

THE PERIOD V RITUAL POSTFACE: PROSPECTIVE OR RETROSPECTIVE?


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Over the years I had come to regard the Period V postfaces associated with the five-ritual cycle as prospective (see the phrases in bold italics), as in:¹

[1A] 癸巳王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰：吉。在十月又二。甲午曆日上甲祭大甲

On *guisi* (day 30), the king made cracks and divined: “In the (next) ten days, there will be no disasters.” The king read the cracks and said: “Auspicious.” (*Postface*:) In the twelfth moon. (*Divined for the week in which*) on *jiawu* (day 31) (we) **were to** perform the *xie*-day ritual to Shang Jia (P1) and the *ji*-ritual to Da Jia (K3).²

[1B] 癸卯王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰：吉。在十月又二。甲辰諷大甲祭小甲

On *guimao* (day 40), the king made cracks and divined: “In the (next) ten days, there will be no disasters.” The king read the cracks and said: “Auspicious.” (*Postface*:) In the twelfth moon. (*Divined for the week in which*) on *jiachen* (day 41) (we) **were to** perform the *cai*-ritual to Da Jia (K3) and the *ji*-ritual to Xiao Jia (K6). (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35530)³ 

1. I reproduce these translations, with minor adjustments, from David N. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.)*, China Research Monograph (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000) 53.

2. The P numbers refer to the predynastic ancestors; the K numbers refer to the actual kings.

3. See, e.g. the list of oracle-bone inscriptions at Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂 and Xiao Ding 肖丁, eds., *Yinxu jiagu keci moshi zongji* 殷墟甲骨刻辭摹釋總集, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988). *Heji* here and in the following citations refers to Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, eds., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1978–82); “V” refers to Period Five of oracle bone inscriptions. Huang 黃 refersto the diviner group of that name.

- [2] 癸巳王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰吉。在八月。甲午翌上甲

On *guisi* (day 30), the king made cracks and divined: "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters." The king read the cracks and said: "Auspicious." (*Postface:*) In the eighth moon. (*Divined for the week in which*) on *jiawu* (day 31) (we) *were to* perform the *yi*-ritual to Shang Jia (P1). (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35398) ∪

It is possible, however, that these "ritual dates" should be taken as verifications that served to validate and demonstrate the auspicious prognostication or cracking. In this view [1A] would end: "... In the twelfth moon. (*Verification:*) On *jiawu* (day 31) (we) performed the *xie*-day ritual to Shang Jia (P1) and the *ji*-ritual to Da Jia (K3)." [2] would end: "... In the eighth moon. (*Verification:*) On *jiawu* (day 31) (we) performed the *yi*-ritual to Shang Jia (P1)." And so on. I preferred the prospective translation because it linked the "ritual date" to the charge itself. And since, when the charge, "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters," had been divined on the *gui*-day, the events of the subsequent *jia*-day had not yet transpired, I preferred to take the "ritual date" prospectively. If, by contrast, the "ritual date" were indeed a verification, then it would have to be translated as a record, not of something about to happen, but of something that had happened after the divination had taken place.

A third, related solution also recommended itself: that these "ritual dates" were indeed postface dates, pure and simple, with no validating function as a verification. Thus [1A] would end: "... In the twelfth moon. (It was the week in which) on *jiawu* (day 31) (we) performed the *xie*-day ritual to Shang Jia (P1) and the *ji*-ritual to Da Jia (K3)." [2] would end: "... In the eighth moon. (It was the week in which) on *jiawu* (day 31) (we) performed the *yi*-ritual to Shang Jia (P1)." And so on. Of the three solutions, this "straight postface" was the simplest and least speculative, fitting our usual model of what a postface usually was. I would also note that the presence of the modal *qi* (see below) also rules out the possibility of translating these "ritual dates" ambiguously, in what we might call "the customary intended present," so that, for example, the postface to [1A] could be rendered: "(Divined for the week in which) on *jiawu* (we) perform the *xie*-day ritual to Shang Jia and the *ji*-ritual to Da Jia." As we shall see, my discussion of [4A], [5A], and [12]–[15] below, leads me to reject this "simple" declarative solution.

The issue is not entirely trivial, for it bears on what the diviners and also, presumably, the record-keepers, thought they were doing in such cases. Was the "ritual date" an integral part of the divination ritual that

served, as a verification, to validate the king's routinely auspicious prognostications? Or was it merely appended by the record-keeper, independent of the divination's outcome, to "triangulate" the divination's date within the ritual cycle? These alternatives need not, of course, have been exclusive. Given the significance attached to the performance of the ancestral rituals, the recording of such a ritual, whatever its divinatory function, would have been rich with validating religious associations. Nevertheless, our choice of translation—prospective or retrospective—will privilege one of these possibilities and, I hope, bring us closer to the workings of the divination process and ritual procedures of Late Shang.

The cases cited above were entirely regular in the sense, as already noted, that the ritual recorded in the postface, the ritual that was used to date the charge within the ritual cycle, was normally performed on the *jia*-day that followed the *gui*-day of divination.

However, there were some occasional exceptions to this pattern, as in the case of:

[3] 癸巳卜王貞：旬亡禍。在四月。邁示癸彤乙未彤大乙

Crack-making on *guisi* (day 30), His Majesty divined:

"In the (next) ten days, there will be no disasters."

(*Postface*:) In the fourth moon. (Divined on the day when we) performed the *gou*-“encountering” part⁴ of the *rong*-ritual to Shi Gui (P6), (for the week in which we *were to*) on *yiwei* (day 32) perform the *rong*-ritual to Da Yi (K1).

(V. Huang) (*Heji* 36486)



This case may throw some light on the point at issue. The first part of the “ritual date” refers to the *gou* part of the *rong*-ritual that would have been performed on the *gui*-day (the *guisi* day when the charge had been divined), to the appropriate *gui*-named ancestor, Shi Gui. That the first part of the “ritual date” is also the date of the divination itself, does not, I think, resolve its function. It might have been serving as a postface (which provides precisely such information as the date of the divination) but, assuming that the *gou*-ritual had been performed after the “ten-day” divination itself, then it could equally well have served as a verification: “In the fourth moon. (We) performed the *gou*-‘encountering’ part of the *rong*-ritual to Shi Gui (P6) . . .” And it could also have been prospective: “In the fourth moon. (Divined on the day when we) *were*

4. For this understanding of the *gou*-ritual, see Zhang Yujin 張玉金, “Jisi buci ‘gou’ ziju de jufa fenzi” 祭祀卜辭‘邁’字句的句法分析, *Liaoning Shifan daxue xuebao* 遼寧師範大學學報 1995.4:32–35.

to perform the *gou*-‘encountering’ part of the *rong*-ritual to Shi Gui (P6), (divined for the week in which) on *yiwei* (day 32) (we) were to perform the *rong*-ritual to Da Yi (K1).” But could the second part of the “ritual date” in [3], referring to an *yi*-day event two days after the divination, have functioned as a normal postface? If not, it would seem, once again, that we are either dealing, in these “ritual dates,” with a prospective postface or a verification.

It should be noted, in terms of what comes below, that there was no breaking of the ritual rules in a case such as [3]. True, the day used to date the ritual was not a *jia*-day, but that was precisely because, in this particular week no Jia ancestor would have been scheduled to receive any of the five rituals: no Jia-named ancestor follows Shi Gui in the ritual cycle; Da Yi does. So, to date the week, the recorder used the day of the first ancestor who was scheduled for ritual in that week, in this case *yiwei* for the offerings to Da Yi.⁵ But what is of interest in [3] is that two ritual dates were recorded: one that accorded with the *gui*-day of divination, which would have served to locate the divination in the ritual calendar: ‘This was divined on the *gui*-day when we performed the *gou*-“encountering” part of the *rong*-ritual to Shi Gui’; the other to mark the day of the first ritual that was to be (prospective) or that had been (retrospective) performed during the ten-day week in question: ‘(Divined for the week in which we were to, or in which we had) on *yiwei* (day 32) perform (or performed) the *rong*-ritual to Da Yi.’

Consulting further evidence that bears on the nature of these postface dates, similar regularity is found in the *gong dian* rituals that started the five-ritual cycle.

After an initial *gong dian* 貢典—“presenting of the tablets” ritual⁶ the cycle started with the *yi* 翌 (or *yi ri* 翌日, “*yi*-day”) ritual, followed by the *ji* 祭, *zai* 鬯 (or 賣), and *xie* 禘 (or *xie ri* 禘日, “*xie*-day”) rituals performed as a unit . . . , and concluding with the *rong* 彤 (or *rong ri* 彤日, “*rong*-day”) ritual cycle performed separately.⁷

5. Shima’s reconstruction of the Late Shang ritual calendar reveals that *jia*-day rituals were only offered to Jia-named ancestors on the first day of weeks 2, 4, 5, 7–9, and 11; that *yi*-day rituals were offered to Yi-named ancestors on the second day of weeks 3, 10, and 12; and that the first ritual in week 6, to a Ding-name ancestor, did not take place till the fourth day, the *ding*-day. See Shima Kunio 島邦男, *Inkyo bokuji sōrui* 殷墟卜辭綜類, 2d rev. ed. (Tokyo: Kyūko, 1971), 556.

6. See the inscriptions at Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂 and Xiao Ding 肖丁, eds., *Yinxu jiagu keci leizuan* 殷墟甲骨刻辭類纂, 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 1118.2; and the relevant entries at Matsumaru Michio 松凡道雄 and Takashima Kenichi 高嶋謙一, *Kōkotsumoji Jishaku Sōran* 甲骨文字釋綜覽 (Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku Tōyō bunka kenkyūjō, [1993, not for sale] 1994), 0580.

7. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 48.

The *gong dian* was thus a ritual that the Shang performed in the ten-day week prior to the start of each of the five rituals of the ritual cycle.⁸ Thus, the expectation, in [4A], that, following the presentation of the tablets, the *yi* 翌 ritual was to be performed, was confirmed, in [4B], by the reference to its impending performance in the following week:

[4A] 癸卯王卜貞：旬亡禍。在九月。甲辰貢典其幼其翌

On *guimao* (day 40) His Majesty made cracks and divined: "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters." In the ninth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiachen* (day 41), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *you*-ritual and *were expecting to* perform the *yi*-ritual."

[4B] 癸丑王卜貞：旬亡禍。在九月。甲寅翌上甲

On *guichou* (day 50) His Majesty made cracks and divined: "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters." In the ninth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiayin* (day 51) (we) *were to* perform the *yi*-ritual to Shang Jia (P1)." (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35399) 𠄎

Similarly, the expectation, in [5A], that, following the presentation of the tablets, the *you* 幼 ritual was to be performed, was confirmed, to some degree, in [5B], by the reference to the impending performance of the *yi* 翌 ritual in the following week:⁹

[5A] 癸未王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰：吉。在八月。甲申貢典其幼

On *guiwei* (day 20), His Majesty made cracks and divined: "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters." His Majesty read the cracks and said: "Auspicious." In the eighth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on

8. See, e.g., Dong Zuobin 董作賓, *Yinli pu* 殷曆譜 (Lizhuang, Sichuan: Guoli Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo zhuankan, 1945), II:2:2a–b; Chang Yuzhi 常玉芝, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu* 商代周祭制度 ([Beijing]: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan, 1987), 140.

9. The graph that I, like other scholars, have transcribed as *you* 幼, is generally thought to have recorded both a personal name and a Shang ritual (Matsumaru and Takashima, *Kōkotsu moji Jishaku Sōran*, 0531). Dong Zuobin (*Yinli pu*, II:2:2b) suggested that, in Period V, the *yi* 翌 ritual became the *you* (though he did not provide a modern graph equivalent). This is refuted by [4A], in which both the *you* and the *yi* appear, but as Chang Yuzhi (*Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 141–42) has noted, the *you* only appeared in association with the *yi*-ritual and took place in the week prior to the performance of the *yi* (as in [4AB], [5AB]) or in the same week (and on the same day?) as the *yi*-day ritual (as in [12]).

jiashen (day 21), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) **were expecting to** perform the *you*-ritual.”

[5B] 癸巳王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰：吉。在八月。甲午翌報甲

On *guisi* (day 30), His Majesty made cracks and divined: “In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters.” His Majesty read the cracks and said: “Auspicious.” In the eighth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiawu* (day 31), (we) **were to** perform the *yi*-ritual to Bao Jia (P1).” (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35756)¹⁰ 𠄎

My translation of the last part of the “ritual dates” of [4A] and [5A] is tentative. The problem is the presence of the *qi* 其, which appears in every postface that records the *gong dian* ritual.¹¹ I am assuming it indicated future intent, “expecting to” (which I have also italicized in bold face here and below).

Qi 其 Usage in Period V

I had considered the possibility that *qi* in such “ritual dates” might have served as a possessive particle, so that, e.g., [5A] 甲申貢典其幼, could be translated as “(Divined for the week in which) on *jiashen* (we) **were to** perform the *you* ritual ritual **of the** presenting of the tablets” or “the presenting tablet’s *you*-ritual.” But I can find no support for such a usage of *qi* in Period V where it generally served to indicate future intent or conditional possibility, as in:

[6] 丙寅卜貞：武丁日其牢

Making cracks on *bingyin* (day 3), divined: “(On) the day of Wu Ding,¹² we **will** offer a penned cow.” (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35818) 𠄎

10. Chang Yuzhi (*Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 141) discusses this inscription, as *Yizhu* 244.

11. See too [12] and the examples at Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu keci leizuan*, 1118.2. Ten of the 11 cases recorded there contain the *qi*. The only exception is *Heji* 38307, which is fragmentary, broken at precisely the point where the *qi* would have appeared.

12. I read the oracle-bone phrase 武丁 — normally transcribed as in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu keci moshi zongji*, as 武丁丁, or as 武丁𠄎 (as at the transcription Hsü Chin-hsiung provided when publishing this rubbing as *Menzies* 2896 (*The Menzies Collection of Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones*, 2 vols. [Toronto; Hong Kong: The Royal Ontario Museum; The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972, 1977]); *beng* is taken has been taken as the name of a ritual) — as 武丁日, with the second 𠄎 being an abbreviated form

There are numerous examples of this Period V usage of *qi lao* 其牢.

Qi also served a similar function in a small number of Period V hunt inscriptions, expressing future intent, as in the formula 王其田PN亡災

[7] 丁□王卜貞：其田于喪往來亡災

On *ding* . . . His Majesty made cracks and divined: "If (we) hunt at Sang, going and returning there will be no disasters." (V. Huang) (*Heji* 37595)



But generally the *qi* was now being omitted in the Period V hunt charges,¹³ as in:

[8] 辛卯卜貞：王田喪往來亡災

On *xinmao* (day 28) made cracks and divined: "If His Majesty hunts at Sang, going and returning there will be no disasters."¹⁴ (V. Huang) (*Heji* 37660)



Whereas *qi* had been present in the protasis of virtually every period II and III charge about hunting (as in *Heji* 28474 and 27146), in Period V the initial *qi* was less commonly used.¹⁵ The basic period V formula, accordingly, is represented by [8]-[10]:

[9] 乙酉卜貞：王田喪往來亡災

Making cracks on *yiyou* (day 22): "If His Majesty hunts at Sang, going and returning, there will be no disasters." (V. Huang) (*Heji* 37367)



[10] 辛亥卜貞：今日王田喜涓日不邁雨

Making cracks on *xinhai* (day 48), divined: "If today His Majesty hunts at Hui, the whole day (he) will not encounter rains." (V. Huang) (*Heji* 37728)



of 日, the graph for *ri*, "day"; see David N. Keightley, "Graphs, Words, and Meanings: Three Reference Works for Shang Oracle-Bone Studies, With an Excursus on the Religious Role of the Day or Sun," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997), 517–24.

13. Thus, I find twenty Period V charges about hunting at Sang 喪 with no *qi*, only two with *qi*; nine Period V charges about hunting at Yu 孟, none with *qi* (Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, *Yinxu jiagu keci leizuan*, 519.1–2; 1029.1–1).

14. Five other charges on this scapula about hunting at other locations were all of similar form, lacking the *qi*.

15. See, e.g., the three period V charges on *Heji* 37793: 貞:王其田亡災 "If the king hunts, there will be no disasters." See too *Heji* 34445, 37570, 37573, 37604, 37777, 37778, 37787, 37800, 37802, etc.

One can well see that [9] can be understood as an abbreviation of *王其田喪往來亡災 (cf. [7] and *Heji* 33536) and that [10] can be understood as an abbreviation of *今日王其田喜涓日不邁雨. The omission of the *qi* did not affect the meaning. Optional, as it had always been, it had increasingly fallen into disuse.

Since, as is well known, the period V hunts had become rigorously scheduled,¹⁶ one might relate the diminished use of *qi* to the redundancy of adding ‘uncertain expectancy’ to a hunting charge whose timing was set firmly in advance. Similar considerations may explain why *qi* was not usually found in the Period V “ritual dates.” That it seems to have been used, as in [4A] and [5A], only when another ritual was to be performed in association with the *gong dian* (p. 6 above) suggests that the Late Shang ritualists were, on these occasions, making a particular and perhaps unusual choice that required specifying in this way.

Qi in period V also still served to weaken the undesired charge of a positive-negative charge-pair, as in:

[11A] 中不雉眾。王曰：弘吉

“The Center (of the army) will not lose *zhong*.” His Majesty read the cracks and said, “Extensively auspicious.”

[11B] 其雉眾。吉

“(The Center of the army) *might* lose *zhong*.” “Auspicious.”

[11C] 左不雉眾。王曰：弘吉

“The Left (of the army) will not lose *zhong*.” His Majesty read the cracks and said, “Extensively auspicious.”

[11D] 其雉眾吉

“(The Left of the army) *might* lose *zhong*.” “Auspicious.”
(V. Huang) (*Heji* 35347)

△

Modal *qi* also appeared in prognostications—to indicate future intent, future possibility;¹⁷ it never appeared in straight verifications. I conclude

16. Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄, “Inkyo bokujichū no denryōchi ni tsuite—Indai kokka kōzō kenkyū no tame ni” 殷墟卜辭中の田獵について—殷代国家の構造, *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 東洋文化研究所紀要 31 (1963):1–163. But see also Li Xueqin 李學勤 and Peng Yushang 彭裕商, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu* 殷墟甲骨分期研究 (Shanghai: Guji, 1996), 385.

17. As in *Heji* 94: 王曰:好其有子, “His Majesty read the cracks and said: ‘(Lady) Hao will (we expect) have a son.’” See too, e.g., *Heji* 113, 136fb, 150, 151, 273, 367b.

for this reason to that it is best to treat these Period V "ritual dates" prospectively.

This evidence, [6]-[11BD], all indicates that the function of *qi* in Period V was routinely modal; it did not serve as a possessive.¹⁸

The *gong dian* 貢典 Postfaces

I cite two more examples of *qi* clauses in Period V *gong dian* postfaces:

- [12] 癸酉卜貞：王旬亡禍。在七月。甲戌翌日報甲[貢]典其幼

Making cracks on *guiyou* (day 10), divined: "His Majesty in the (next) ten days will have no disasters." In the seventh moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiaxu* (day 11) (we) *were to* perform the *yi*-day ritual to Bao Jia (P1) and, at [the presenting of] the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *you*-ritual." (V. Huang) (*Heji* 35397)



- [13] 癸巳王卜貞：旬亡禍。王曰：大吉。在五月。甲午貢典其彫幼

On *guisi* (day 30) His Majesty made cracks and divined: "In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters." His Majesty read the cracks and said: "Greatly auspicious." In the fifth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiawu* (day 31), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *you*-cutting ritual and the *you*-ritual."¹⁹ (V. Huang) (*Heji* 41840)



The parallels are significant. If [4A] and [5A] were expectant and prospective, then [4B] and [5B] should have been expectant and prospective too. Inscriptions [12] and [13], with their use of *qi*, bolster the view that the "ritual dates" were prospective. Similarly, the prospective mood of [14A] can be inferred from the *qi* in [14B]:

- [14A] 癸卯卜貞：王旬亡禍。在二月。甲辰魯彤日祖甲


Making cracks on *guimao* (day 40), X divined: "His Majesty in the (next) ten days will have no disasters." In the

18. My study of the Zhouyuan oracle-bone inscriptions leads to the same conclusion: *qi* indicated modality (as in H11:1, 11, 69, 82, 189); it did not play a genitive or possessive role.

19. Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 185, discusses this inscription.


second moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiachen* (day 41) (we) *were to* perform the *xie* and the *rong*-day rituals to Zu Jia (K23)."

[14B] 癸丑卜囟貞：王旬亡禍。在二月。甲寅貢典其醑

Making cracks on *guichou* (day 50), X divined: "His Majesty in the (next) ten days will have no disasters." In the second moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiayin* (day 51), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *you*-cutting ritual." (V. Huang) 

And yet another case, involving the *guan*-observing ritual, which also appears to have formed part of the *gong dian* ritual, provides additional support:

[15] 癸卯卜貞：王旬亡禍。在六月。乙巳貢典其蕞

Making cracks on *guimao* (day 40), divined: "His Majesty in the (next) ten days will have no disasters." In the sixth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *yisi* (day 42), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *guan*-overseeing ritual."²⁰ (V. Huang) 

I do not insist on the precise accuracy of my translations, but these inscriptions, [4A], [5A], and [12]–[15], with their modal *qi* in the "ritual date," indicate to me that the intent in such cases—as in the "ritual dates"

20. Yan Yiping 嚴一萍, *Jianshoutang suo cang Yinxi wenzi kaoshi* 戩壽堂所藏殷墟文字考釋 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1980), 164–66, in commenting on *Jianshou* 25.1 = *Heji* 8967, argues for oracle-bone *huan* 蕞 as *guan* 觀. Following an insight of Dong Zuobin (*Yinli pu*, II:2:2b), Yan noted that the ritual calendar recorded on [15] was irregular. Dong had noted that the *gong dian* ritual usually took place on the *jia*-day; that it had taken place in this instance on the *yi*-day was irregular. Yan cited the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳, Yin 5: 常視曰視, 非常曰觀. "Regular observing is called *shi*, irregular is called *guan*" (cf. Göran Malmqvist, "Studies on the Gongyang and Guuliang Commentaries I," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 43 (1971): 79 [changing all romanizations to pinyin]: "The term *shi* ('to regard') is used of regular events; the term *guan* ('to look at') is used of irregular events.") It was the 'irregularity' of the *Heji* 38310 schedule in [15], Yan claimed, that had led the Shang to employ the *guan* ritual in this and other cases. I am not, however, on the basis of this single instance, prepared to believe that the Shang only employed the *guan* when the situation was irregular. [15] provides the only instance of a *qi guan* 其觀 in a postface and the only postface instance of the *qi* preceding any ritual verb in which the day was "irregular." All the other cases in which *qi* was present involved, entirely regularly, a *jia* 甲 day; e.g., [4AB], [5AB], [12], [13], [14AB], [16], and [17]. Furthermore, I resist the idea that the *yi*-day was irregular in any way; see n. 5 above.

that lacked the *qi*—was indeed prospective. Had these “ritual dates” simply been a record, a verification, of what had been done, no *qi* would have been present.

In closing, I end with an inscription that contains one of the fullest “ritual dates” remaining to us, with, as was normal, the *qi* following the *gong dian*:

- [16] 癸亥王卜貞：旬亡禍。王固曰：大吉。在四月。甲子
貢典其醴翌日。佳王祀翌日

On *guihai* (day 60) His Majesty made cracks and divined: “In the (next) ten days there will be no disasters.” His Majesty read the cracks and said: “Greatly auspicious.” In the fourth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiazi* (day 1), at the presenting of the tablets, (we) *were expecting to* perform the *you*-cutting ritual and the *yi*-day ritual. It was when His Majesty (said)²¹ “Perform the *yi*-day ritual.” (V. Huang) (*Hebu* 12927)²² 𠄎

I suspect, in this postface, that we have a mix of prospective and retrospective. To translate the last part of the “ritual date” prospectively as “It was when his Majesty *was to* (say) ‘Perform the *yi*-day ritual,” might, I think, have smacked of presumption on the record-keepers’ part. If I am correct in this view of [16], then that what His Majesty had said (retrospective)—as opposed to what His Majesty was yet to do (prospective)—would have been a true verification, recorded after the divinatory event. I would translate a similar case in the same way:

- [17] 癸丑卜泳貞：王旬亡禍。在六月。甲寅醴翌報甲(佳)王
曰祀

Making cracks on *guichou* (day 50), Yong divined: “His Majesty, in the (next) ten days, will have no disasters.” In the sixth moon. (Divined for the week in which) on *jiayin* (day 51) (we) *were to* perform the *you*-cutting ritual and the *yi*-ritual to Bao Jia (P1). (It was when) His Majesty said, “Perform the ritual.”²³ (V. Huang) (*Heji* 37867) 𠄎?

21. I supply the *yue* 曰 on the basis of n. 23 below.

22. *Hebu* 12927: *Heji* 35400 + 37898 + 38307 + 38732. *Hebu* refers to Peng Bangjiong 彭邦炯, Xie Ji 謝濟, and Ma Jifan 馬季凡, *Jiaguwen Heji: Bubian* 甲骨文集補編, 7 vols. (Beijing: Yuwen, 1999).

23. I follow the argument of Qi Xigui 裘錫圭, “Guanyu Yinxi buci zhong de suowei ‘nian si’ he ‘nian si’” 關於殷墟卜辭中的所謂‘廿祀’和‘廿司’, *Wenwu* 文物 1999.12:40–96, in taking the oracle-bone graph that has traditionally been read as *nian* 廿, “twenty,”

For we do not find any postface cases of a prospective *王其曰! Inscriptions [16] and [17] were records of what the king had said. Inscription [16] tells us that he would probably have said it on *jiazi*, one day after the divination on *guihai*. Inscription [17] tells us that, if he were referring to the *yi*-ritual to Bao Jia, he would have said it on *jiayin*, one day after the divination on *guichou*. These *wang yue si* 王曰祀 phrases were perhaps the legitimating verifications. They confirmed that this was not just the week in which the Shang ought to have performed the rituals specified prospectively, but that it was the week in which His Majesty had said, 'Get on with it' – and they had!

as *yue* 曰, "say, declare." I supply the *wei* 隹, "it was when," on the basis of *Heji* 37865 and 37868; see too [16].