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Not only is the genealogical inscription of the Ni lineage authentic, it is also a certified copy. This paper addresses the meaning and function of the word heading the genealogy, *zhen* 貞, and is intended to serve as an annotation to an earlier, unqualified statement by Rao Zongyi which stressed that its correct rendering was the key for both its appraisal as a genuine artefact, and by extension, its comprehension as a coherent document.¹ Here, I take the position that as the meaning of the word *zhen* in the oracular inscriptions means ‘to verify, to certify’, its function on a document of this kind was intended to validate that its current possessor was the rightful patriarch of a nonroyal family whose recorded ancestry of 11 generations ascending confirms an elite pedigree going back to the founding of the Shang dynasty.

Orientation and Form of the Document (庫 1506 = 英藏 2674)

The inscription (plate 1) is written on what in *jiaguwen* terminology is called the ‘fan’ of an ox scapula (胛骨扇). This part of the bone is not only the most even and spacious, but its relatively thin consistency demerits use for hollow boring and divination cracking. It is undoubtedly for these reasons that scribes are often seen utilizing the tablet-like (牘) area to draft vertically oriented display inscriptions, both oracular and non-oracular.² In the text of the genealogy, spatial design is illustrated by a horizontal boundary line (界線) drawn to start precisely from the right side of the first graph and continuing to just after the left side of the last graph. This suggests that it was written after the content (Fig. 1). In general, the use of boundary lines is a scribal habit intended to frame select content.

Reading from right to left, the inscription is composed of two parts, with the content of the genealogy proper written in three forms:

Part 1/Preface:

Line 1: The header word *zhen* 貞

¹ Rao Zongyi, “Zhen de zhe xue “貞”的哲學”, *Huaxue* 3 (1998), pp. 1-13: “大英博物院所藏的唯一殷代家譜記錄的《兒家譜》上面開頭便記下一個“貞”字，懷疑派的人們反致疑於這一片的可信性，是由於不明白貞的涵義。”

² For a discussion of the qualifications and advantages of using this area of a the bone to draft display inscriptions see Sakikawa Takashi 崎川隆, “A Research on the Feature of Oracle Bone with Big-Characters from Yin Relics 殷墟出土大字骨版刻辭的史料性質考辨”, *Eastern Archaeology* 東方考古 4 (2008), pp. 248-252. For a discussion of the existence of writing ‘tablets’ during the Shang period, see Li Xueqin, “Xiaochen Qiang gudu de jidian sikao 小臣牆骨牘的幾點思考”, *Jiaguxue* 110 nian: *Huigu yu zhanwang* 甲骨學 110 年: 回顧與展望 (2009), pp. 37-40.



Fig. 1: Boundary line

Part 2/Genealogy:

Line 2: Lineage name + *xian zu* 先祖 + *yue* 曰 + Name A (Lineage A's first ancestor is called Name A)

Lines 3-13: Name A + *zi* 子 + *yue* 曰 + Name B (Name A's son is called Name B)
 Name A + *di* 弟 + *yue* 曰 + Name B (Name A's younger brother is called Name B)

At first glance, lines 1, 2 and 3-13 have also been consciously rendered for display purposes. Working backwards, lines 3 through 13 are even in both space and length and have been orthographically arranged so that each four character line appears symmetrical. This layout is also attested for oracular inscriptions (plate 2). In this orientation the scribe has intentionally set off line 2, which being longest of all the lines, is intended to highlight the position of the families foremost ancestor. This leaves line 1.

In the modern language of *jiaguwen* morphology *zhen* 貞 is a prefatory term introducing the content posterior to it.³ Here, what follows is a non-divinatory inscription in 13 lines of vertical text recording the genealogy of the personal names of the patriarchs of the Ni lineage spanning 11 generations. Without trying to be anachronistic, it seems rather straightforward that the word 'verification, certification' would be written at the head of a document made for a specific jurisdiction of application.

In appraisals of this inscription's authenticity numerous scholars have noted two dubious criteria stemming from the appearance of *zhen* 貞. The first focuses on its codified lexical usage in Shang divinatory language. As anyone who is involved in the field of oracle-bone studies knows there is still a wide gap in how scholars define the word *zhen* 貞, and by extension, the way in which one chooses to interpret the mood of a divination proposition⁴. Naturally, those who follow the *Shuowen*'s definition of 'to ask' (卜問) cannot make any sense of its usage on a genealogy, which in turn leads

³ David Keightley, *Sources of Shang History* (1978), p. 28-30, n. 7.

⁴ As per the responsive statement of Rao Zongyi, *Yindai zhenbu renwu tongkao* (1959), p. 71, “舊說於貞字下每施問號多不可通”; see also Keightley, *ibid.*, David Nivison, “The “Question” Question”, *Early China* 14 (1989), and Kenichi Takashima and Paul L.M. Serruys†, *Studies of Fascicle Three of the Inscriptions from the Yin Ruins* (2010), pp. 22-25.

to the notion that it has been entirely miscategorized⁵. Arguments stemming from this then take the position that the entire composition has been forged.⁶ The second criteria is calligraphic. The malformed writing of *zhen* 貞 is an indication that it is a forgery.⁷

I will first address the second criteria.

Orthography

While not denying the existence of an abundance of forgeries in antique markets, the position taken by scholars that the piece has calligraphic problems seems to have more to do with its lack of provenance, and the fact that it was amongst a collection containing blatant forgeries.⁸ What is funny about this case is that several of these forgeries appear to be early 20th century copies that have used this piece as the model. While orthographic “inconsistencies” are noticed through comparisons with the typologies established for royal inscriptions, I would suggest that their true disparity is a illusory, methodological one. The fact is this inscription belonged to a peripherally-based (sw Shandong)⁹ nonroyal family and was most likely written by a scribe under its charge. In terms of paleography, the composition of the graphs are perfectly consistent with the development and nuances of the script at this time,¹⁰ and the calligraphy displays a nonroyal style¹¹. As for the writing of *zhen*, while there are suggested “orthographic issues” with the fact that the right side of the graph---from the “ear” of the caldron, to the body, and down the leg---has not been written in one clean stroke (Fig. 2.IB), I would better see this as “our” issue, not the original scribes’. Compare, for instance, the writing of the left “ear” in the Li-diviner form (Fig. 3.IC, below), or of the right “ear” in the composition of *yan* 膚 from a Chu 出-diviner group scribe (below, Fig. 2.IIA), neither of which are written fluidly (contra the opposite

⁵ Hu Houxuan, “Jiaguwen jiapu keci zhenwei wenti zai shang 甲骨文《家譜刻辭》真偽問題再商, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 4 (1980): 115-138: “本非卜辭, 即不能稱“貞”. “貞”是卜辭問卦的專用字眼, 不能用於記事刻辭.”

⁶ Qi Wenxin, “Guanyu Yincang jiagu zhengli zhong de jige wenti 關於英藏甲骨整理中的幾個問題”, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 1986.3 (*cit.* from Cao Dingyun, n. 7), “內容結構不合理, 右邊一個“貞”字本應是卜問之辭, 而《家譜刻辭》既成事實, 無需貞問, 放在一道不倫不類.”

⁷ Cao Dingyun, “Yincang 2674 jiapu keci zhenwei 英藏 2674 《家譜刻辭》真偽”, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 28 (2010), pp. 169-179: “尤其是《家譜刻辭》中的“貞”字很“特別”右邊的一直道是從兩筆構成: 上面的一端筆打彎; 下面的一長筆與裏面的一斜筆相連. 這樣的寫法確實很“怪”, 說明契刻者開始不知道這個字如何下筆. 殷代的史官絕對不會犯這樣的錯誤, 這只能是現代人所為. 就憑這一條, 基本可以斷定該片為偽刻.”

⁸ For a discussion of some of the fakes in the collection, Shen Zhiyu 沈之瑜, *Jiaguxue jichu jiangyi* 甲骨學基礎講義 (2011), pp. 127-141. The “Names of the Four Directions and Winds 四方風名” bone inscription (HJ 14294) was not authenticated until the discovery of the “Names of the Four Directions and Winds” shell inscription (HJ 14295) during the 13th season (1936) of Yinxu excavations. Prior to this time scholars like Guo Moruo had appraised the bone inscription as a forgery.

⁹ For the location for the Ni lineage during the reign of the Shang king Wu Ding 武丁, see Liu Zheng 劉正, “Jiaguwen keci yanjiu 甲骨文刻辭研究”, *Yindu xuekan* (2008), pp. 20-23.

¹⁰ Yu Xingwu 于省吾, “Jiaguwen jiapu keci zhenwei bian 甲骨文家譜刻辭真偽辨”, *Guwenzi yanjiu* 4 (1980): 139-146

¹¹ Li Xueqin, “Zailun jiapu keci 再論家譜刻辭”, in *Wenwu zhong de gu wenming* 文物中的古文明 (2008): pp. 121-125 (originally published in *Huaxue* 7 (2004)).

“ear”, and the example from a Bin 賓-diviner scribe (Fig. 2.IIB). Knowing that the science, paleography, and history of the bone and its inscription checks out, it is hard for me to accept a position that posits that a scribe writing more than 3,000 years ago could not be irregular.

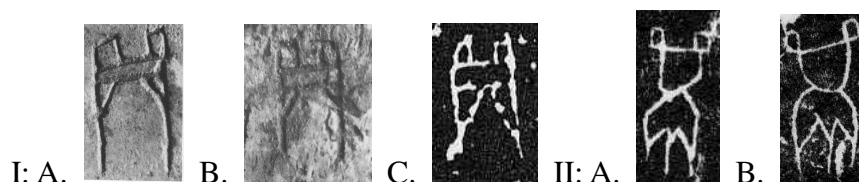


Fig. 2: Comparison of handwritings of *zhen* 貞 and *yan* 膚

(Sources: **I:** A: Ni Genealogy; B: YC 1784 [Li]; C: TN 81 [Li]; **II:** A: HJ 23536 [Chu]; B: HJ 6063r [Bin])

The Form of the Word *zhen* 貞

In composition *zhen* 貞 is a pre-classified (> + *bu* 卜 = 鼎), stylized form of *ding* 鼎 ‘caldron’. From orthographic forms attested in the writings of the Shi 師-diviner group scribes¹² it can be adduced that at the earliest stage(s) in the development of the writing system *ding* 鼎 was used as a rebus spelling representing the word *zhen* 貞.¹³ It is only starting from approximately the middle period of Wu Ding’s reign that both nonroyal (非王) and “transitional” (間) types begin to display a noticeable evolution from a loan to a distinctive stylized form.¹⁴ The example provided below (Fig. 3) from the scribes of the royal Bin-diviner group make it visually clear that at a time when both forms were in common use they were intended to represent two different words.¹⁵



Fig. 3 HJ 171 [Bin-diviner group]

¹² For a discussion and periodization of this corpus of divination records, see Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu* 殷墟甲骨分期研究 (1996), pp. 60-105.

¹³ For instance: HJ 20576r, HJ 20408, HJ 21220, HJ 20532-33.

¹⁴ For instance: HJ 20516 [Shi-Li intermediate 師歷間; royal], HJ 22231 vs. 21782 [Zi 子; nonroyal], and HJ 22086 vs. HJ 21656 [Wu 午; nonroyal]. For a discussion of the evolution of the graph, see Wu Qichang (1934) rpt. 2008: 2-3, and paleographic forms listed *Xin Jiaguwen bian*, pp. 201-202 (貞)/p. 410 (鼎).

¹⁵ Yu Xingwu, *Jiagu wenzi shilin* 甲骨文字釋林(1979), pp. 217-219.

Meaning in the OBI

In the OBI *zhen* 貞 has only one primary meaning. While commentators on classics like the *Zhou Yi* have long since advocated defining *zhen* 貞 through an association with its cognates¹⁶, Wu Qichang 吳其昌 (1934-37) was the first to implement it as a mode of interpretation to explain its reoccurring usage in the Shang divination records.¹⁷ Thereafter, both Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 (1959; 1998)¹⁸ and Father Paul L.M. Serruys (1974; 2010)¹⁹ would revisit this “cognate theory” with several new compelling emendations, most notably one that stressed the relationship between *zhen* 貞 and *zheng* 正.

In an article dated 1989 David Nivison has in my opinion nearly hit the bulls-eye by refining Bernard Karlgren’s archaic Chinese definition of ‘to verify’. Because of its direct application to the source material at hand, I will offer the citation in full:

Karlgren offers one meaning of *zhen* as “verify, to read off an oracle.” His source is the *Shangshu*, presumably the “Luo gao” chapter: Zhou gong had had divinations performed for the proper site for the new capital, and had obtained favorable results for the Luoyang area. He then had sent the diviners’ results to King Cheng, who was about to take over full royal responsibilities. King Cheng expressed appreciation for this sharing of authority by saying, “You have had messengers come, and they have brought me the oracles with their evidence of (Heaven’s) grace and auspiciousness. We two together will *zhen* (*Wo er ren gong zhen* 我二人共貞). What will they *zhen*? The verb lacks an object, but it has to be

¹⁶ For the more prominent citations, see Rao Zongyi, *cf.* n. 1.

¹⁷ *Yinxu shuqi jiegou* 殷虛書契解詁 (1934-1937) rpt. 2008, pp. 2-3: “既已證明貞，鼎，當之為一字，則知殷虛契文之凡‘卜貞’連文者殆其意謂所卜之日之當也。謂所卜之日之可用也。” See also the listing in the 3rd c. lexical work *Guangya* (廣雅•釋詁三): “貞，當也”; 王念孫注: “貞之言丁也，《爾雅》云‘丁，當也’。” (*Guangya gulin* ed. 3.223a)

¹⁸ In Rao Zongyi (1959), pp. 70-71, he concluded that in the bone inscriptions *zhen* 貞 had as many as three different meanings. While he continued to understand one usage under the umbrella of the SW, his second explanation followed Wu Qichang’s “*dang* 當-theory” but proposed a meaning closer to its exegetical meaning (of *zhi* 直>值) and explained its function as being equivalent to the modern Chinese compound *dangzhi* 當值. When coming after the words “*bu* 卜 + diviner’s name” within a preface formula he explained it as meaning that “the diviner was ‘responsible for’, or ‘was on duty to supervise’, the divination event. Finally, his third explanation promoted the cognate relationship with *zheng* 正, “引申為事之正”. It is explanation (3) which then becomes the focus of his philological and philosophical storm in his article dated 1998, *cf.* n.1.

¹⁹ Takashima & Serruys, *cf.* n. 4, citing Serruys: “Though 貞 is usually defined in accordance with the SW as “to ask, query,” this meaning is almost unique to the SW and *Zhouli* 周禮 (i.e., a rather late development and rare in occurrence) as against the more frequent and regular meaning 貞: 正也, 定也, 善也, 信也; there is a majority of usages of 貞 (adjective + noun): “reliable, good, fine, correct”. If we try and explain 貞 of the introductory formula of divination, not in the light of SW and later, rare usages, but of a majority of usages, we can only think of a verbal sense, “to test, to try out, to make true, correct” in the sense of “find out the right (course of action)” parallel with “tried, tested, reliable, correct, good”. In this hypothesis, XX 卜, Y 貞 would simply mean: “In the bone divination of day XX, diviner Y tested the proposition, or proposed for test (i.e., rectification) the following course of action or alternative courses of action...”;

the oracle *results* just mentioned. Here *zhen* seems to mean “officially certify as correct”---as does a notary public in a simpler sense---said of the results already known of divination rites already performed.²⁰

The Evidence

This section is mainly intended to validate Nivison’s comments and is meant to be selective, not exhaustive. Since the Ni genealogy is of a nonroyal pedigree I have chosen examples from concurrent Period I nonroyal divination records which, in my opinion, depict a method of divination unlike what is seen from royal divination organs. By doing so I intend to illustrate that the genealogical document at hand, and particularly its language, need not typologically accord with any royal standard. As a disclaimer, my focus is not a philological explanation of the content of the divination statements, only the morphological form by which they are introduced.

The first two examples are from the Wu group (午; 丙一類), a self-contained divination organ whose divination and scribal practice displays distinct characteristics not seen on concurrent royal oracular records (Period I; r. of Wu Ding).²¹

HJ 22049 + 22081 (*如下釋文用寬式法)

1. 戊午卜：致妻禦束父戊良，又瘥。
2. 戊午卜：禦外戊^𠄎。
3. 于子庚禦^𠄎。
4. 戊午卜，貞：妻有瘥今夕。
5. 戊午卜，貞：不死。

The context of this one-day series of divinations is an illness to one of the wives of the family. Five divinations are made on the topic of performing exorcism rites to three potential ancestors, all of them male, with the hope that doing so will lead to her recovery. What I want to call attention to, however, is the disparity between the pair of divination statements placed at the end of the series introduced by *zhen* 貞 (4)-(5), and the ones preceding it that are not (1)-(3). Even if we were to shuffle the sequence,²² what is important is that only 2/5 of the divination statements have *zhen*

²⁰ Cf. n. 4; I am using a reprint collected in *JGWXJC* 18: 384c-387a.

²¹ For a discussion of this group of inscriptions, see Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu*, pp. 313-316.

²² For instance, Jiang Yubin’s 蔣玉斌 transcription of this series of inscriptions places (4) after (1); see “Yinxu zi buci zhenli yu yanjiu 殷墟子卜辭整理與研究”, PhD dissertation (Jilin University, 2006), p. 90. He does not however say anything about the placement of (5) which is a cohesive pair with (4). Based on the coherency of the divination sequence, especially the relationship between the coda on (1)

貞 in the preface (40%). This then leads to the evaluation that a technical difference exists between those divinations marked with *zhen* 貞 and those without it. When read as a unit, scholars proposing to apply the *SW* definition of “卜問” for *zhen* 貞 are then at a disadvantage for how to explain the three instances that do not have it. Moreover, in a case such as this one the default explanation that *zhen* 貞 as been abbreviated, or is meant to be covered by *bu* 卜, betrays what is otherwise a default mechanic within one technique of Shang divination practice.²³ Applying Karlgren’s definition of ‘verify, (re)check, certify’ renders the force of those divinations marked with *zhen* 貞 as non-initial, resultative divinations made in response to an antecedent.

HJ 22092 (午)

1. a. 乙巳卜，貞：石疾首不延。二
b. 其延。
2. a. 乙巳卜：夕，告^个于亞雀。
- b. 乙巳卜，貞：于翌丙，告^个于亞雀。二

(1ab) are a commonly seen antithetical pair (對貞) of divinations focused on whether the head illness of a person named “石” is going to continue or not. Based on Serruys’ “principle of 其” the diviner (/the patron) does not want it to. What is of interest to us is the pair of divinations numbered (2ab) which concern the appropriate time for reporting “^个” to the military general Que. Again, what is evident is that there exists a mechanical disparity between a divination statement marked as being “貞” (2b) and one that is not (2a). Applying Karlgren’s definition of ‘verify, certify’ renders the force of (2b) as a non-initial, resultative divination made in response to an antecedent (2a).

HJ 21805 (子)²⁴

and the *zhen*-divinations on (4)-(5), it is certainly possible that (1),(4)-(5) be taken as a sequence.

²³ Contra Rao Zongyi (1959: 1.70) who states, “通籀全部卜辭所記貞卜人物命辭之辭式，多書‘卜’而少言‘貞’，其省略‘貞’字尤為慣例；故知言‘卜’可以概‘貞’。” While Rao’s poignant calling to attention that divination charges introduced by the prefatory word *bu* 卜 far outnumber those introduced by the word *zhen* 貞 can entirely be supported by the most recent discovery of nonroyal OBI from Huayuanzhuang, the second part of his statement that it is a well-practiced tendency to omit or abbreviate *zhen* 貞, as well as his concluding sentence that the word *bu* 卜 can be used to approximate *zhen* 貞 is, in my opinion, severely misinformed. The now frequently encountered convention amongst specialists to generalize *all* Shang-Western Zhou period divination statements, regardless of the word by which they are introduced, by the name “*zhenci* 貞辭” runs even more askew; In my doctoral dissertation (University of Chicago, 2012) I suggest a broader bi-partite classification of “non-*zhen* type divinations 非貞類卜辭” and “*zhen* type divinations 貞類卜辭”.

²⁴ For a discussion of the Zi-diviner group, see Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu*, pp. 316-320.

- 1.庚子，子卜：夷小宰禦龍母。
- 2.庚子，子卜：夷小宰臂司。
- 3.庚子，子卜：其禦媾。
- 4.辛丑卜：中母己鼎。
- 5.辛丑卜：其禦中母己。
- 6.辛丑，子卜貞：用小宰龍母。
- 7.辛丑，子卜貞：用小宰臂司。

This divination series is made over a two day period and proposes to perform an exorcism rite over a female (媾). Three different female ancestors are mentioned as possible recipients and the sacrificial offerings for at least two of them are set to be small pen-raised sheep. Of the seven divinations made during this time the patron (子) is recorded performing five. What I want to call attention to in this instance is the marked disparity between the two divinations statements taking place on the first day and introduced with the prefatory form, “*gan zhi* 干支 + appellation 子 + *bu* 卜 (to divine)”, and the two on second day introduced by a preface that now adds the technical term “*zhen* 貞”. Again, regardless of whether we shuffle the sequence and place (6)-(7) ahead of (4)-(5) the fact remains that (6)-(7) are non-initial and being made *in response* to (1)-(2). This can also be proven grammatically by the usage of the modal copula *hui* 夷 ‘let it be’ in (1)-(2), which then gets switched for the declarative verb *yong* 用 ‘to use’ in (6)-(7). In mood, the former pair of sentences are probe-charged subjunctive, while the latter pair are decision-charged indicative.

HYZ 446

- 15 己卜：惠牝妣庚。二
- 16 豨一。用。三
- 18 己卜：[]牝。一
- 17 歲妣庚豨一。 [一]
- 19 歲妣庚豨一。 二
- 21 歲妣庚一豨。 三
- 20 己卜，貞：歲卜亡吉，亡[]。一

Translation²⁵:

(15) On *Ji* divined: Let it be a cow (to) ancestress Geng. #2

(16) [On *Ji* day divined: Let it be] a boar, (amounting to) one. Use (it). #3

²⁵ *The translation below fills in the scribal abbreviations meant to be read in. The numbers next to the inscriptions indicate the sequence of the editors, Liu Yiman and Cao Dingyun. Note that I have switched (17) behind (18) and (21) in front of (20).

(18) On *Ji* divined...cow. #1

(17) [On *Ji* divined]: (We) will *sui* 歲 (=sacrifice by axe killing) ancestress Geng a boar, (amounting to) one. #1

(19) [On *Ji* divined]: (We) will *sui* 歲 (=sacrifice by axe killing) ancestress Geng a boar, (amounting to) one. #2

(21) [On *Ji* divined]: (We) will *sui* 歲 (=sacrifice by axe killing) ancestress Geng one boar. #3

(20) On *Ji* divined, **verifying**: The *sui* 歲-divinations (i.e., the divinations/stress cracks on the topic of *sui* 歲) are without luck; there is no misfortune (present). #1

In this example from Huayuanzhuang a series of seven divinations are all taking place on the same day and concern sacrificial offerings to be made the following day (*Geng*) to an female ancestor with a corresponding day-name. As just alluded to in the previous example, the grammatical use of the modal copula in (15)-(16)²⁶ produces an evaluation (用) in the latter which then gets “applied” into the chained sequence of three divinations (三卜制) at (17), (19), and (21). What is evident is that the reason (20) gets performed is to ‘verify’ or ‘recheck’ the ‘inauspicious’ result of the three previous divinations (歲卜).

The Function of *zhen* 貞 on the Ni Lineage Genealogy

Now that Karlgren & Nivison’s definition of ‘verify, validate, certify, (re)check’ has been established as the most suitable definition for *zhen* 貞, in this section I will first deconstruct the problems with three previous explanations, and then conclude with some basic observations for why it might have been used to preface a genealogy.

Hitherto, several interpretations have been proposed for the function of the document as a whole:

1. “與卜問有關” (related to divination); Li Xueqin 李學勤²⁷
2. a. “為了準確牢記自己的歷代祖先名氏” (in order to correctly remember the names of one’s generational ancestors)
b. “這一家譜的準確性質應該是祭祀祖先的祭譜 (a ledger²⁸ for ancestor sacrifice and rites); Liu Zheng 劉正²⁹
3. Practice Inscription; Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄³⁰, Sarah Allan³¹

²⁶ (16) is a scribal abbreviation of (15) and both the date and the divination formula starting with “夷” and ending with “妣庚” is meant to have been read into it.

²⁷ Cf. n. 11

²⁸ Ledger, in the Middle English usage meaning one volume of writing (/breviary) kept in one place (/in church).

²⁹ Liu Zheng, cf. n. 9.

³⁰ “介紹一片四方風名刻辭骨——簡論習字骨“典型法刻”的關係”, in *Jinian Yinxu jiaguwen faxian yibai zhounian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 紀念殷墟甲骨文發現一百周年學術研討會論文集 (2003), pp. 83-87.

³¹ The information on Allan’s lecture at the Department of History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on December 14, 2010 entitled, “The Problems of the Authenticity of the Genealogy

(1) is not technically an “interpretation”, only more of a deference. Li says (p. 123), “家譜刻辭開端有一“貞”字，可見仍與卜問有關，究竟是怎麼關係，有待將來有更多資料再深入探究”。In my opinion, Li’s reluctance to think outside of the *language of Shang divination* leads him astray. The reason I say this is because recently he has been relatively outspoken that a Western Zhou OBI (Hongdong, Shanxi 山西洪洞坊堆, 1954) ending with *zhen* 貞 ought to read as “coda” with a meaning glossed as *zheng* 正 or *dang* 當.³² Aside from the obvious merits of Li’s article essentially putting his seal on the historical accuracy of the ancestry, what is noteworthy is that he accepts the authenticity of header graph *zhen* 貞. I give it precedence at the top of the list mainly because this statement has given me the authority and confidence to write this paper.

While the first part of Liu Zheng’s explanation can be used without hesitation, his supposition that its function lies in the consultation and application of ritual ancestor sacrifice seems to ignore the fact that ancestors would not have been called by their personal names. What then would be the actual implementary sacrificial function of having a list of personal names for deceased ancestors who are designated by day-names 日名³³? That is unless he envisions a situation like that of the Western Zhou *Qiu pan* 逎盤 which contains genealogical information inscribed on a ritual vessel used to contain sacrificial items.³⁴ A supposition like this would then have to take the position that this bone genealogy would have been the *diben* 底本 used to make such an inscription, not that the bone piece itself was designated for this isolated ritual function. Indirectly though, Liu Zheng’s argument is of interest in that it is suggestive that archival documents of this type (i.e., bone tablets) would have been accessed by western Zhou period scribes to draft bronze documents containing genealogical information.³⁵

Matsumaru Michio and Sarah Allan are the two people identified with suggesting that

Inscription (“家譜刻辭”真偽問題)” has come from the summary at <http://www.xianqin.org/blog/archives/2235.html>.

³² In an article dated to 1956 (“Lun Anyang Xiaotun yiwai chutu de youzi jiagu 論安陽小屯以外出土的有字甲骨”, *Wenwu ziliao cankao* 11), and now collected in his *Zaoqi wenji* 早期論文集 (2008, pp. 33-37), Li formerly held the opinion that *zhen* 貞 meant “問” (to ask). However, at least from the time of his *Zhou Yi jingzhuan suyuan* 周易經傳溯源 (1992: 130) he comes to suggest that it be read as a coda to a divination statement. I am not so sure, however, that *zhen* 貞 is a divination coda at all, and would lean towards Li’s original reading (with *zhen* 貞 modified to mean ‘to verify’).


³³ Also called ‘temple sobriquets 廟號’. For the seminal discussion of the meaning of ‘day names’, see Li Xueqin (1957; rpt. 2008, *ibid.*), “Lun Yindai qinzu zhidu 論殷代親族制度”. With regard to Liu’s explanation of how *zhen* 貞 fits with the genealogy he offers the “odd” suggestion that, “把11代13位祖先的名字放在一起，又冠以“貞”字之下，這只能說明這是祭祀的考慮...其實，上古漢語中出現個別怪異詞語很常見，並不僅僅表現在甲骨刻辭中。”

³⁴ Lothar Von Falkenhausen, “The Inscribed Bronzes from Yangjiacun: New Evidence on Social Structure and Historical Consciousness in Late Western Zhou China (c. 800 BC)”, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), 239-295.

³⁵ Edward L. Shaughnessy, “The Writing of A Late Western Zhou Bronze Inscription”, *Asiatische Studien* LXI.3 (2007), 845-877.

the genealogy is a practice inscription, and on the surface both are entirely right. For as I alluded to above several forgeries amongst Cooling and Chalfant's collection have evidently used this piece *as the model* (法刻). That is, an early 20th c. “scribe” once used this piece *to practice* writing, and his skills were good enough to sell for the real thing. Outside of this interesting coincidence, however, there is essentially no basis for supposing that this inscription is a true Shang period *xike* 習刻.³⁶ For if it was, the first question to be asked in response would be, Why use a certified family genealogy as a practice inscription? In the same logic that I have argued against interpreting HYZ 349 as a practice inscription by virtue of its content (the recording of nightmares *is not* an appropriate topic for a practice exercise)³⁷, what makes one think that a scribe would be learning to write by practicing the personal names of dead patriarchs of a nonroyal lineage? Moreover, an explanation like this goes against the attested fact that the writing of names in early Chinese, whether they be place, lineage, personal, or otherwise, show the most graphic variation, and are the least static.³⁸ While I certainly understand using the “model/exercise” explanation for inscriptions like the “Names of the Four Directions and Winds (四方風名)”, royal ascension and king lists, date-tables (干支表), ritual ledgers (祀譜)³⁹, and onomastica as practicum, I cannot see the rationale for proposing that this inscription was used for this purpose, either as a model or as a practice exercise. Perhaps the only default explanation that might be acceptable is that this is a verbatim *copy* off a certified original⁴⁰. It could not have been done for practice (學/練習) in a pedagogical sense.

Conclusion

The patriarch of generation 10 is seen on Period I OBI⁴¹. We can then be certain that the creation of this document took place at some time during the reign of Wu Ding, and was most likely in the possession of the son, , who at that time was the

³⁶ The topic of practice inscriptions has now been dealt with in the doctoral dissertation of Adam D. Smith, “Writing at Anyang” (UCLA, 2008), pp. 303-384.


³⁷ “Aspects of Shang Dynasty Divination Practice: The Meaning and Function of the Word *zhen* 貞 as Seen on the Oracular Inscriptions from Huayuanzhuang” (unpublished manuscript (2011), 88 pages), and contra the commentary of Liu Yiman and Cao Dingyun, *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu* (2003), vol. 6, pp. 1641 (HYZ 205), 1698-1700 (HYZ 349), 1729 (HYZ 441).

³⁸ In his discussion of the parity between the “Names of the Four Directions and Winds” bone inscription and the genealogy, one of Matsumaru's criterias (#2/3) for passing judgment that the latter is a “model inscription” is that both record nouns (names), “在刻辭中羅列了筆劃較多的固有名詞”. The fallacy of this model is that learning (> knowing) the names of the directions and their winds is a pedagogical subject, whereas, no matter how many grades one wishes to hypothetically construct, learning how to write the personal names of 11 generations of an elite lineage most certainly is not.

³⁹ By ritual ledgers I am referring to content associated with the ritual presentation of written agendas (工(貢)典) taking place at the commencement of each cycle of the three major periodic rites (周祭); see Yu Xingwu, *Jiaguwenzi shilin* 甲骨文字釋林(1979), pp. 30-31, and Shima Kunio 島邦男, *Yinxu buci yanjiu* 殷墟卜辭研究 (Chinese ed., 2006), pp. 204-316.

⁴⁰ For an discussion proposing the copying of oracular records for display purposes, see Zhang Shichao, *Yinxu jiagu ziji yanjiu* (2002), pp. 361-374.


⁴¹ For the 10th generation patriarch, see HJ 21570, 21722 [Zi 子; nonroyal]; HJ 891 [Bin 賓; royal]; for the 11th, see Jingdu 3241 [Zi 子; nonroyal], and citations at Shima Kunio, *Sōrui*, pp. 280d-281ab.

patriarch of the family.⁴² This then leads to the assumption that either the former commissioned the document as confirmation of his rightful heir, or the latter commissioned the document upon his ascension as a validation. As mentioned at the top, it is no coincidence then that the genealogy dates back 11 generations to the rule of the first Shang king, Cheng Tang 成唐. I would suggest that the main display purpose of this document was therefore not only to validate that  was the rightful head (or rightful future head) of the family, but that this line of patriarchs had been in place concurrently with the line of the Shang kings. Taken in this way, the document is actually doubly certified, once by language (貞), and once by history.

What is made manifest by the genealogy is that the word *zi* 子 does not just mean any ‘child’. Rather, it has to be referring to a special institutional sense of ‘child’—‘eldest son 嗣子’, which is a well-attested usage in early Chinese received literature.⁴³ That nonroyal diviners and scribes refer to their patron by this appellation can be explained as a status marker derived out of his position of seniority in the family and ancestral temple.⁴⁴

Finally, why then would the patriarch of a family lineage need a genealogy? I would propose the following hypothetical usages in 1200 BC China: 1/a document to be kept in the ancestral temple for display and ritual purposes directed by the head; 2/a document validating the possessor and his heir as the rightful head; 3/for intralineage disputes; 4/for covenants; 5/to be used as credentials for visits with the king.

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⁴² While likely, it is still not entirely certain if  should be associated with the person usually called by scholars “子商”. For a list of occurrences recording this name, see Shima Kunio, *Sōrui*, pp.

280d-281ab. The graph  appears as a name on HYZ 441.

⁴³ See discussion of Chen Guangyu 陳光宇, “Er shi jiapu keci zhi zi yu Huadong buci zhi zi 兒氏家譜刻辭之子與花東卜辭之子”, in *Jinian Wang Yirong faxian jiaguwen 110 zhounian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 紀念王懿榮發現甲骨文 110 周年國際學術研討會論文集(2009), pp. 164-173; for use of the term 子 in received literature as referring solely to the eldest son, see Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚, *Shang-Zhou jiazu xingtai yanjiu* 商周家族形態研究 (2004), pp. 39-60.

⁴⁴ Lin Yun 林沄, “Cong Wu Ding shidai de jizhong zi buci shilun Shangdai de jiazu xingtai 從武丁時代的幾種子卜辭試論商代的家族形態”, *GWZYYJ* 1 (1978), pp. 314-336.

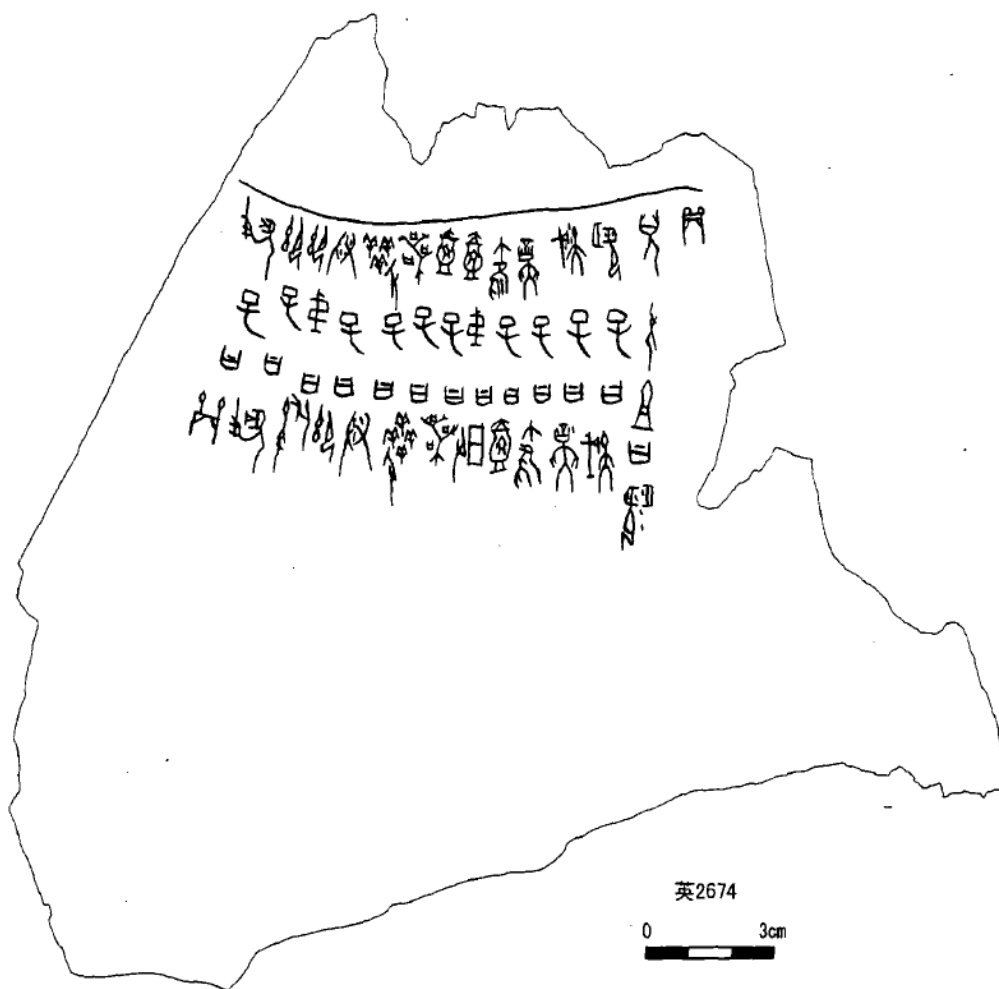


Plate 1: Genealogy of the Ni Lineage Patriarchs

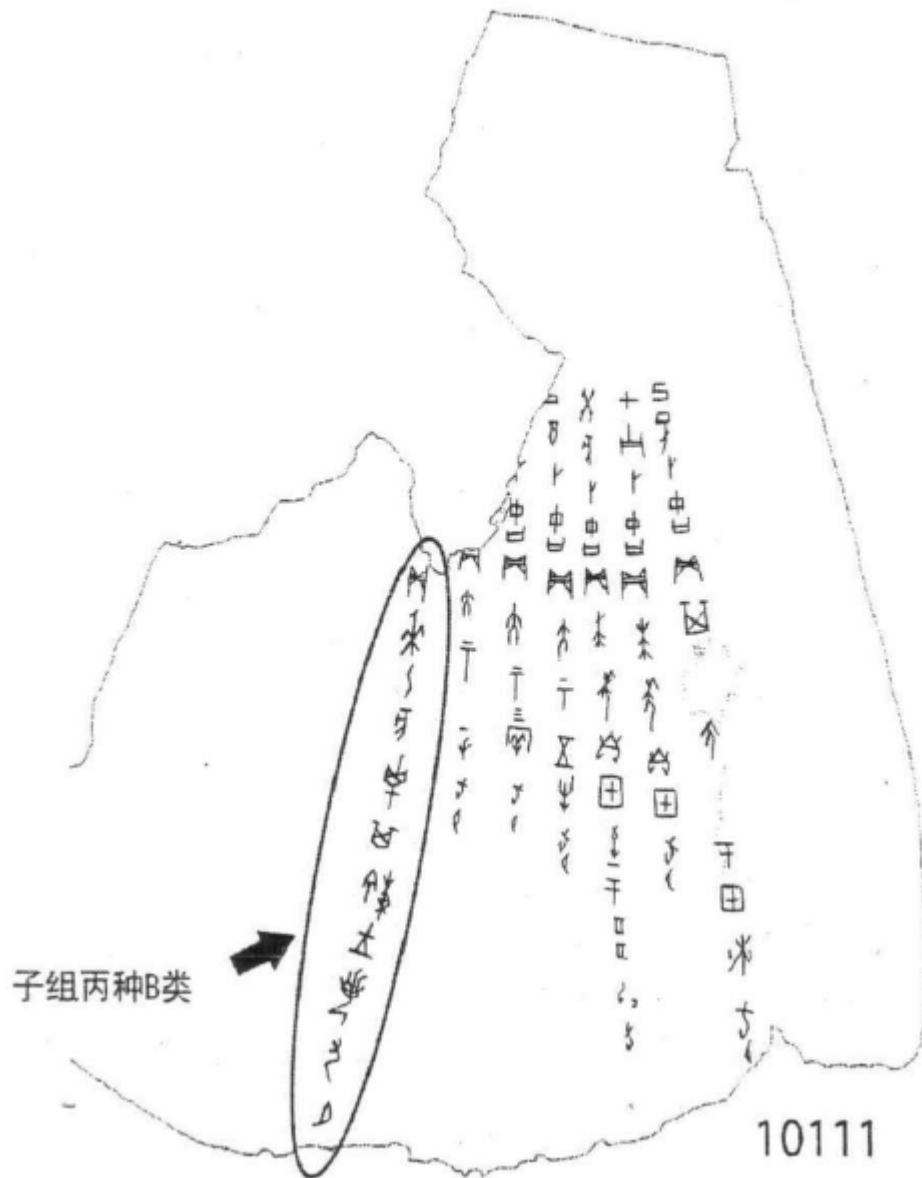


Plate 2: HJ 10111 (royal Bin-diviner type + nonroyal Zi-diviner type)

Source: Sakikawa Takashi, *Binzu jiaguwen ziti fenlei yanjiu* 賓組甲骨文字體分類研究 (PhD dissertation, Jilin University, 2009), p. 185, plate 105.