PLACEMENT OF INSCRIPTIONS ON ORACLE-BONE PLASTRONS AS A GUIDE TO DECIPHERMENT

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Abstract

There are different, though interrelated, approaches to the task of reading texts in ancient Chinese scripts. This paper focuses on the placement of inscriptions on a particular turtle plastron to see how we can use it as a guide to understanding contextually related oracle-bone inscriptions. This approach complements and enhances the palaeographical, philological, and linguistic examinations of the inscriptions in which one is normally engaged. The paper reviews the ordering and the interpretive transcriptions in modern characters (釋文) by other specialists, specifically, 張秉權, 胡厚宣, 王宇信, 楊升南, 孟世凱, and 謝濟. If we take the placement of a total of seven inscriptions, which are further made up of thirteen separate sentences, we can discern the scribe's conscious use of both the obverse and reverse sides of the turtle plastron (*Bingbian* 207 and 208 reproduced as *Heji* 11497o and 11497r). This is a manifestation of the underlying "Page Layout" design, and the paper makes it explicit. It then proposes a set of emendations to the ordering of the thirteen sentences, resulting in a more accurate understanding of the contents of the inscriptions on this plastron as a whole.

1. Introduction

The placement of inscriptions on the turtle plastron or bovine scapula has long been known as an important factor to be considered in the task of reading oracle-bone inscriptions. The most noticeable example of the inscription placement is observed in what is referred to as *duizhen* 對貞 'paired testing statements', the statements of intention, wish, plan, prediction, explanation, etc. that were addressed, in the form of a "test", to the numen of the divining media for its response. This characterization represents what I take as equivalent to modern Chinese jargon *zhenci* 貞辭. The *duizhen* are frequently, though not exclusively, couched in the positive and the negative statements.[1] They provide inestimable

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1   The positive sentence is usually inscribed on the right-hand side of a turtle plastron (facing the bottom of a plastron; from the turtle's point of view, the left-hand side) and the negative one on the left-hand side of it. In bovine scapulas, it is inscribed from the bottom to the top

value in interpreting the inscriptions, because they offer larger context, parallelism, and other useful hints. On the basis of *duizhen* and other contextual considerations, we will examine in this paper an additional method which the scribe must have utilized in doing his work.[2] This has to do with the placement of inscriptions on the obverse and reverse sides of a plastron, and I would like to show in what way this was done and how such placement affects our interpretation of the inscriptions. Due to space constraints and the limited scope to which a paper can extend, we shall use only one specimen.
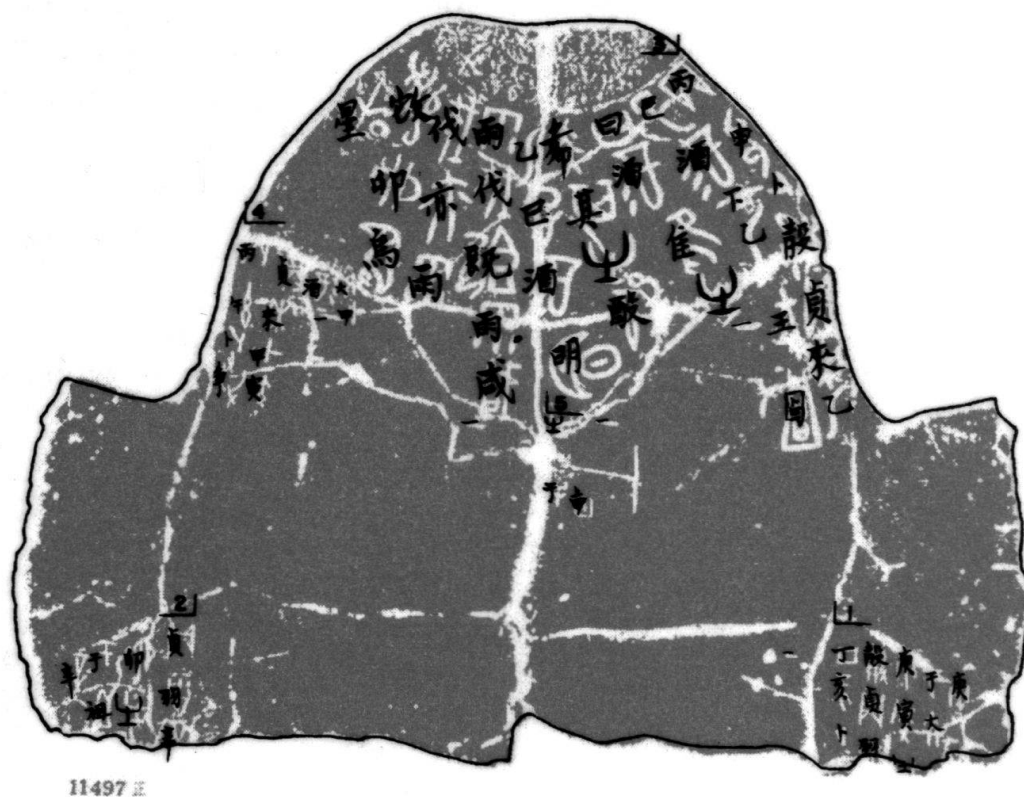
This paper takes a slightly unusual method of presentation. In addition to having normal footnotes, there will be bold numbers in parentheses like "**(4.1)**", "**(4.2)**", and so on that are provided after some specific word which is deemed to require some palaeographical and linguistic commentary. I have set up a separate section, section 4, to deal with them. Thus, "**(4.3)**" refers to note 3 in section 4, rather than to footnote 3. The normal footnotes are comparatively shorter than notes, and I have tried to provide some background or fuller bibliographical information. Thus, the paper consists of four sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Placement of Inscriptions: "Page Layout" of *Heji* 11497[3] as Perceived by Other Specialists; 3. Emendations to the Placement of Inscriptions by Other Specialists – which also serves as the conclusion of this paper) – and 4. Notes on Palaeographical, Lexical, and Grammatical Issues.

(socket), and the *duizhen* usually appear in successive rows. Most probably the diviner uttered the positive first and then the negative. They are referred to as a "charging statement" or, simply, "charge" (命辭) by specialists. Thus, the charge frequently, though by no means always, has the positive and the negative forms. The 貞辭 and 命辭 are often used synonymously, but the former is more general in meaning because any statement introduced by the term 貞 'test' can be called 貞辭, whereas the 命辭 is laden with such a specific meaning as "order, command", signifying that the statement ist taken as a command put to the divining media. For more on this topic, the reader is referred to Takashima (1989).

2   In addition to the *duizhen*, we also find on occasion something referred to as *chengtao buci* 成套卜辭 'divination inscriptions in sets'. They are very similar, frequently identical, inscriptions made on five separate plastrons or scapulas which also offer a contextually larger perspective. For more detail concerning *chengtao buci*, see Zhang Bingquan (1960).

3   The abbreviations for the oracle-bone collections follow those given in Keightley (2000: 159–162). For a list of abbreviations used in this paper, see at the end of the paper.

2. Placement of Inscriptions: "Page Layout" of *Heji* 11497 as Perceived by Other Specialists

Let us first look at the rubbings which I have reproduced in two pages: first, the front view and, then, the back view of the turtle plastron (龜版腹甲). They are *Heji* 11497o ("o" = short for obverse, 正) and *Heji* 11497r ("r" = short for reverse, 反). These rubbings are originally from *Bingbian* 207(o) and 208(r) which, in turn, are from the *Yibian* 6664(o) and 6665(r), respectively. Unfortunately the plastron as we have it lacks the lower half; it was already missing at the time of discovery in pit YH 127 in 1936. Although this is admittedly a drawback, we can nonetheless construe, as we shall see, a contextually coherent content. As is the case with other plastrons, the obverse side is much clearer than the porous reverse side. Given below is the rubbing of the original (proportionally reduced to fit the page size of this journal) with the overleaf in which Zhang Bingquan's 張秉權 quasi-modern-Chinese character transcriptions, with the order and the direction of each inscription to be read, are given:

11497 正

殷貞來圖
牧代雨代乙希巳曰申下乙卜王
卯烏赤既巳其酒雨酒王
雨雨酒明隹
星代雨明歝
卯鳥雨戌

貞羽于大
于卯辛殷更
辛卯貞丁亥卜

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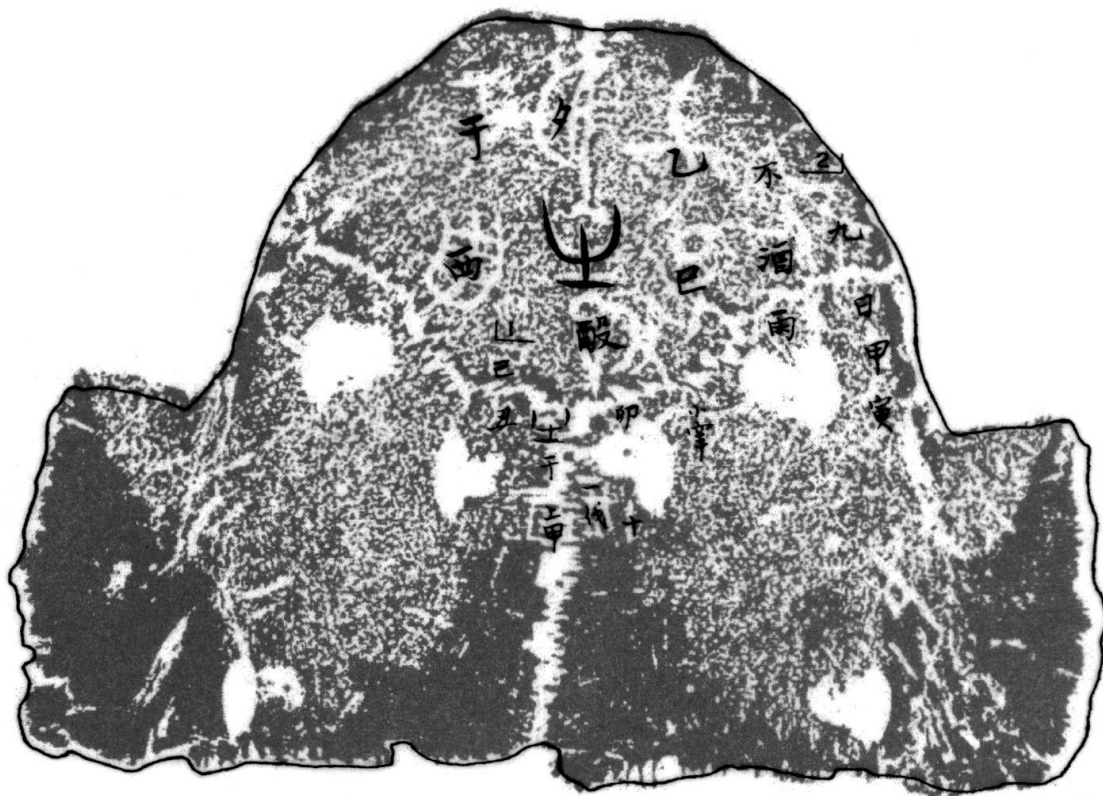

11497 正

Zhang Bingquan's transcriptions are followed verbatim by the editors of the *Heji shiwen* 合集釋文 (胡厚宣主編, 王宇信·楊升南總審校, 孟世凱釋文, 謝濟互校). They are given below with my English translations:

(1) 丁亥卜, 㱿貞: 翌庚寅(㞢)于大庚.
Divining on the *dinghai day* [24],[4] Que (or Nan 㱿) tested (the following proposition): On the following *gengyin* day [27] (we will) make an offering (**4.1**) to Da Geng.

(2) 貞: 翌辛卯㞢于祖辛.
[Que or Nan] tested (the following proposition): On the following *xinmao* day [28] (we will) make an offering to Zu Xin.

(3) 丙申卜, 㱿貞: 來乙巳酒[> 酌]下乙. 王固曰: 酒[> 酌]隹㞢[> 有]希[> 祟], 其㞢[> 有]酸[> 雷]. 乙巳酒[> 酌], 明雨, 伐既雨, 咸伐亦雨, 攺卯[> 劉]鳥[> 倏?]星[> 晴].
Divining on the *bingshen* day [33], Que (or Nan) tested (the following proposition): On the (coming:) next *yisi* day [42], (we will) do the cutting sacrifice (**4.2**) (for) Xia Yi. His Majesty, having prognosticated, said: "Do the cutting sacrifice, (but) it [= the omen] spells that there will be ancestral curses (**4.3**); there will be thunder (**4.4**)." On the *yisi* day [42] (we) did the cutting sacrifice (or: the cutting sacrifice was done); in the morning it rained [i.e., as might be expected to go with thunder], and (by the time we) did the decapitation sacrifice, it had already rained, and (when we) finished the decapitation sacrifice, it (also:) again rained [i.e. it was still raining] (**4.5**). (But when we) disemboweled (or displayed) that which has been split open (**4.6**), the weather quickly (**4.7**) cleared up (**4.8**).

(4) 丙午卜, 爭貞來甲寅酒[> 酌]大甲.
Divining on the *bingwu* day [43], Zheng tested (the following proposi-tion): On the coming *jiayin* day [51], (we will) do the cutting sacrifice (directed to) Da Jia.

(5) 㞢[> 侑]于上甲.
(We will) make an offering to Shang Jia.

Given below is also a reduced copy of the rubbing of the reverse side of *Heji* 11497o with the overleaf on which Zhang Bingquan's transcriptions with the divination sequence and reading direction are shown:

4   The number in square brackets indicates the ordinal number in the sixty-day cycle that begins with *jiazi* 甲子 [1] and ends with *guihai* 癸亥 [60].

The following two inscriptions constitute the reverse side, i.e., *Heji* 11497r (*Bingbian* 208). They are presented according to the transcriptions of Zhang Bingquan and the rest of the *Heji* editors:

(1) 己丑屮[> 侑]上甲一伐卯[> 劉]十小宰.
     On the *jichou* day [26] (we will) make an offering (to) Shang Jia of one *decapituri* (and) split open ten small specially reared sheep.
(2) 九日甲寅酒[> 酚]不雨 [> 九日甲寅不酚雨]. 乙巳夕屮[> 有]酘[> 雷]于西.
     In nine days, on the *jiayin* day [51] (we) did not do the cutting sacrifice (or: the cutting sacrifice did not take place) (because) it rained (**4.9**). On the *yisi* day [42], in the evening, there was thunder in the west.

As shown in the square brackets, there are many changes in the transcriptions of both sides that I indicate with the arrow sign. Some of them are more or less standard among *jiaguwen* specialists, but several are novel. I have addressed them as concisely as possible in section 4.

于　夕　　乙　不　②
　　　　　巳　酒　九
西　　　　　雨　日
　　　　酸　　　甲
　巳　　　卯　小　寅
　丑　生　　宰
　　　于　一伐　十
　　　宰

11497r

The following two inscriptions constitute the reverse side, i.e., *Heji* 11497r (*Bingbian* 208). They are presented according to the transcriptions of Zhang Bingquan and the rest of the *Heji* editors:
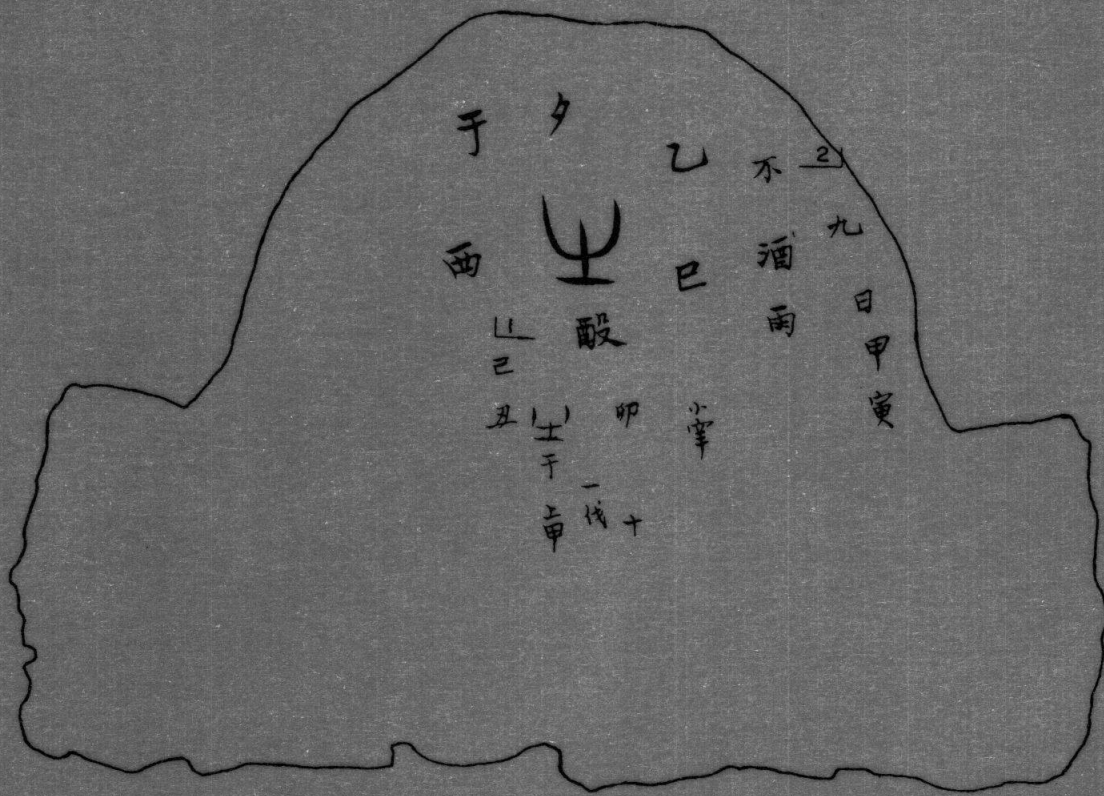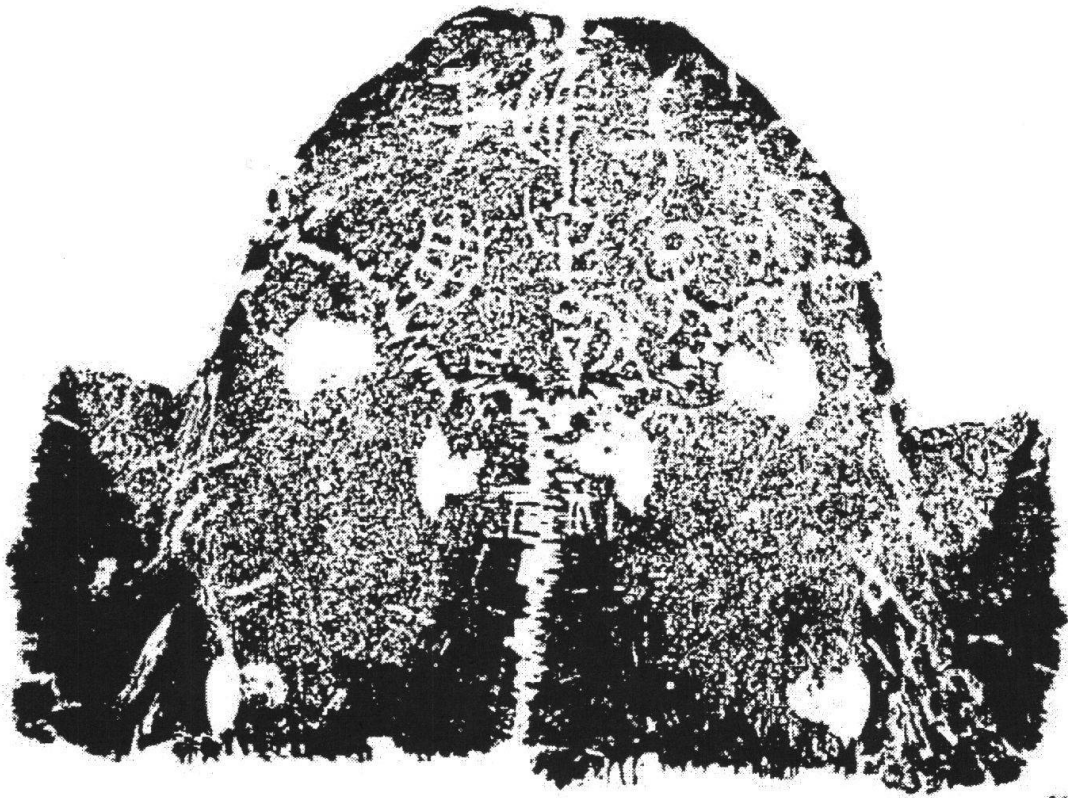
(1) 己丑屮[> 侑]上甲一伐卯[> 劉]十小宰.
On the *jichou* day [26] (we will) make an offering (to) Shang Jia of one *decapituri* (and) split open ten small specially reared sheep.

(2) 九日甲寅酒[> 酚]不雨 [> 九日甲寅不酚雨]. 乙巳夕屮[> 有]酚[> 雷] 于西.
In nine days, on the *jiayin* day [51] (we) did not do the cutting sacrifice (or: the cutting sacrifice did not take place) (because) it rained (**4.9**). On the *yisi* day [42], in the evening, there was thunder in the west.

As shown in the square brackets, there are many changes in the transcriptions of both sides that I indicate with the arrow sign. Some of them are more or less standard among *jiaguwen* specialists, but several are novel. I have addressed them as concisely as possible in section 4.

3. Emendations to the Placement of Inscriptions by Other Specialists

The five inscriptions on the obverse side of *Heji* 11497 and the two inscriptions on the reverse have been reproduced by the specialists already mentioned. They did not take into consideration any relationship that may have existed between the two sides. Failure to take note of the relationship has led to the loss of coherent understanding of the inscriptions. The main purpose of this paper is to remedy such shortcomings by rearranging some of the sentences into their proper order. I would first like to emend inscription (2) above, on *Heji* 11497r, by moving the second sentence in inscription (2) to the end of the king's prognosticating statement (繇辭) on the obverse side in inscription (3), *Heji* 11497o. Hereinafter, for ease of reference, I will use the following notational convention: "R-2", for instance, refers to inscription (2) on the Reverse side of *Heji* 11497; "O-3" refers to inscription (3) on the Obverse side of it. We have thus far a total of seven inscriptions (not sentences) from "O-1" to "O-5" and from "R-1" to "R-2". The reason for such an emendation is based on the placement of the R-2 inscription which is found on exactly the opposite side of O-3. Notice also the use of large and bold characters common to both inscriptions. Once we do this rearrangement, it becomes clear that these physical features are in harmony with the context in the following way: The king made the prognostication that there would be thunder, which apparently was an ill omen, and his prognostication became true as attested by the actual occurrence of it on the *yisi* day [42]. Accordingly we have to change the O-3 as follows:

O-3   丙申卜, 殸貞: 來乙巳酚下乙. 王固曰: 酚隹有祟, 其有雷. 乙巳夕有雷于
西.

> Divining on the *bingshen* day [33], Que (or Nan 殸) tested (the following proposition): On the (coming:) next *yisi* day [42], (we will) do the cutting sacrifice (for) Xia Yi. His Majesty, having prognosticated, declared: "Do the cutting sacrifice, (but) it [= the omen] spells that there will be ancestral curses; there will be thunder. On the *yisi* day [42], in the evening, there was thunder in the west.

It is also proposed here that the first sentence of R-2, 九日甲寅不酚雨,[5] be put after the charging statement (命辭); namely, O-4, 丙午卜, 爭貞: 來甲寅酚大甲. This emendation is also motivated by the placement of R-2 in that it physically

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5   See **(4.9)** for my reasons in changing the word order different from other specialists.

occurs on the opposite side of O-4. Notice again that contextually it is also fitting; that is, nine days after the *bingwu* day [43] is the *jiayin* day [51], the start of a new decameron after the decameron during which the *bingwu* day occurs.[6] Furthermore, the verb 酚 'to perform the cutting sacrifice' in the charging statement is "responded", as it were, in the verifying statement (驗辭), which R-2 is, as "不酚雨" ([we] did not do the cutting sacrifice [or: the cutting sacrifice did not take place] [because] it rained). Thus, the original R-2 com-pletely disappeared as it was redistributed to appropriate places in the obverse inscriptions. The new O-4 therefore reads as follows:

O-4 丙午卜, 爭貞: 來甲寅酚大甲. 九日甲寅不酚雨.

> Divining on the *bingwu* day [43], Zheng tested (the following proposi-tion): On the coming *jiayin* day [51], (we will) do the cutting sacrifice (directed to) Da Jia. In nine days, on the *jiayin* day [51] (we) did not do the cutting sacrifice (or: the cutting sacrifice did not take place) (because) it rained.

What about R-1? Here again we need to make a change. On the opposite side of this inscription we find O-5. If we now compare the two inscriptions, we will notice that R-1 is more elaborate in phraseology, suggesting that this was uttered before O-5. Indeed they constitute a paired charging statement (對貞) which should be presented as follows:

R-1 己丑卩[> 侑]上甲一伐卯[> 劉]十小宰.

> On the *jichou* day [26] (we will) make an offering (to) Shang Jia of one *decapituri* (and) split open ten small specially reared sheep.

O-5 卩[> 侑]于上甲.

> (We will) make an offering to Shang Jia.

We may say that the proposed reordering and redistribution of the inscriptions on this plastron reflect the "page design" as actually practiced by the Shang scribes. The right and left placement of the positive and negative charges has been known for a long time, but the forward (obverse) and backward (reverse) placement of the inscriptions, though they do not seem to be the positive and negative charges, are also related both physically and contextually. A full explo-

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6   We need to count inclusively as was practiced by the scribes belonging to the Period-I Bin 賓 Diviner Group. For more on this and on the use of time demonstratives such as 今, 翌, and 來, the reader is referred to Handel (2004).

ration of such a page design, which in fact is multi-dimensional, has not yet been conducted; but if it were to be done, it would allow us to find fuller contexts, as well as new clues to understand the inscriptions more accurately and contextually more fully than before.

4. Notes on Palaeographical, Lexical and Grammatical Issues

Now that the physical and contextual relationship on this plastron has been made clear, let us see if we can take advantage of this to pursue some palaeographical and linguistic aspects further. Given below are several highlights or problems related to these aspects. I have also provided a few notes that are not necessarily related to the physical placement of the inscriptions but are basic to reading the inscriptions.

(4.1) The graph 屮 is a stylized form of the top portion of ⅄ which is *niu/*$*ng^wjəg$ 牛, apparently serving as phonetic for the word *you/*$*g^wjəgx$ 屮 = 有 'there is, to have' in its 上聲 reading, also used presumably in its 去聲 reading as *you/*$*g^wjəgh$ 侑 'to offer'. These are standard interpretations. However, as pointed out by Wolfgang Behr (at the Hamburg symposium on 27 February, 2004), the nasal initial of *niu* is a problem as there is no *xiesheng* connection with *you*.[7] It is not impossible that the nasal feature is considered as a prefix of some sort which was added to the syllable *you/*$*g^wjəgx$ 屮 to obtain the word for ox, but an exploration into this possibility would take me to a field in which I am not so confident as to pass any definite judgment.

(4.2) The traditional transcription of the graph 酉 as 酒 is incorrect. It is suggested here to be replaced by *you* 酉, a direct transcription of 酉, perhaps standing for the word *diao* 彫 'to cut'. My reasons are:

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7   But, as Chris Button (2004: 11) has noted, mao 毛 'hair' is used as phonetic in non-nasal labiovelar initials such as *hao/*$*x^wáwʃ$ 耗 'decrease' and *hao/*$*q̥k^wáw$ 毫 '(very fine) hair'. He suggests that *$*ŋ^w$- changed to m- so that *mao* 毛 can be reconstructed as *$*ŋ^wáw$ (using Pulleyblank's reconstruction system). Button thus supports Pulleyblank's original suggestion of a change of *$*ŋ^w$- to m- in *wei/*$*ŋ^wə́tʃ$ 未 with a further delabialization to *$*ŋ$- in *niu/ŋuw/*$*ŋ^wəɯ$ 牛 'ox' (Pulleyblank 1991: 59).

(a) Palaeographically, 彤 is a graph which consists of an amphora-like object, often considered as a wine jar, and what I take to be a depiction of the sun rays, the modern 彡. Typically this element has such a semantic connotation as "beautiful, brilliant". Consider the following examples: 彥 'good-looking man', 彩 'beautiful pattern', 彤 'red ornament', 彧 'luxuriant ornament', 彬 'vivid', etc.

(b) Etymologically, 彤 = 彤 may well be related to, if indeed identified exactly with, diao 彫/琱 'to carve'. (See below.)

(c) Grammatically, it should be pointed out that this verb is a "directional" one in that the Shang did the cutting sacrifice for the benefit of a recipient. In the oracle-bone context the recipient is some ancestor.

(d) Contextually, as I have elsewhere noted, the verb 彤, to be read as *you*/ *rəg^w or *diao*/*djəg^w (sc. 彫/琱) occurs in an environment in which "rain" was undesired, suggesting that it was a sacrifice that was performed outdoor and that it required a "beautiful" execution of the act and, if (b) is taken into account, the verb meant "to cut (in a neat manner)". This explains the fact that the graph is frequently followed by some sacrificial victim such as bovine and ovine, suggesting a VO construction. It would also seem to make a better sense to cut sacrificial victims than to "pour libation on" them, an interpretation which is required of what I believe is the palaeographically unjustifiable transcription of 彤.

(4.3) The original bone graph shows something like 彖, a pictograph of an animal carcass (of perhaps porcine or bovine). The direct transcription of the bone graph yields 希, the modern reading of which is *yi* (羊至切; the *SW* 9b says 讀若弟 'read like *di*') 'long-haired animal' or 'pig', word used in the Henei 河內 region', but a few entries later the *SW* also gives the reading of *tuan* (通貫切) defined there to mean "(the way) pigs run" (豕走也). (The *SW* has double entries for the same graph presumably because of the homophony.) However, none of these meanings fits the bone context. If it is correct to interpret the graph 彖 as animal carcass, the flesh of which having been all removed, as well as taking into consideration the fact that it is used after the word *niu* 牛 'bovine' or *zhi* 彘 'wild pig', it is cogent to interpret the phrase as constituting a VO structure meaning "to kill (such sacrificial animals)". That is, the word must have been *sha* 殺 'to kill; dissect'. This is a lexical representation of the graph additional to yet another word *qiu* 求 'to seek'. In fact, the bone graph 彖 is the *chuwen* 初文 'primary graph' of *qiu* 裘 'pelt garment'. There is also evidence that the graph stands for Cai 蔡 'proper name' (cf. *Sōrui*: 209–210), and it is

well-known that in classical Chinese the character *cai* 蔡 is used to mean "to kill". In view of all these, I think that the suggestion made by Guo Moruo (1937) that the graph expressed the word *sui*/*srjəd 祟 'to lay a curse' is a good one, because the word can be construed as morphologically related to *sha*/*srjət 殺 'to kill'.[8] According to this interpretation, the underlying meaning of "kill" is in the physical sense of "dissect, cut into pieces" (cp. Japanese *barasu* バラす 'to kill' and *barabara ni suru* バラバラにする 'to dissect, cut into pieces'), and that of *sui* 'to lay a curse' is a psychological or figurative counterpart of the physical sense.

(4.4) The graph 酘 is transcribed by Zhang Bingquan and the *Heji* editors as 酘, but this is difficult to accept on palaeographical and philological grounds. Palaeographically, the left-hand side of the graph is certainly not 酉 whose bone graph looks like �. This is very different from the pointed bottom of a an amphora-like object we have in 酘 . Moreover, according to *HYDZD*, this character is read as *dòu*, but the meanings defined therein, "re-brew; the hair of the dog that bit you" does not fit the context at all.[9] There is another, once popular, transcription of the bone graph, into *she* 設 'to set up'. If the left-hand side of 酘 is considered as an abbreviation of 言 / 言 (which is 言), then it could be transcribed as 設, but the meaning does not fit the bone context. As is known to specialists, the bone graph 酘 occurs in the context of a weather phenomenon. I have previously suggested that it represents a word *lei* 雷 'thunder', which is deduced mainly from the context in which it is found. Palaeographically, it may be taken to have depicted a kind of drum with its spiked bottom stuck in the ground to fix or stabilize it, and a pestle or pounder held by a hand striking it. A weakness of this graphic interpretation is that we have not yet found any drum which looks like that, and a Shang bronze drum housed in the Sen'oku 泉屋 Museum in Kyoto is shaped like a Japanese *taiko* 太鼓, the kind one pounds on

8   The initial probe into this relationship is something I have published in a Japanese journal (Takashima 1991), but I plan to revisit this issue in the future, delving further into the question of a word family to which such words as "kill" and "cut to pieces" belong. It is my hypothesis that a general meaning like "disintegrate the cohesive whole into pieces" unerlies in the word family or, stated differently, there was a root perhaps like *sə with such a general meaning as postulated.

9   The original in the *HYDZD* (p. 1489) reads: 酒再釀; 古人認爲飲酒過多, 次日須再飲方適, 因稱酒後再飲叫"酘". The latter meaning in Japanese is *mukaezake* 迎え酒" '*sake* one drinks to alleviate a hangover'. So neither this nor the "re-brew" meaning has anything to do with a weather phenomenon (see below).

the sides, not on the top. However, in view of the fact that other musical instruments in ancient China are continuously unearthed, we should keep this in our mind. Another thing about this graphic interpretation is that it clashes with that of David Keightley (2000: 6) and many others (e.g., Li Xueqin 1997 [1999]: 64), who take the graph 𝄞 as standing for 雷. Reexamination of the whole issue is thus needed to settle this conflict, but it is my view that the idea that 𝄞 equals 雷 is mistaken. I cite here only a couple of inscriptions which suggest that the interpretation of the graph 𝄞 standing for the word 雷 is more defensible than the alternative, while determining what 𝄞 may have been must be left for future work:

(i) [...] 庚申亦㞢 𝄞 (= 雷), 㞢鳴鳥. 疫圍羌肇.　　　*Zhuihe* 36
[...] on the *gengshen* day (57) there was also thunder, and there were birds singing. The Qiang captured by You were freed (?).

(ii) [...] 昃亦㞢 𝄞 (= 雷), 㞢出虹自北, [飲]于河.　　　*Zhuocun* 35
[...] in the late afternoon there was also thunder, and there arose a rainbow from the north [to the south] [dipping] into the River [water]. It was in the twelfth month.

Example (i) above shows that after thunder, perhaps the weather turned better, there appeared birds singing, which is a common phenomenon. The appearance of a rainbow after a thunder-shower is also a common phenomenon that the Shang seem to have described in example (ii). The graph for the word rainbow, *hong* 虹, shows the shape of an arched rainbow with the two gaping mouths of an imagined creature dipping into the water thus: 𝄡 . The word is often followed by the verb *yin* 㱃 (= 飲) 'to drink' with the locative phrase 于河 'from the River' following it. It offers a glimpse of such a Shang belief as the rainbow was an atmospheric phenomenon caused by the imagined creature drinking water from the River.

(4.5) There is no problem with the transcription of the bone graph 𝀃 as *ji* 既. There are, however, some disagreements on the interpretation of its meaning. Some scholars consider that 既 had in the language of bone inscriptions an adverbial meaning of "fully, completely". Presumably this is motivated partly by the palaeographic structure of the graph: "food placed on a vessel" on the left side and, on the right hand side, "the kneeling figure of a person having consumed the food and had enough of it, and thus his head turned to the other side of the food". This suggests a sense of "satiated, full, or completed." While it

is methodologically unsound to base oneself on the graphic shape to obtain the meaning of a word, we shall here, for the sake of argument, proceed to consider such a meaning.[10] In terms of semantic evolution, it may not be too far-fetched to link the meaning of "full" and "already". However, the verb it modifies here is 雨 'to rain', and the meanings of "fully raining" (if indeed it can ever be said) and "already raining" are different. The former could mean "raining a lot", while the latter simply conveys the tense or aspect. I have chosen the latter interpretation because the progression of a temporal sequence seems more important here than the amount of rain. The *yisi* 乙巳 date set the day, and in the morning, *ming* 明, it rained (as might be expected to occur after thundershowers). Then the decapitation sacrifice came after it, with a further comment that it had "already rained". I have here interpreted 既雨 as a past event, because thunder was predicted by the king and, in the morning of the *yisi* day, it rained first, and by the time the decapitation sacrifice was conducted it had "already rained"; i.e., finished raining. Ultimately, the temporal expression 咸伐亦雨 (lit. finish / decapitate / also / rain > when we finished the decapitation sacrifice, it "also rained" – see below) followed it. Li Xueqin (1997 [1999]: 62) explains 伐 既雨 as meaning "進行 '伐' (學者一般以爲是人祭) 這儀式時雨止" (at the time of performing *fa* 'human sacrifice', rain stopped). Although I agree that this is the illocutionary meaning, and the interpretation of 既 as a verb meaning to "finish" may be defensible in and of itself, here we have the verb 雨 'to rain' after 既. It would thus be more natural to take it as an adverb, and this parallels the following 亦雨 'also rained'. That is, if 亦 is adverbial, so also is 既, although the former is an adverb of extent and the latter that of time or aspect. This aspectual interpretation could well be past progressive in the sense of "it was still raining" because it connects smoothly with the ensuing "the weather quickly cleared up". Lastly, the word *xian* 咸 is considered to have at least two meanings: "all, completely" and "to finish". In bronze inscriptions, 咸 is often used to describe a certain ritual procedure has come to an end, and that typically it stands alone without embodying the structure 咸 + V₂.[11] Here, however, we

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10   Even though we should maintain that it is methodologically flawed to elicit the meaning of a word on the basis of the word's graphic representation, there sometimes is a surprising degree of correspondence in the bone and bronze inscriptions. We have specially noted such examples as 𣄰 (既) 'already' and 𤋎 (雷) 'thunder' in this paper.

11   Zhang Guangyu (2002: 109) cites the following bronze inscription in which the words 咸 and 既 occur juxtaposed:
      甲申, 明公用牲于京宮. 乙丑用牲于康宮. 咸既, 用牲于王. *Zuoce* Ling *fangzun* 乍冊令方 尊.

have the V$_2$ surfaced as 咸伐, which I have interpreted to mean "(when we) finished the decapitation sacrifice". The meaning of "all, completely" for 咸 might not be impossible here, but it is not supported by context; there is no reference to the extent to which the beheading sacrifice was carried out.

(4.6) Although there still are uncertainties in the interpretation of 攺卯, there is general agreement that the graph 攺 expressed the word *shi* 攺 = 施 'spread out, expose' and/or 'disembowel' (sc. *yi/chi* 胣). Morphologically, they seem related to each other since *sthjiar 攺 and *djiar/ *thjiarx 胣 may also be linked semantically by postulating an "expose" sense common to both words. Contextually, such a meaning fits the bone context as it refers to the way sacrificial victims are treated. It is used as a verb, and it makes best sense if we take the graph 卯 (direct transcription being 卯) as standing for the word *liu* 劉 'split open; kill'. But here it is nominalized because it occurs as the object of 施.[12]

(4.7) Li Xueqin (1997 [1999]: 64–66) has shown that the previous interpretation of 鳥星 as "bird star" or "Shang 商 star" are incorrect.[13] But his own proposal that 鳥 should be read as *shu* 倏 'quickly' is not all that convincing either. He extracts the element 攸 from 倏, arguing that the initials of 攸 ranges in the 透母 (*th-), 喻母 (*g^{w}j- or *r-), and 定母 (*d-), which (itself forming a problem) are said to be comparable to 鳥. But the initial of 鳥 is *t- (端母) and the final

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The punctuation is Zhang Guangyu's, showing his understanding of the inscription to be different from mine. I would separate the juxtaposed 咸既 and link 既 with the following verb 用. The entire sentence should thus be translated as follows: "On the *jiashen* day [21], Duke Ming used sacrifices at Jing palace. On the *yichou* day [2; i.e., 42 days later] (they) used sacrifices at Kang palace. (The sacrificial activities) were completed. (This is because they) already used sacrifices at the (place of) His Majesty." This interpretation is based on the fact that the word 咸 'complete, finish' is frequently used independently in bronze inscriptions (e.g. Mai *fangzun* 麥方尊), signifying the completion of some sacrificial or ritual procedures, and the word 既 is used adverbially to modify the following verb in the same way as most other cases in the bone and bronze inscriptions.

12   For more in detail on the question of nominalization and nominal derivation, the reader is referred to Takashima (1984).

13   In *Heji* 11501 and 11726, to be rejoined according to Ts'ai Che-mao (1996), there is a graph 鴋 which is transcribed by a few specialists as 鴋 (鳥 and 丙 combined). This is equated with 商星 presumably referring to *da chen* 大辰 or *da huo* 大火 (2nd ed. *Hanyu dacidian* electronic version). As pointed out by Li Xueqin (*ibid.*), the phonophoric element of this graph must be 鳥 as the right hand element of the graph 鴋, even if the accuracy of the 丙 transcription is questionable, is absent on *Heji* 11497 in which the phrase 鳥星 occurs.

(including medial) is *-iəg^w (幽部); moreover, 儵 (*drjək^w) is a *rusheng* word. The alleged phonetic similarity might still be acceptable in the end, and for want of anything better I tentatively follow Li's suggestion.[14]

(**4.8**) There is much scholarship on the graph 𝚫 (星) (cf. *Sōran*: 204, #835; 205, #836). Earlier studies all interpreted it as standing for the word "star", but it was Yang Shuda (1954: 11) who first suggested that it expressed the word 晴 'to be clear'. Later, Li Xueqin (1981) elaborated on Yang Shuda's interpretation, and I think that this interpretation is unassailable. The most telling evidence for this is that the portion 鳥星 in Heji 11497o, example (3) above, is replaced by 大𢼸, 易 [= 暘] '(greatly:) all cleared up, and turned sunny' in *Heji* 11499o quoted below:

(i)   癸卯卜, 爭貞: 下乙其屮鼎. 王固曰: 屮鼎二隹大示, 王亥亦㡭. […] 酚明
       雨, 伐[既]雨, 咸伐亦[雨], 攸卯鳥大𢼸, 易 […].
       Divining on the *guimao* day [40], Zheng tested: (As for) Xia Yi, (we) will
       make an offering of the cauldron (to him). His Majesty, having prognos-
       ticated, declared: (We should) make the offering of the cauldrons (number-
       ing) two; it will be (to) the Great Altar and to Wang Hai, [to both of whom
       or to the latter?] (we) will also (make an offering of) aromatic liquor. […]
       (We) did the cutting sacrifice (or: the cutting sacrifice was done). In the
       morning it rained. (By the time we) did the decapitating sacrifice, (had
       already) rained, and (when we) finished the decapitation sacrifice, it (also:)
       again rained [i.e. it was still raining]. (But when we) disemboweled (or
       displayed) that which has been split open, the weather quickly and (great-
       ly:) all cleared up, becoming sunny [暘].[15]

14   Perhaps there is a better, more straightforward, solution to the way the graph 鳥 is used here.
      While it is most probable that 鳥 is used adverbially in this context, one could apply what
      may have underlain the word 鳥 itself. For this Tōdō Akiyasu (1965: 197–199) has deduced
      what he calls the "basic meaning" (基本義) of 鳥 to be "(something) hanging slender and
      long". From this it is not difficult to think of such a meaning as "hanging manner" or
      "protractedly", and hence, quite possibly, "finally". This, in fact, is a meaning opposite to
      what Li Xueqin proposed, but the difficulty for this hypothesis, as well as even the one
      proposed by Li Xueqin, is that there is no corroborative evidence for either.

15   According to this interpretation, we observe the use of two adverbs, *niao* 鳥 (presumably
      loaned, as already mentioned, for *shu* 儵 'quickly'), and *da* 大 'greatly'. Such usage of two
      adverbs does not seem common, but it is preferable to taking 鳥星 as meaning "Bird Star"
      which some scholars associate with the Pleiades (a cluster of small stars in the constel-lation
      Taurus, commonly spoken of seven, though only six are visible to the average naked eye).

We see here that the Shang scribe recorded that the rain fall was observed on three different occasions. Rain was not very conducive to the decapitation sacrifice, certainly much less so for the cutting sacrifice (cf. Note **4.2** above), but, finally, when they displayed the decapitated victim(s), the weather cleared up.

(4.9) If we look very closely at the reverse side of the plastron, *Heji* 11497r (reproduced in a reduced size in section 2) or, better yet, the original rubbing of *Bingbian* 208, we notice that Zhang Bingquan's and the others' ordering of 酒 [>酌]不雨 is incorrect. It should be 不酌雨. My translation follows this correct order. However, since it engenders a problem of negation involving, in this case, the negative 不 (the position of which is now shifted to that before the verb 酌, rather than before 雨), I provide below a brief summary of my findings on the morphology of the negative 不 and the other negatives that form a system of negation.

First, I divide the negatives in terms of the initials of the reconstructed sound values, either *p- or *m-. According to this division, the *p-type negative *bu*/*pjəg(x) 不 is in contrast to another *p-type negative *fu*/*pjət 弗. We immediately notice that apart from the "tones", the only thing different in the two is the coda in Old Chinese. 不 is in the 陰聲 (probably without coda), while 弗 has the 入聲 with the final *-t coda. I have elsewhere (Takashima 1973; 1988; 1996: 364–382) proposed that this contrast is captured in the stative vs. non-stative opposition, which is dictated by the nature of the verb they negate. The stativity also involves the phenomenon of "happening", "occurrence" or "event", but here we have the action verb 酌 'to cut' which is humanly controllable. Since example (2) of *Heji* 11497r is a verifying statement (驗辭), the action verb 酌 is specified on the underlying level to be a "happening" or "event" verb, thus dictating the use of the negative 不.[16] This negative with the initial *p- is inter-

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But the Pleiades are identified with *mao* 昴, and if the graph 卯 expressed the word 昴 'the Pleiades', then it is structurally not impossible to interpret 卯鳥星 as a binomial phrase meaning "the Pleiades and Bird Star". As discussed in the beginning of Note **4.8,** however, it would make a better sense in terms of context, as well as of comparison with *Heji* 11499, to construe 星 as standing for the word 晴 'to be clear, to clear up'.

16 This point may be a bit hard to understand. Zhang Bingquan and the *Heji* editors must certainly be familiar with the very common use of the negative 不 associated with such an eventive verb as 雨 'to rain', and that may have been the reason why they transcribed this 驗辭 as "酒[> 酌]不雨" without closely observing the actual, though somewhat unclear, inscription. While it is true that in the 命辭 the verb 雨 is never negated by 弗 (or 毋 or 勿 for that matter), such an action verb as 酌 'to cut' appears negated by 不 in the 驗辭, but in the 命辭 by 勿. This is not an isolated example.

preted as non-modal, as opposed to the initial *m- which is interpreted as modal in the negatives *wu*/*mjəg 毋 and *wu*/*mjət 勿, the latter including what other specialists transcribe as 弜 presumably read as *bi*.[17] These *m-type negatives involve an element of human will and generally negate the verbs that are humanly controllable (or thought of as controllable). In the context of 命辭, this is applicable to a great majority of examples. Thus, when in the 驗辭 the controllable verbs are negated by the non-modal, stative/eventive, negative 不, the modality feature is "neutralized" such that the controllability feature is not applicable and becomes a non-issue.[18] In short, the *p-type negatives are characterized as non-modal and are associated with the uncontrollable verbs. What I have just presented is a much condensed summary of only the immediately relevant portion of the negative morphology and is not intended to be an argument for its system. It is merely to indicate that there are good reasons to make the emendation to the ordering of 不 before the verb 酌 'to cut', and for a fuller discussion of the morphology of the negatives reference should be made to the literature referred to above.

17   This reading seems to be deduced from the graph 弼 or 弼 in which 弜 appears as phonophoric. But before such a deduction, we need to question the validity of the transcription into 弜 for which I would suggest a different interpretation based on the following palaeographical analysis. The original graph is written like 𝄒𝄒 or 𝄒 which depicts a doubling of 弓 'bow'. The original graph of 勿 is written like 𝄒 which consists of a "bow" as a "primary" graph and, in my view, the two-stroke marks used as an abbreviation mark (or the repetition mark of the element on the right). This is similar to a frequently observed practice of the Shang scribes to show the abbreviation or repetition of a "primary" graph like 𝄒 by writing 𝄒 _, being equal to 又又 (= 有祐) 'much assistance'. Thus, 𝄒𝄒 or 𝄒 can be written like 𝄒 , and they represented the same negative *wu* 勿.

18   I have described the said neutralization process in Takashima (1989a), and for a fuller discussion, with examples, I refer the reader to this work. For the present, we would gain a deeper understanding of the 不酌雨 expression by translating it as "the cutting sacrifice did not take place (because) it rained," a translation suggested by Matthias Richter as part of his rigorous editorial work (October 9 and 14, 2004). This translation captures the stative-eventive nature of the negative 不, as well as the neutralization process I have suggested to have taken place.

Abbreviations

Bingbian *Xiaotun di erben* 小屯第二本: *Yinxu wenzi bingbian* 殷墟文字丙編. 6 folio Vols. Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1957–1972.

HYDZD *Hanyu da zidian* 漢語大字典. 縮刷本. Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe 四川辭書出版社, 1996.

Heji *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集. 13 folio Vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.

Sōran *Kōkotsumoji jishaku sōran* 甲骨文字字釋綜覽. Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄 and Takashima Ken-ichi 高嶋謙一. Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1994. [Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, Tokyo University, 1993, not for sale.]

Sōrui *Inkyo bokuji sōrui* 殷墟卜辭綜類. Shima Kunio 島邦男. Tokyo: Kyūko shoin 汲古書院, 1971.

SW *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字. Reprinted in Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963.

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            66. Page reference is to the latter, which is shown in the following
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