferred”.²⁰² In the *Shanhaijing* 山海經 (“Haiwaibeijing” 海外北經) Xuan Ming is also called Yu Qiang 禺疆, and is related to the north. Elsewhere in the “Haiwaidongjing” 海外東經, the “Consort of the Rain-Master” (Yushiqie 雨師妾) is described as “black in colour”.²⁰³ The textual evidence shows that the idea that black is related to water was widely accepted by the Spring and Autumn period (the sixth to fourth centuries BCE) at the latest. Whether this myth already existed and was associated with the rain-making ritual in Shang times is uncertain, yet it may be a transformation that originated from Shang belief and ritual practice.

The Huang-group

The Huang-group dates to the final stage of the Yin-xu period covering roughly the reigns of Wen Ding, Di Yi and Di Xin. The regular diviners include Huang 黃 and Pai 派. In the Huang-group, sacrifice to the ancestors became routine, but the different sequences of the weekly-ritual (*zhouji* 周祭) suggest that there might have been different systems at work. Also, as we know from other historical sources, the final phase of the Shang dynasty is full of dramatic events, and during this period we see a much more complex picture of the use of literacy. The calligraphy of the Huang-group inscriptions is neat and compact, and some of them are very long. We also have a number of contemporary ritual bronzes bearing inscriptions that can be compared with OBI.

In terms of content, the Huang-group inscriptions relate to both the He-group of the north branch and the Wuming-group of the south branch. First, in the Huang-group, there are a number of divinations concerning matters of royal hunting, such as which chariot-horses should be used for expeditions, the nature of the hunted animals and how many of them were captured. Sometimes, when the colour of the horses was specially indicated, the significance is obvious. For example:

Heji: 37514

戊午卜，在潢，貞：王其墾大兕；惠騂暨騮，亡災，擒/惠驂暨騂，子亡災/
惠左馬暨馬，亡災/惠驕暨小驕，亡災/惠驪暨驪，亡災/惠竝暨，亡災

201 *ibid.*, *juan* 42 (SSJZS, 2034).

202 *ibid.*

203 See Yuan Ke, *Shanhaijing jiaozhu*, 48–9. Yuan discusses Guo Pu’s 郭璞 commentary (p. 263), and notes that the Yushiqie was understood by several scholars as the name of the place. But, in the *Fengsutong* 風俗通, the Rain-Master himself is called Xuan Ming; cf. *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, *juan* 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960, 53).

wuwu/crack/at/Huang/divine/king/qi/trap²⁰⁴/big/rhino/hui/X-horse²⁰⁵/
and/dark-horse/no/misfortune/capture/hui/black-horse/and/X-
horse²⁰⁶/prince/no/misfortune/hui/left/horse/and/right-horse(?) /no/mis-
fortune/hui/X-horse²⁰⁷/and/small/dark-horse/no/misfortune/hui/
X-horse²⁰⁸/and/dark-horse/no/misfortune/Hui/together/X-horse²⁰⁹/no/
misfortune

Cracking made on wuwu (day 55), at Huang, divining: “The king will perhaps intercept a big rhino. For the chariot it should be X-horse paired with dark-horse, there will be no misfortune, and catch the animal”.

It should be black-horse paired with X-horse, the prince will then have no misfortune.

It should be the left horse paired with right-horse(?), and there is no misfortune.

It should be X-horse paired with small dark-horse, and there will be no misfortune.

It should be X-horse paired with dark horse, and there is no misfortune.

It should be X-horse paired together, and there is no misfortune.

Although there are a few undeciphered names for horses in the inscription, the context suggests that they probably refer to chariot-horses of different kinds. In the He-group above we saw that divination sometimes concerned the chariot-horse and its colour. Here, we see a similar situation, where special divination was made on the topic of chariot-horses used in royal hunting. A later reference can be found in the *Shijing* (*Maoshi*: 298), where we read that in the Zhou royal stables there were many horses of various colours:²¹⁰

...有驪有皇, 有驪有黃; ...有騅有駉, 有騂有騏; ...有驪有駉, 有驪有雜;
...有駉有駉, 有驪有魚; ...

... there are white-breeched black horses and light-yellow ones, there are black horses and reddish-brown ones, ... there are grey-white horses and brown-white ones, there are red horses and dark

204 I have followed Yu Xingwu’s decipherment of the character to read it as *ken* 墾, which appears frequently as a phrase *kentian* 墾田 in OBI, meaning “to plough the fields”; but in this context, it is rendered as *ku* 窟, meaning “to dig a hole to catch animals”; see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 232–42.

205 The character consists of [馬] and [豕]; it is probably the name for a particular kind of horse.

206 The character consists of [立] [犬] [馬]; it refers here to a particular kind of horse.

207 The character consists of [高] and [馬], referring to a kind of horse.

208 The character consists of [馬] and [鹿], referring to a kind of horse.

209 The character consists of [牢] and [馬], which is traditionally understood as a “penned horse”. But it probably refers to a horse of a certain colour; see Zhang Xinjun 張新俊, “Shi Yinxu jiaguwen zhong de ‘liu’” 釋甲骨文中的‘騮’, <http://www.jianbo.org>, 2005

210 *Maoshizhengyi*, *juan* 20.1 (SSJZS, 609–10). For a translation, see Karlgeen, *The Book of Odes*, 97.

multicoloured ones, ... there are spotted horses and whites ones with black manes, there are red horses with black manes and black ones with white manes, ... there are black and white horses, and red ones and white ones, there are hairy-legged horses and fish-eyed ones

Even if we do not know why certain colours were specially mentioned, it would seem that colour was perceived as an important factor in the selection of the horses and would perhaps influence the outcome of the hunting expeditions.

The colour of hunted animals is usually not recorded, but there are some exceptions when the colour mentioned is white. For example:

Heji: 37448

壬申...王...田麥, 往...亡災。王...吉。茲禦...白鹿/乙亥, 王卜, 貞: 得桑, 往來亡災。王繇曰: 吉/丁丑, 王卜, 貞: 田宮, 往來亡災。王繇曰: 吉/...寅, 王卜, 貞: ... 桑, 往來...王繇曰...

renshen/king/ ... /hunt/Mai/go/ ... /no/misfortune/king/ ... /auspicious/this/happen²¹¹/ ... /white/deer/yihai/king/crack/divine/campaign²¹²/Sang/go/come/king/prognosticate/say/auspicious/dingchou/king/crack/divine/hunt/Gong/go/come/no/misfortune/king/prognosticate/say/auspicious/... /yin/king/crack/divine/ ... /Sang/go/come/ ... /king/prognosticate/say/

On *renshen* (day 9), "...the king ... hunting at Mai, [there is] no misfortune going and [coming]" [The king read the cracks and said]: "Auspicious". This happened ... white deer.

On *yihai* (day 12), the king cracked the bones, divining: "Expedition to Sang, and there is no misfortune going and coming". The king read the cracks and said: "Auspicious".

On *dingchou* (day 14), the king cracked the bones, divining: "Hunting at Gong, and there is no misfortune going and coming". The king read the cracks and said: "Auspicious".

... *yin* day, the king cracked the bones, divining: "[Expedition to] Sang, [and there is no misfortune of] going and coming". The king read the cracks and said: ["Auspicious"].

In this inscription, white deer are mentioned; they are probably the desired animals for capture during the hunting expedition. *Heji* 37449 is a very similar inscription, though not from the same set. It reads:

壬申卜, 貞: 王田惠, 往來亡災, 獲白鹿一, 狐二

renshen/crack/divine/king/hunt/Hui/go/come/no/misfortune/catch/white/deer/one/fox/two

211 The phrase here is *zìyù* 茲御, which is probably the verification of the charge, and similar to *zìyòng* 茲用. For a discussion of this phrase, see Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, 119, where he also summarizes the early studies by Hu Houxuan and Hsu Chin-hsiung.

212 Scholars' decipherments of this graph vary; see *JGWZGL*: 2307. It consists of [𠄎] and [必], and Qiu Xigui has rendered it as *bi* 𠄎, meaning "to go on a punitive campaign". See his *Guwenzi lunji*, esp. 25–6.

Cracking made on *renshen* (day 9), divining: “The king hunts at Hui, there is no misfortune coming and going, and catch one white deer and two oxes”.

Other animals of white colour are also specially mentioned in this divination; see:

Heji: 37499

...王卜, 貞: ...惠, 往來亡災, 獲...麋二, 白狐一

... /king/crack/divine/ ... /Hui/go/come/no/misfortune/catch/ ... /river-deer/two/white/fox/one

... the king cracked the bones, divining: “ ... at Hui, there is no misfortune coming and going; and catch ... two river-deer and one white fox”.

As in the later periods, hunting itself probably served as a sort of state ritual in the Shang dynasty and played an important part in the process of state formation.²¹³ In these cases, the deer, foxes and other animals caught in the hunting were considered special, perhaps owing to their auspicious colour, and they were likely to be used in sacrifice.

If a caught animal was unusual, on account either of its appearance or its rarity, its significance could be even greater. A number of inscriptions record how a larger wild animal (兕, rhinoceros or buffalo²¹⁴) was caught in hunting expeditions, and on one or two occasions the animal was described as white.

Yicun: 517²¹⁵

辛巳, 王俎武丁, 𠄎...麓, 獲白兕, 丁酉...

xinsi/king/meat-offering²¹⁶/Wu Ding/X²¹⁷/ ... /mountain-foot/catch/white/buffalo /dingyou/ ...

On *xinsi* (day 18), the king performed the meat-offering to Wu Ding, and of X-sacrifice at the foot of the hill; a white buffalo was caught; on *dingyou* (day 34)

213 See Magnus Fiskesjo, “Rising from blood-stained fields: royal hunting and state formation in Shang China”, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 73 (2001), 48–192. M. L. Lewis also discusses the role of hunting in early Chinese history; see his *Sanctioned Violence*, esp. 18–22.

214 It is usually understood as “rhinoceros”, but J. A. Lefevre has recently argued that it should be a wild buffalo; see J. A. Lefevre, “Rhinoceros and wild buffaloes north of the Yellow River at the end of the Shang dynasty”, *Monumenta Serica* 39 (1990–91), 131–57.

215 *Yincun* is an abbreviation for Shang Chengzuo’s 商承祚 *Yinqi yicun* 殷契佚存 (Nanjing: Jinling daxue, 1933).

216 This character can be read as *zu* 俎 or *yi* 宜, meaning “meat-offering”; see *JGWZGL*: 3279, 3280.

217 The meaning of this graph is uncertain. It looks very close to another character found in OBI, which Yu Xingwu reads as *fu* 祓, meaning to pray to avert evil; see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin*, 26.

This is a piece of rib bone beautifully carved on one side with a two-eyed *taotie* motif, and an inscription on its other side. White buffalo were frequently hunted by the Shang kings. A similar inscription was found on a large animal head excavated in a pit at the north of Xiaotun village during the third excavation session by the Academia Sinica. The inscription reads:

Heji: 37398

...于倪麓獲白兕...于...在二月，惟王十祀，彤日，王來征孟方伯

... /at/Ni?/mountain-foot/catch/white/buffalo²¹⁸/ ... /blessing-rite²¹⁹/to/
... /in/second/month/wei/king/ten/year/rong-rite/day/king/come/
attack/Yu Fang/chief

... at the foot of Mt Ni, a white buffalo was caught ... the blessing-rite was performed to In the second month, the tenth year of the king's reign, the day of *rong*-rite, the king came to attack the chief of Yu Fang.

It is worth pointing out that the inscriptions are not divinatory in nature, but are proper records of actual events, recording the place and time. This type of record became commonplace on ritual bronzes in the final stage of the Yinxu period. There is an important long inscription (see below) that belongs to this category. It is an inscription of the Huang-group, and records warfare between the Shang and one of the northern tribes:

Heji: 36481

...小臣牆比伐，擒危美...二十人四...馘千五百七十，犇一百...丙車二
丙，僦一百八十三，函五十，矢...侑白麟于大乙，用𠄎白印...于祖乙，用
美于祖丁，兪曰京錫...

... /small/minister/Qiang/ally/campaign/capture/Wei Mei/ ... /twenty/
people/four/head/thousand/five-hundred/seventy-ten/captured-tribes-
men(?)²²⁰/one-hundred/ ... /bing/chariot/two/bing/crossbow/one-hun-
dred/eighty-three/quiver/fifty/arrow/ ... /sacrifice/white/unicorn²²¹/to/
Da Yi/use/bird²²²/white/Yin/.../to/Zu Yi/use/Mei/to/Zu Ding/X²²³/
say/Jing/reward/ ...

“... the Lesser Minister Qiang was an ally in the campaign, we captured Wei Mei ... 24 men ... and 1,570 victim heads, and 100 (or more) prisoners of war ... two chariots, and 183 crossbows, and 50 quivers, ... arrows ... We made sacrifice of a white unicorn (?) to Da Yi; and made sacrifice of Chief Yin and X ... to Grandfather Yi; and made sacrifice of Mei himself to Grandfather Ding. X said that Jing should be rewarded”

218 See Qu Wanli's transcription and notes of this inscription in the *Jiabian*: 3939.

219 Cf. n. 163.

220 This is an undeciphered character, probably referring to some tribemen captured in war.

221 Dong Zuobin 董作賓, “Huo bai lin jie” 獲白麟解, *Xueshu lunzhu*, 217–83. also Qu Wanli's 屈萬里 transcription and notes of it in the *Jiabian*: 3939.

222 An undeciphered character, probably a name for birds.

223 An undeciphered character, probably a personal name.

This inscription is a record of an important event. According to the inscription, the Shang won a great victory over their enemy, capturing Wei Mei, the chief of the enemy tribe, and obtaining many weapons and prisoners. At the victory celebrations the Shang sacrificed *bailin* 白麟, probably a unicorn of white colour, to their ancestor Da Yi. The captured chiefs of the enemy tribes were also used in sacrifice to Zu Ding. In Chinese tradition, the unicorn is a rare mythical beast and consequently carries great significance. But the interpretation offered here is very tentative, as the character *bai* can be rendered differently; it is also read as *bo* 伯, meaning “chief”.²²⁴ The account in this inscription is very similar to a chapter found in the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 (“Shifupian 世俘篇”), which describes how the Zhou people vanquished the Shang capital, triumphed, recorded all the victims, made human sacrifice at their ancestor temple, and sacrificed many ritual animals to the altar of earth and other spirits.²²⁵

Finally, in the Huang-group inscriptions, when the colour of ritual animals is mentioned in the context of ancestral sacrifice, in particular the *beng* 禘 ritual, it is similar to those seen in the He- and Wuming-groups. We know from OBI that, in the late Yinxu period, rituals and sacrifice at the Shang court had become more routine and followed a regular pattern in which the ancestral rites were performed at certain ancestral temples according to the 60-day ritual cycle. However, in divination, the number, combination and colour of ritual animals remained an important topic. For example:

Heji: 35828

丙戌卜，貞：武丁禘，其牢。茲用/癸巳卜，貞：祖甲禘，其牢。用
/惠騂牛。用

bingxu/crack/divine/Wu Ding/*beng*-rite²²⁶/*qil*penned-ox/this/use/*guisil*
crack/divine/Zu Jia/*beng*-rite/*qil*penned-ox/use/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/use
Cracking made on *bingxu* (day 23), divining: “In performing the *beng*-
rite to Wu Ding, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”. This is used.
Cracking made on *guisi* (day 30), divining: “In performing the *beng*-
rite to Grandfather Jia, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”. Used.
It should be oxen of red-yellow colour. Used.

224 See Hu Huoxuan 胡厚宣, “Zhongguo nuli shehui de renxun he rensheng 中國奴隸社會的人殉和人牲”, *Wenwu*, 1974, 63, where he read *balin* as Bo Lin 伯麟 “Chief Lin”.

225 Zhu Youzeng 朱右曾, in *Yi Zhoushu jixun jiaoshi* 逸周書集訓校釋, *juan* 4, ed. Huang Qing jingjie xubian 皇清經解續編, 5–9. For a modern commentary on the text, see Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, “Yi Zhoushu Shifupian jiaozhu, xieding yu pinglun” 逸周書世俘篇校註寫定與評論, *Wenshi* 文史 2 (1964), 1–41. See also Edward Shaughnessy, “‘New’ evidence on the Zhou conquest” in his *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 31–68.

226 The character is written as a square or a circle in OBI. Many scholars read it as *ding* 丁, *fang* 方, or *tang* 堂; see *JGWZGL*: 2179. But I have followed Yang Shuda’s 楊樹達 decipherment which argues that it should be rendered as *beng* 禘, referring to a kind of indoor ritual; see See Yang Shuda, *Jiweiju jiawen shuo* 積微居甲文說 (Beijing: Zhongguo kexue chubanshe, 1954), 26–8.

The *beng*-rite probably refers to a special ritual space where the ancestral cult took place, or to the ritual itself being performed inside the temple in a particular area such as the entrance or a sanctuary. In the Huang-group, the *beng*-rite is regularly performed to ancestors such as Wu Ding, Wu Yi, Zu Yi and Kang Zu Ding,²²⁷ and in these rites the diviners proposed the red-yellow oxen as the most desirable sacrifice.²²⁸ In a recent paper, Liu Huan argues that the inscription does not refer to a ritual, but to putting the ritual animals in the temple before they are sacrificed.²²⁹

The majority of OBI examples are fragmentary; it is therefore particularly helpful to find inscriptions that have survived in comparatively good condition. This allows us to examine more closely the interrelationship between the divinatory charges. *Heji*: 35818 and 35931 are two similar records found on large turtle plastrons, though they date from different periods. A translation of one of them follows.

Heji: 35931

甲戌卜，貞：武乙宗，其牢/其牢，又一牛/惠... 茲.../惠勿牛/惠... /惠勿牛/丙子卜，貞：武丁禘，其牢/其牢，又一牛/其牢，又一牛。茲用/惠駢牛/惠勿牛/癸巳卜，貞：祖甲禘，其牢/其牢，又一牛/惠駢牛/惠勿牛/惠駢牛/惠勿牛。茲用/甲午卜，貞：武乙宗/禘，其牢/其牢，又一牛。茲用/癸卯卜.../其牢，又一牛。茲用/惠駢牛/惠勿牛/惠駢牛/惠勿牛。茲用/甲辰卜...宗，禘...茲.../其牢，又一牛/...貞...禘，其.../其牢，又一牛/[惠]駢牛/惠勿牛。茲用/...卜，貞：...禘...牢...用/其牢，又一牛/[惠]駢牛/惠勿牛

jiaxu/crack/divine/Wu Yi/temple/*qi*/penned-ox/*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/*hui* ... /this /... /*hui*/multicolour-ox/*hui* ... /*hui*/multicolour-ox/*bingzi*/crack/divine/Wu Ding/*beng*-rite/*qi*/penned-ox/*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/this/use/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox/*guisi*/crack/divine/Zu Jia/*beng*-rite/*qi*/penned-ox/*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox/this/use/*jiawu*/crack/divine/Wu Yi/temple/*beng*-rite/*qi*/penned-ox/*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/this/use/*guimaol*.../*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/this/use/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox/*hui*/red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox/this/use/*jiachen*/crack/ ... /temple/*beng*-rite/ ... /this.../*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/.../divine/*beng*-rite/*qi*.../*qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/[*hui*]red-yellow-ox *hui*/multicolour-ox/this/use/.../crack/divine/.../*beng*-rite/.../penned-ox/use *qi*/penned-ox/have/one/ox/[*hui*]red-yellow-ox/*hui*/multicolour-ox

Cracking made on *jiaxui* (day 11), divining: “At the temple for Wu Yi, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”.

227 For a further discussion on the dating of the inscriptions related to the *beng*-rite, see Chang Yuzhi, *Zhouji zhidu*, 312–43.

228 Many inscriptions have similar content; for example, *Heji*: 35829, 36003 and 35965.

229 Liu Huan, *Jiagu zhengshi*, 220–26.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox.

It should be ... this ...

It should be a multicoloured ox.

It should be ...

It should be a multicoloured ox.

Cracking made on *bingzi* (day 13), divining: “In performing the *beng*-rite to Wu Ding, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox. This is used.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox.

Cracking made on *guisi* (day 30), divining: “In performing the *beng*-rite to Grandfather Jia, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox. This is used.

Cracking made on *jiawu* (day 31), divining: “At the temple of Wu Yi, in performing the *beng*-rite, we will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen”.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox. This is used.

... *guimao* (day 40) ...

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox. This is used.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox. This is used.

Cracking made on *jiachen* (day 41) ... at the temple of ... the *beng*-rite ... this ...

“We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox”.

...divining: “In performing the *beng*-rite...perhaps ...”.

We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox.

It should be an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox. This is used.

Cracking made on ... divining: “...in performing the *beng*-rite ... penned oxen”. [This is] used.

“We will perhaps sacrifice penned oxen, and additionally of another ox.”

[It should be] an ox of red-yellow colour.

It should be a multicoloured ox.

The divination is concerned with the regular weekly *beng*-ritual performed in the ancestral temples. They took place at the beginning of each week, and the ancestors included the most important Shang kings, Wu Yi, Wu Ding, and Zu Jia. In this example, the *chain-choice-type* divinatory charges consist of eight different sets that are displayed in mirror opposition and are in a uniform formula: the dates of cracking, the type of rite (or the ritual space), the names of ancestors, and the sacrificial animals. For the last item, the diviner first proposed “penned oxen”, then “penned oxen, and additionally of another ox (unpenned?)”; he then specifically wanted to know the appropriate colour of that ox: should it be “red-yellow”, or “multicolour”. Beside the charge “It should be an ox of red-yellow colour”, we read the verification: “This (charge) is used”. There seems to have been a preference for red-yellow over other colours, suggesting that the reddish colour had begun to have a particularly favourable set of meanings in the Shang ritual system.