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* 辛 (red-yellow), *bai* 白 (white), *wu* 物 (multicolour), *zhi* 紫 (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 Xigu 程吉 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.

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. 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. 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. 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 劉郁, 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, 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” (miáohào 廟號), 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 盛戊 and Xue Wu 孫戊.8

There are also several Shang ancestors recorded in OBI who may be better understood as mythological than historical ancestors. They include Nao 霞 (or Kui 霞, 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

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7 For a discussion of temple names, see Chen Mengjia, Yinxu buci zongsu, 401–82; see also Ji Dewei 吉德偉 [David Keightley], “Zhongguo gu dai de jiri yu miaohao” 中國古代的祭日與廟號, Yinxu bowuyuan yuankan 殷墟博物苑苑刊, 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 zongsu, 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, “Lüe lun tuteng yu zongqiao qiyuan he Xia Shang tuten” 論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.
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 禪), 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 寶) 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 guizhi 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, Guidai 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)].
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.
a rich variety of Shang ritual activity, and include holocaust, libation and
exorcism. 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. But human sacrifice also featured heavily in
Shang rituals. The Shang kings frequently hunted, and wild species caught
in hunting expeditions were also sacrificed: wild boars, deer, tigers and
birds.

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
polities” of the Neolithic period. 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”. 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.

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 bokujiki 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
18 For further discussion on human sacrifice in early China, see Huang Zhanyue 黃展
岳, Zhongguo guadai de rensheng renxun 中國古代的人牲人類 (Beijing: Wenwu
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
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
22 David N. Keightley, “The making of the ancestors: late Shang religion and its
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 (Yangzte 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.
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, “‘Nangui beigu shuo‘ de zai renshi <南龜北骨說> 的再認識”, Yuanwangji – Shaanxisheng kaoqiyuanjianshu huandan sishi zhounian jinian wenji 運望集 – 陝西省考古研究所華誕四十周年紀念文集 (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998), 338–45.
27 For a detailed reconstruction of Shang turtle divination, see Dong Zuobin, “Shangdai guibu zhi tuice” 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 *žēn* < *trianj* (or *dǐng* 鼎 < *tėnj*)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 *žēn* 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 (*duizhēn* 對貞);


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 周長祺, *Hanzi gu jin yin biao* 漢字古今音表 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), in which both *žēn* and *dǐng* have the duan 端 initial and geng 聾 final, which is reconstructed as < *tėŋ*.

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. Lefeuvre, 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

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, huí 惟 and wei 惟 are the most frequently used particles. In Archaic Chinese, their pronunciations are close: huí has the xiā 惟 initial and zhi 肇 final, which is reconstructed as <*jwej; 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 Lefeuvre 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 huí is “extroverse 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

Huí and wei are often matched in the duìzhēn 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

38 Jean A. Lefeuvre, Collections of Oracular Inscriptions in France (Taipei and Paris: Ricci Institute, 1985), 292.
future sense.\footnote{Zhang Yujin, \textit{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.} When dealing with the different contexts in which \textit{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,\footnote{First published in \textit{Zhongyang yanjiusuo jikan waibian 1 中央研究所集刊外編 1} (1933); cf. Dong Zuobin, \textit{Xueshu lunzhu}, 371–488.} 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.\footnote{See Wang Yuxin 王宇信, \textit{Jiaguuxue tonglan} 甲骨學通論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989), esp. 154–214.} 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.\footnote{E.g. \textit{Dong Zuobin, \textit{Xueshu lunzhu}, 371–488.} \textit{Dong Zuobin, \textit{Xueshu lunzhu}, 1163–72.}} According to Dong, the Old School (\textit{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 叔甲 succeeded Zu Geng, he reformed the ritual system and established the New School (\textit{xinpai 新派}). The rulers after Zu Jia, Lin Xin 勝辛 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 Itô 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 (\textit{wang zu 王族}) or indeed princely branch lineages.
(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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{45} Kaizuka Shigeki and Itō Michiharu, “Kokotsubun dansai kenkyuho no saikento” 甲骨文斷代研究の再検討, \textit{Toho Gakuko 東方學報} (Kyoto) 23 (1953), 1–78.
\textsuperscript{46} Chen Mengjia, \textit{Yinxu buci zongshu}, 145–72. Chen’s study was first published in \textit{Kaogu xuebao} 6 (1953).
\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Yinxu jiaju fenqi yanjiu} 殷墟甲骨分期研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996); also Peng Yushang, \textit{Yinxu jiaju duanlai} 殷墟甲骨斷代 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 1994); and Huang Tianshu 黃天樹, \textit{Yinxu wangbuci de fenlei yu duandai} 殷墟卜辭的分類與斷代 (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”, \textit{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. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North Branch</th>
<th>South Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bin-group 賓組</td>
<td>Li-group 歷組</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chu-group 出組</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He-group 何組</td>
<td>Wuming-group 無名組</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang-group 黃組</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 coexisted 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

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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 殷墟甲骨分類研究, 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, “XiaoTunandi jiagu yu fenqi” 小屯南地甲骨與分類, Wenwu 1981/3, 27–33.


54 For example, see Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, “Lun ‘Lizu buci’ de shidai” 論<姫叔簋>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 林濤,
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

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is also a group of inscriptions for which no diviners’ names have been found; these are known as the Feiwang wuming-group 非王者無名組. 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 賈家茂 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, 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.

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 林濤 has suggested that the Zi might also be the heads of different royal clans. In 1991, over 1,000 oracle bones were discovered at Huayuanzhuang dongdi 花園東地 in Locus South, and of these, 579 are inscribed turtle shells and ox scapulae. In the inscriptions the Zi’s position is prominent. He was 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. But the

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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: Ywen 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, Yinxi 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” 武丁時另種卜辭分類研究, 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 jiazhu 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 jiazhu xingtai yanjiu 商周家族形態研究 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1990), esp. 35–241. 
61 Zhongguo sheshui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, Yinxi Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu 殷墟花園東地甲骨 [hereafter Huayuanzhuang], (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2003). 
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 periodicization 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 Yin Xu 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 葉 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. 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 薛庚, Xiong Ding 兄丁, Xiong Wu 兄戊 and the old minister Xian Wu 賢戊. 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.


The use of the final interrogative particles occurs only in the early diviners’ groups; see Li Xueqin, “Guanyu Shizu buci de yixie wenl” 關於師祖卜辭的一些問題, *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: 19999
乙卯 … 師 … 庚 … 婦 … /… 午卜: 王亙白穢… yimaol…/Shi/…/Geng/…/lady/…/… wu/crack/king/offer65/… /white/hog66
On yimaol (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□ [甲] …
guimaol/crack/king/hui/multicolour/ox/use68/Tu [Jia]69/…
Cracking made on guimaol (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 shenhuikekexueyuan lishiyanjusuo, 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 □, and here is read as you 儀, which is broadly understood as “to sacrifice”, “to offer”. For further discussion of the functions of the character you, see D. Nivison, “The phonological use of the verb yu (giug)”, Early China 3 (1977), 1–17; and Ken-ichi Takashima, “Decipherment of the word yu 用 / 用 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 甲骨文字詮林 [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 Xigu, “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. 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 殷, Zheng 瑪, Nei 内 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:

Hejii: 2051
乙未卜, 侑于祖 ...三羊, 又白豕
yiwei/crack/offer/to/grandfather/ ... /three/penned sheep²²/have²³/ 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 羊, 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 JGWLZGL: 1548. For a further discussion, see Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂, “Lao lao kaobian” 牢牢考辨, Gwenshi yanju 9 (1984), 25–36.

73 The meaning of you 又 here is “there is”, “to have” or “plus”. I have translated it as “additional”. 
Cracking made on yiwei (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/piglet

[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: 矢zie/…實，貞: …白魖…子佑…
wuyin/crack/divine/ Xi75/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
...惠白魖…毓佑
... lhui/white/wild pig/ .../ancestor78/have/assistance
... it should be white wild pigs ... ancestors will grant us assistance.

Yingcang: 79
貞: 侑于父乙白魖，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: 侑于壬亥，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 “arrow”, but, as Qiu Xigui has argued, this graph has a different graphic form and should be read as bi 矢, meaning “to give”, “to present”; see his Gu wenzi lun ji, 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 新, 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
...殲...幻偽大甲白牛。用
.../Que/.../X/offer/..Da Jia/white/ox/use
... Que ... “X makes an offering to Da Jia of white oxen. Used”.

Jinbun: 0001
辛酉卜，賁，貞: 燔于殲白牛
xinyou/crack/Bin/divine/burn/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 and Da Jia. Who usually carried the title gaozu or “high ancestors”. The identity of Nao is not entirely clear yet, but this name is likely to be related to the high ancestor Nao 叢 84.

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

Heji: 995
...巳, 彫, 伐, 六牢, 惟白豕
... si/cutting-rite/beheaded human/six/penned sheep/weil/white/pig

80 This graph has not been deciphered; it appears to be a personal name.
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.
84 For further discussion of this mythical ancestor, see Shimo Kunio, Inkō buuki kenyū 金科布氏研究, 241–5; see also Chen Mengjia, Yinxi buxi zongshu, 345. For a more recent study, see Liu Huan 劉桓, “Shuo gaozu Nao – jianlun Shangzuo zuyuan wenti” 說高祖叢 – 兼論商族源問題, 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 樺, referring to a burning sacrifice; see JGWZGL: 2733. Takashima has argued that it is etymologically related to diao 釀 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 伐 (fa 伐) depicts a decapitated man. Archaeological evidence has shown that human sacrifice was practiced 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.  

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/廩白人

*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：惠今夕用三白羌子丁。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

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

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:

guinao/crack/Que/on/next/yinao/offe/Zu Yi/antelope/sheep/two
/yinao/crack/three/week/next/jiashen/.../hui/hai/cutting-rite/not/astily/yi/hai/cutting-rite/offe/dog/to/Xian Wu/.../Xue Wu/to/Er/exorcism/9/X94/to/Er/next/ding/not/to/Zu Ding/Zu Ding/serve/man/to/Bi Ji/nie-rite/85/hui/white/pig/xin/crack/Que/not/offe/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 (Guizhang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1992), which reads: “丙午卜，御/九/羊，白/殿. Cracking made on bingwu (day 43), the exorcist rite is performed to Fang with nine sheep and a hundred white boars”. Here *bai* 貳 and *bai* 白 are used together, which gives credibility to the reading *bai* as a colour term. For further discussion on the Qiāng people, see Luo Kun 羅琨, “Yin Shang shiqi de Qiāng he Qiāngfang” 殷商時期的羌和羌方, Jiaguan yu Yin Shang shi 3 (1991), 405–26; see also Gideon Shelach, “The Qiāng and the question of human sacrifice in the late Shang period”, Asia Perspective 35/1 (1996), 1–26.
89 For example, the name “Bāi Dī” 白狄 or the White Dī-people is found in ancient texts, and today the Yī people in south-western China are also called the “Bāi Yī” (White Yī-people) and “Hēi Yī” (Black Yī-people).
90 The graph depicts a sheep with long horns, probably an antelope or ibex. In this inscription it may be read as yuan 羊, 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 犬, 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 Iio 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 bokujii kenkyuu, 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/Qu/crack/Quel/Zi Shang/send
Cracking made on guimaoyi (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 女己, old ministers such as Xian Wu 戲戊 and Xue Wu 学戊 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, 賓, 貞: 王夢白牛, 惮憂
gengzi/crack/Bin/divine/king/dream/white/ox/weil/worry
Cracking made on gengzi (day 37), Bin, divining: “The king dreamt of white oxen, it will be a worry”.

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96 This character has many different readings, such as huo 極 (trouble), jiu 告 (fault) and you 憂 (worries); see *JGWZGL*: 2240. For a further discussion of the character, see Qiu Xigui, *Giavenzi 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. 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. For example:

**Heji: 9176**

貞: 殲不我其來白馬

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, 殲, 贞: 奚來白馬…王蘇曰: 吉, 其來/甲辰卜, 殲, 贞: 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:

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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 *Jiagu xue Shangshi lun cong chu* 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 yangmaya” 商代的馬和養馬業, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中國史研究 1980/1, 99–108.
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, 亊 (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
小興子白，不白
small/mare/birth\(^{102}\)/white/not/white
“The foal born to the little mare will be white.” (Verification) It was not white.

Heji: 5729
丙辰卜，…貞: 鞣…馬子白
bingchen/crack/ …/divine/Cha\(^{103}\)/ …/horse/birth/white
Cracking on bingchen (day 53) … divining: “Cha … the foal born to the horse will be white”.

Heji: 18271
騨…毓…白
xi-horse\(^{104}\)/ …/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 yí 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.
102 The character zi 子 here should be read as the verb “to give birth”.
103 In OB1 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，争，貞：七白馬殤；惟丁取

*bìng wù*//crack//Zhēng/divine/seven/white/horse/die\(^{105}\)/weǐ/Dīng/take

Cracking made on *bìng wù* (day 43), Zheng, divining: “Seven white horses are dead – it is Dīng 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：惟子弒害白馬

*bìng wù*//crack/divine/weǐ/Zǐ Gong/harm\(^{107}\)/white/horse

Cracking made on *bìng wù* (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

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\(^{105}\) 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.


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$j$

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

$j$ 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: 11156*\(^{112}\)

允出/求勿牛/求凍牛

indeed/out/seek\(^{113}\)/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: 勿牛/王往省從西/王往出省/王去束/王往省

leave/Ci/divine/see\(^{115}\)/multicolour/ox/king/go/inspect/from/west/king/go/out/inspect/king/leave/Ci/king/go/inspect

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\(^{112}\) *Heji: 11154, 11155, 11163 and 11157* record the same activities.

\(^{113}\) This character is written as 匝, 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, *Gwenzi lunji*, 59–69.

\(^{114}\) The meaning of the character dong 凍 here is not certain. In the *Erya* 羅雅 (“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 羅雅今注* (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1987), 203. But sometimes it could also be understood as a name for Zhang River 澤水; see Gui Fu 桂馥 (1736–1805), *Shuowenjiezhi yizheng 說文解字義證* (reprint: 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<*maw; see *JGWZGL*: 0614. In my view, it is probably used in this context as the original form for mi 觀<*mejk, 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，殼，貞: 王往去/ ... 貞: 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。穀牲則贊。
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 *Li Ji* 禮記 ("Ji yi 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，諸侯必有養靮之官。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，得其毛而卜之，吉。然後
養之。君皮弁素積，朔月，月半，君巡牲，所以致牲，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 *Li Ji 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/4/to/use/ ...

Divining: “The king brings four multicoloured oxen for sacrifice ...”.

**Heji:** 836

貞: 士卯，惠勿牛

divine/Shi/cut/18/hui/multicolour/ox

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

**Heji:** 39

貞: 燙告，眾步于丁 …/貞: 翌丁未殤燙于丁，十小牢，卵十勿牛

divine/burn/announce/19/group/20/march/21/to/Ding/ … /divine/next/ dingwei/cutting-rite/burn/to/Ding/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”.

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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 職 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: 15616
癸巳卜，殻，貞：燎十勿牛，又五鬯
guīši/crack/Que/divine/burn/ten/multicolour/ox/have/five/aromatic-
wine
Cracking made on guīši (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：侑于示壬妻妣庚牢，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：禰年于丁，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 祢, which is transcribed as yǐ. Previously many scholars
read it as qū 求, meaning “to beg”; but although its meaning is close to qū, 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 Xiguí’s
Guwenzi lanji, 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 說文解字注 (repr. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981), 213,
315.
125 There are different interpretations for the character ce in OBI: (a) ce 筆 “a written
record”, (b) shan 剿 “to cleave”; see JGWZGL: 2935, 2937. Here, I have followed
the former explanation and translated it as “written pledge”.

SHANG RITUAL ANIMALS (PART 1) 335
Cracking made on jiazì (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. 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: 今日侑于下乙牛
xinyou/crack/Zheng/divine/today/offer/to/Xia Yi/one/ox/record/ten/multicolour/penned sheep/divine/today/offer/to/Xia Yi/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, huáng 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 連劭名, “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: 稀于東，陷囪犬，燎三牢，卵黃牛
divine/di-rite/to/east/bury/dark\(^{127}\)/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，貞: 燎于東，三犬，三羊，囪犬，卵黃牛
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: 1289\(^{129}\)

乙丑卜, 貞: …犬, 卵十黃牛
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, 卵黃牛/燎于東西, 侑伐, 卵南黃牛
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 and West, 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.”

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\(^{127}\) 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* 夏紀), 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” 経傳禘紀通考, *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* 頭牛 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，咎，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/癸已卜，燎一牛/貞：其延雨/不其延雨
*jiazi*: crack/Que/divine/Tuo/sent/wu-magician\(^{130}\)/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:

燎東黃麤
burn/east/yellow/antelope\(^{131}\)
“We perform the burning rite to the East of yellow antelope.”

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\(^{130}\) For the decipherment of character *wu*, see *JGZQL*: 2909. In a more recent paper, Victor Mair argues that the Chinese word *wu* < *mud* 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* 黃, 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 quadrat”). *Zhi* 燊 probably refers to the *xiezhi* 孝志 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* 委 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: 燊…東母…黃[牛]\(^ {138}\)

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

Divining: “In performing the burning sacrifice to\(^ {139}\)… Mother of the East … yellow oxen.”

\(^{132}\) For a discussion of the significance of the *xiezhi* 孝志 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 wenzu 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.


\(^{135}\) Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, esp. 77.


\(^{137}\) 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

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. But, as Ding Shan has argued, they were more likely to be the spirits of the directions, and therefore earthly rather than heavenly spirits. 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.

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

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 糧 or ji 穬, 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. The following textual reference from Shiji and Zhouli may throw some light on this issue.

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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考 (Shanghai: Longmen lianhe shuju, 1961), 163.


143 Qi is written 齊 and is usually used as a place name in OBI. As Yu Xingwu has argued, it may well be the original form of the character ji 穬, 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, 用骍牲毛之; 陰祀, 用牡牲毛之; 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:\(^{146}\)

殺時犧牡, 有掎其角, 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 榫牡 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: 212\(^{147}\)

曾孫來止, 以其婦子, 鑫彼南畝; 田畯至喜, 來方禋祀, 以其骍黑, 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 黄帝 or the “Yellow Lord”, who has been

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\(^{145}\) Zhouli zhushu, juan 23; (SSJZS, 723).

\(^{146}\) Maoshi zhengyi, juan 19/4; (SSJZS, 603), where Kong Yingda 孔颖达 also explains that the sacrifice to the she and ji usually uses darkish oxen. B. Karlgren’s translation of the phrase chumu 榫牡 as “bull that is seven feet high” is a little odd; see his The Book of Odes: 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 worshiped by the Chinese as their first ancestor, is associated with the earth. 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. 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. Many scholars have argued that this story should be regarded as a kind of transformation, 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. 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 西畤 to worship the White Lord 白帝, he used yellow oxen for sacrifice. 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. 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 Zeng Geng and Zou 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 犀, 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 回, xie 協, rong 彤, yi 翊) were performed to certain ancestors on pre-determined days.

149 Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle*, 64–7.
150 Chungiu Zuozhuan zheng yi 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 Zhoudi 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).
155 For a detailed study of the zhouji system in the Late Shang Dynasty, see Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouti*; see also Keightley, *Ancestral Landscape*, 47–53.
usual ancestors receiving sacrifices are Zu Yi, Zu Xin, Fu Ding, Mu Xin, and Xiong Geng. 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

Ji: 惟白豕
divine/wei/white/pig
Divining: “It should be white pigs used for the sacrifice”.

Heji: 23165

…白牛其用于毓祖乙， 戟…
… /white/ox/qi/use/to/ancestor/Zu Yi/zhī-roast (?)
… white oxen perhaps to be used to ancestor Grandfather Yi in the roasting rite.

Heji: 22575

丁卯…貳…佀…佀…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, 繇: 翟乙丑此, 惠白牡
jiazi/crack/Lù/divine/next/yichou/dismember/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, 其佀此歳于祖乙白牡. 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 (zhī 禮) in which the animals were roasted or exposed to the sun; Yu Xingwu, Jiaguwenzi shilin, 182–84.

157 The character is written as 丘, and is transcribed as 3271. According to Yu Xingwu, it could be understood as the zhe 礦 ritual mentioned in the late texts, meaning “to dismember (ritual victims)”; see his Jiaguwenzi shilin, 167–72.
... /king/ ... /yichou/qi/sacrifice/x-rite\textsuperscript{158}/slaughter\textsuperscript{159}/to/Zu Yi/white/bull /king/at/X\textsuperscript{160}/crack
... the king... on yichou (day 2), we will perhaps perform the asending (?) 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:

\textit{Heji}: 23218

貞：二羊/貞：三羊/貞：翌丁亥父丁歳勿牛/弱勿牛
divine/two/penned sheep/divine/three/penned sheep/divine/next/ding-hai/Fu Ding/slaughter/multicoloured-ox/not\textsuperscript{161}/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.”

\textit{Heji}: 23002

庚子卜，行曰，貞：翌辛丑其侑九歲于祖辛/貞：毌侑在正月/貞：翌辛丑其侑祖辛牢/貞：二羊/貞：翌辛丑祖辛歳勿牛/貞：弱勿
gengzil/crack/Xing/say/divine/next/xinchou/qi/ofer/x-rite/slaughter/to/ Zu Xin/divine/not/offert/in/first/month/divine/next/xinchou/qi/ofer/Zu Xin/penned sheep/divine/two/penned sheep/divine/next/xinchou/Zu Xin/slaughter/multicolour/ox/divine/not/multicolour [-ox]

\textsuperscript{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 衫, meaning “to ascend”, or jiu 炎 “to brand”; see \textit{JGWZGL}: 3335. Liu Huan has recently deciphered it as the verb \textit{ba} 巴 (把) “to hold”; see his \textit{Jigu zhengshi}, 209–27.

\textsuperscript{159} In OBI, the character is a representation of an axe attached to a handle [6f]. 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 \textit{JGWZGL}: 2429. See also Itō and Takashima, \textit{Studies in Early Chinese Civilization}, 418–25, where Takashima reads it as gui 劈.

\textsuperscript{160} It is probably a place name here.

\textsuperscript{161} It is used as a negative in OBI; see Qiu Xigui, “Shuo jiang” 說強, \textit{Giovenzi lunji}, 117–21. For other explanations of the character, see \textit{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: 毓祖乙釗勿牛/貞: 弱勿
… /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: 王寶父丁, 夕, 歲/貞: 弱勿牛
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 make sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 23367

庚子卜, 喜, 貞: 始庚歲其勿牛/貞: 弱勿/庚子卜, 喜, 貞: 歲, 惠王祝
/hui

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 資 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 Gong xiansheng baimian dachen jinian wenji 容庚先生百年誕辰紀念文集 (古文字研究專號), Guangdong yanhuan 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”, Jiaguwen zhi 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: 王實藝裸亡憂/貞: 勿牛/貞: 弱勿

*yiyou/crack/Xing/divine/king/host/yi-rite*\(^{165}\)/libation\(^{166}\)/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: 翳丁未父丁，暮，歲其勿牛/…卜，旅…丁未父丁，暮，歲其牡，八月

*b ingwu/crack/Lü/divine/next/dingwei/Fu Ding/evening/slaughter/qil/multicolour/ox/ … /crack/Lü/ … /dingwei/Fu Ding/evening/slaughter/qil/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”.

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\(^{165}\) 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* 艺, but scholars’ readings of it vary greatly: Tang Lan interprets it as “burning-rite”, while Yu Xingwu interprets it as *ni* 女 “temple-rite”; see *JGWZGL*: 0386. For a different interpretation, see also Itô 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* 黨, meaning “libation”; cf. *JGWZGL*: 1123.
A rare example in the Shanghai Museum collection further demonstrates the complexity of colour categorization of the Shang people. 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，贞：翌甲寅其valueOf the Yi 為祖乙勿 茲用。于宗三牢…/贞：弔勿牛
癸丑卜，行，贞：翌甲寅躍祖乙歳，惠幽勿牛。茲用/贞：惠黃勿牛
癸丑卜，行，贞：翌甲寅彫 茲用/貞：于乙卯彫
癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅躍祖乙歳，朝， 彫 茲用/貞：暮，惟彫
癸丑卜，行，貞：翌甲寅躍祖乙歳二牢/貞：三牢。茲用

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” 甲骨卜辭新釋, 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, 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 Wu-ming-group of the south branch. The regular diviners found in the He-group include He 何, Peng 彭, Ning 宁, Zhi 止, Kou 口 and Xian 現. 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.

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

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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, Yinju buci fenqi yanjiu, esp. 139–73.

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. This is quite similar to what we have seen in the Chu-group. For example:

Heji: 27186

甲子...4|歲于祖乙三牢/弒勿牛
jiázī/... /X-rite/slaughter/to/Zu Yi/three/penned-ox ... /not/multi-colour/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, 至: 其牢/又一牛/癸丑卜, 何, 至: 弛勿[牛]/癸丑卜, 何, 至: 惠勿牛/癸丑卜, 何, 至: 弛勿[牛]/癸丑卜, 何, 至: 惠勿[牛]
guìchóu/crack/He/divine/qi/penned sheep/have/one/ox/guìchóu/crack He/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]/guìchóu/crack/He/divine/huí/multicolour[-ox]/guìchóu/crack/He/divine/not/multicolour[-ox]/guìchóu/crack/He/divine/huí/multicolour[-ox]
Cracking made on guìchóu (day 50), He, divining: “We will perhaps sacrifice penned sheep, and additionally of one ox”.
Cracking made on guìchóu, He, divining: “It should not be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.
Cracking made on guìchóu, He, divining: “It should be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.
Cracking made on guìchóu, He, divining: “It should not be multicoloured oxen that are to be sacrificed”.
Cracking made on guìchóu, 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，用，貞：頑 乙左駿，其例不爾/乙未卜，用，貞：[豕史]入駿，其例不爾/乙未卜，用，貞：今日子入 駿，乙例/乙未卜，用，貞：師賈入貳駿，其例不爾
吉
yiwei/crack/Xian/divine/old/Yi\textsuperscript{172}/left/chariot-horse/qi\textsuperscript{173}/good\textsuperscript{174}/not/wild/yiwei/crack/Xian/divine/Shi-official/send/male-chariot-horse\textsuperscript{174}/qi\textsuperscript{175}/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\textsuperscript{176}/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[駿]…其例不…/乙未卜，用，貞：在甸田，駿黃，右赤馬…其例…/乙未卜，用，貞：辰入駿…其例…
yiwei/crack/ … /divine/left/chariot-horse]/ … /qi\textsuperscript{175}/good/not/wild/not…/yiwei/crack/Xian/divine/at/Ning/hunt/chariot-horse/yellow/right/chi-red/horse/qi\textsuperscript{176}/good/ … /yiwei/crack/Xian/divine/Chen/send/chariot-horse/…/qi\textsuperscript{176}/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，用，貞：左赤馬，其例不爾
guichou/ … /divine/right/ … /horse/…/guichou/crack/Xian/divine/left/red/horse/qi\textsuperscript{175}/good/not/wild
Cracking made on guichou (day 50), Xian, divining: “The horse on the right side”.

\textsuperscript{172} Here two elements, — and 乙, are written together. The meaning is not clear, but it is probably the name of a horse.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{174} The character is written as a hewan or joined character, consisting of the character shi 駿 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. 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 Yinxiu, and reconstruction has shown that the Shang chariot was driven by two horses, one on the left and one on the right. The origin of the Shang chariot remains a topic of heated scholarly debate, 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. 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...
and oxen were frequently used in sacrificial rites. In the following examples white oxen and pigs were burned.

*Heji*: 34462
… 燦惠白穀
… /burn/hui/white/piglet
“… in performing the burning sacrifice, we should use white piglets”.

*Heji*: 34463
乙亥卜, 燦白豕
yihai/crack/burn/white/pig
Cracking made on yihai (day 12): “We will make the burning sacrifice of white pigs”.

*Tunnan*: 231
庚午卜, 惠今夕…/惠白牛燦
gengwu/crack/hui/this/evening/ …
hui/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: 其大禝王自上甲…盟用白穀九…/丁未, 貞: 其大禝王自上甲/盟用白穀九: 下示劔牛, 在父丁宗卜/丁未, 貞: 惠今夕歸, 繒, 在父丁宗卜/癸丑, 貞: 其大禝, 惠甲子彭
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/altar/blood-sprinkling/ox/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack/dingwei/divine/we/this/evening/cutting-rite/exorcism/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack/guichou/divine/qi/big/exorcism/hui/jiazi/cutting-rite

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:

... 彡, 大豜王自上甲, 其告于大乙, 在父丁宗卜/...大豜王自上甲, 其告于祖乙, 在父丁宗卜/...貳: ...其大豜王自上甲, 盟用白犂九; 下示刓牛, 在大乙宗卜/...自上甲, 盟用白犂九...在大甲宗卜/...卯, 貳: 其大豜/王自上甲, 盟用白犂九; 下示刓牛, 在祖乙宗卜/丙辰, 貳: 其 彡, 大豜自上甲, 其告于父丁

... cutting-rite/big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qil/report/to/Da Yi/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack ... /big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qil/report/to/Zu Yi/at/Fu Ding/temple/crack ... divine/ ... /qil/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/qil/big/exorcism/king/from/Shang Jia/blood-offering/use/white/boar/nine/low/altar/blood-sprinkling/ox/at/Zu Yi/temple/crack/bingchen/divine/qil/cutting-rite/big/exorcism/from/Shang Jia/qil/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, 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: 丙午酐, 禱生于妣丙, 牝, 犬, 白[犭]
yisi/divine/bingwu/cutting-rite/suppplicate/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: 其祫生于妣庚妣丙, 牝, 犬, 白犭/...贞: ...祫生...庚...牝羊, 牝
xinsi/divine/qi/suppplicate/childbearing/to/Bi Geng/Bi Bing/bull/ram/white/boar ... /divine/ ... /pledge/childbearing/ ... /Geng/ ... /ewe/sow
On xinsi (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

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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 甲 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:

**Tuanan: 86**

… 黃卜, 王其射 正白狐, 湾日亡灾
… 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 酋, 牧來羌/惠白黍烝
to/Zu Yi/cutting-rite/shepherd186/bring/Qiang/hui/white/millet/offer.187

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

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184 In later traditions, boars are always regarded as a metaphor for sex or wantonness, for example, in the Zuozhuan 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 糧; see JGWZGL: 1032. Alternatively, it can also be read as deng 登, meaning “to offer”; see JGWZGL: 0858.
a kind of cereal. 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
guizai/divine/jiazi … /Shang Jia/three/multicolour/ox
On guizai (day 60), divining: “On jiazi (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
jiayi/divine/big/altar/multicolour/ox
On jiayi (day 11): “To the Great Ancestral Altar we sacrifice multicoloured oxen”.

Heji: 33691
丙午卜, 裸…牢兹用/勿勿牛
bingwu/crack/libation/x-rite [...] /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
勿勿[牛]/癸酉, 其酼祝, 惠乙亥
Not/multicolour[-ox]guiyou/qil/cutting-rite/pray/hui/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).

Tunman: 2308
丁酉卜, …來乙已彪歲伐十五, 十勿牢

188 Like the term huangliang 黃粱, the term baoliang 白粱 is also found in later texts; cf. Cihai 諸海 (Shanghai: Shanghai chishu 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.
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* 歴無名間類),\(^{190}\) and towards the end of the Yinshu 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] 茬用/癸已卜, 父甲爀勿/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 Xiaotunndi is probably related to the same set:

**Tunan: 3778**

己亥卜, 父甲爀勿/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

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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/correct\(^{191}\)/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
yimaol/qil/yellow/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/用/其延/惠白牛九，有正
white/ox/hui/two/have/correct/white/ox/hui/three/have/correct/not/use/qil/continue\(^{192}\)/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

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\(^{191}\) 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 延, which is transcribed as yin, 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* 騧 “red-yellow”. For example:

*Heji* : 27122
... 登洋牛, 大白牛, 惠元 ...
... offer/red-yellow\(^{193}\)/ox/Da Yi/white/ox/hui/first ...
... offering of red-yellow oxen, white oxen to Da Yi; it should be the first ...

*Heji* : 29512
丁丑卜, 王其ﭑ洋牛于...五牢
dingchou/crack/king/qilx-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
駧牛新祖乙
... red-yellow-ox/fire/Zu Yi
[We make sacrifice of] red-yellow oxen in the fire to Grandfather Yi.

*Heji* : 29514
惠駧牛...吉
*hui/red-yellow-ox/ ... /auspicious
We should sacrifice oxen of red-yellow colour ... auspicious.

\(^{193}\) The character is written with the water radical and 充-elements in this instance, which probably reads as *yang* 洋 <*jian* and is the early form of the character *xing* 騧 <*siajj*. 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’ 即漢水，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.
**Tunan**: 694
庚申卜，祟辛咽牢，王受佑/牢，又一头/惠駉牛
gengshen/crack/Bi Xin/dismember/penned-ox/king/receive/assistance/
penned-ox/have/one/ox/hui/red-yellow-ox
Cracking made on gengshen (day 57), to Ancestress Xin we shall
perform the dismemberment sacrifice of panned oxen, the king will
then receive assistance.
We make the sacrifice of panned oxen, and additionally of one ox.
It should be oxen of red-yellow colour.

**Heji**: 27575
日，于妣癸，其役，王受佑/惠駉牛，王受佑
day/to/Bi Gui/qi/dismember/king/receive/assistance/hui/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**: 210^{194}  
祭以清酒，從以辟牡，享于祖考 執其鸞刀，以啟其毛，取其血膄
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).
**Tunna:** 2304
惠АЗ牛, 王受佑/惠勿牛, 王受佑
*huì/red-yellow-ox/king/receive/assistance/huì/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ASK牛/惠勿牛
three/penned-ox/king/receive/assistance/huì/red-yellow-ox/huì/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, 姒辛禭, 惠ASK牛/惠勿 (牛)
*xinmao/crack/Bi Xin/supPLICATE/huì/red-yellow-ox/huì/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.

**Tunna:** 2710
姮辛歳, 惠ASK牛/惠勿牛
Bi Xin/slaughter/huì/red-yellow-ox/huì/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…製牛…/惠勿牛
pray/Shang Jia/ … /red-yellow-ox/ … /huì/multicoloured-ox
In making a prayer to Shang Jia … we sacrifice oxen of red-yellow colour …
It should be multicoloured oxen.

**Heji:** 27013
父己歳, 惠ASK牛/惠勿牛
Fu Ji/slaughter/huì/red-yellow-ox/huì/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* “multicolour” 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/…駄牛  
hui/dark-ox/ … /…red-yellow-ox  
We should make the sacrifice of dark-coloured oxen.  
… oxen of red-yellow colour.

*Tunan:* 139  
庚子卜，祖辛歳…吉 不用/惠駄牛/惠幽牛/惠勿牛  
gengzi/l/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.

*Tunan:* 2363  
丁丑卜，妣庚事, 惠黑牛, 其用惟/惠駄牛/惠幽牛/惠黄牛  
/hui/turtle/zhi-rite  
dingchou/crack/Bi Geng/server/hui/black-ox/ use/hui/red-yellow-ox/hui/dark-red-ox/hui/yellow-ox/hui/turtle/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 hwen 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

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

 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 昭公元四年, 538 BCE) reads: “黑牡秬黍, 以享司寒; Black bulls and jiu-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; jiu is a sort of

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


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”. Kong Yingda (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”. In the Shanhaijing 山海经 (“Haiwaijijing 海外北經”) Xuan Ming is also called Yu Qiang 禺彊, 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”. 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, 在漢, 貞: 王其墾大兕, 惠驊暨騏, 亡災, 擒/惠驊暨騏, 子亡災/
惠左馬暨馬, 亡災/惠驊暨小騏, 亡災/惠驊暨騏, 亡災/惠駿暨騏, 亡災/惠駿暨騏, 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 Yushijie was understood by several scholars as the name of the place. But, in the Fensuoting 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/trap\textsuperscript{204}/big/rhino/hui/X-horse\textsuperscript{205}/
and/dark-horse/no/misfortune/capture/hui/black-horse/and/X-
horse\textsuperscript{206}/prince/no/misfortune/hui/leifthorse/and/right-horse(?)/no/mis-
fortune/hui/X-horse\textsuperscript{207}/and/small/dark-horse/no/misfortune/hui/
X-horse\textsuperscript{208}/and/dark-horse/no/misfortune/Hui/together/X-horse\textsuperscript{209}/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.\textsuperscript{210}

…有騮有皇, 有騮有黃; …有騮有駟, 有騮有駟;
…有騮有駏, 有騮有駏; …
… 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

\textsuperscript{204} I have followed Yu Xingwu’s decipherment of the character to read it as ken 壬,
which appears frequently as a phrase kentian 壬田 in OBI, meaning “to plough the
fields”; but in this context, it is rendered as ku 廠, meaning “to dig a hole to catch
animals”; see Yu Xingwu, Jiaoguwenzi shilin, 232–42.

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{208} The character consists of [馬] and [廄], referring to a kind of horse.

\textsuperscript{209} The character consists of [牛] 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 Yinxi jiaoguwen zhong de ‘liu’” 釋甲骨文中的’騮’; \url{http://www.jianbo.org}, 2005

\textsuperscript{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。茲禎...白鹿/乙亥, 王卜, 貞: 之桑, 往來亡災 王蘇曰: 吉/丁丑, 王卜, 貞: 田宮, 往來亡災。王蘇曰: 吉
/...寅, 王卜, 貞: 之桑, 往來...王蘇曰...
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: 王田恵, 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 ziju 資御, which is probably the verification of the charge, and similar to ziyong 資用. 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 [ الشمس] and [iz], and Qiu Xigui has rendered it as bi 貝, 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: ㄓ惠,往來亡災, 獲...棗二, 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 (兎, rhinoceros or buffalo\(^{214}\)) was caught in hunting expeditions, and on one or two occasions the animal was described as white.

*Yicun: 517\(^{215}\)*

辛巳, 王旭武丁, 𠕥...麗, 獲白兎, 丁酉...

*xinsi/*king/meat-offering\(^{216}\)/*Wu Ding/X\(^{217}\)/ ... /mountain-foot/catch/ white/buffalo /dingyoul*

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) ... .


\(^{214}\) It is usually understood as “rhinoceros”, but J. A. Lefeuvre has recently argued that it should be a wild buffalo; see J. A. Lefeuvre, “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 *Yingyicun* 殷契佚存 (Nanjing: Jinling daxue, 1933).

\(^{216}\) This character can be read as *zu* 周 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* 戒, meaning to pray to avert evil; see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaqunzi 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
...于倪麓获白兠...ŋŋ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
...小臣墉比伐, 擒危美...二十人四...馘千五百七十, ŋŋ一百...丙車二
丙, 俠一百八十三, 陠五十, 矢...俛白麟于大乙, 用ŋŋ白印...于祖乙,用
美于祖丁, 俛曰京錫...
.../small/minister/Qiang/ally/campaign/capture/Wei Mei/.../twenty/
people/four/head/thousand/five-hundred/seventy-seven/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/bird?222/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” 禾白麟解, *Xueshu lunzhu*, 217–83. also Qu
Wanli's 補聞里 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 篱 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：武丁祊，其牢 茲用/癸巳卜，貞：祖甲祊，其牢 用
/bingxu/crack/divine/Wu Ding/beng-rite 226/qi/penned-ox/this/use/guisi/
crack/divine/Zu Jia/beng-rite/qi/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 shenhui de renxun he rensheng 中國奴隶社會的人殉和人牲”, Wenwu, 1974, 63, where he read balin as Bo Lin 伯麟 “Chief Lin”.
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 篱, referring to a kind of indoor ritual; see See Yang Shuda, Jiweiju jiawen shuo 業微居甲文說 (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, and in these rites the diviners proposed the red-yellow oxen as the most desirable sacrifice. 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.

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

jiaxu/crack/divine/Wu Yi/temple/qil/pennon-ox/qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/huil ... /this /... /huil/multicolour-ox/huil ... /huil/multicolour-ox/bingzi/crack/divine/Wu Ding/beng-rite/qil/pennon-ox/qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/this/use/huil/red-yellow-ox/huil multicolour-ox/guisi/crack/divine/Zu Jia/beng-rite/qil/pennon-ox/qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/huil/red-yellow-ox/huil/multicolour-ox huil/red-yellow-ox/huil/multicolour-ox/this/use/jiawu/crack/divine/Wu Yi/temple/beng-rite/qil/pennon-ox/qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/this/use guimao .../qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/this/use/huil/red-yellow-ox huil/multicolour-ox/huil/red-yellow-ox/huil/multicolour-ox/this/use jiachen/crack/ ... /temple/beng-rite/ ... /this .../qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/.../divine/beng-rite/qil .../qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/[huil]red-yellow-ox huil/multicolour-ox/this/use/.../crack/divine/.../beng-rite/.../pennon-ox/use qil/pennon-ox/have/one/ox/[huil]red-yellow-ox/huil/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.
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.