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In and Outside the Square:
The Sky and the Power of Belief in Ancient China
and the World, c. 4500 BC – AD 200

Volume II:
Representations and Identities of High Powers
in Neolithic and Bronze China

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Volume II

Representations and Identities of High Powers
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JOHN C. DIDIER

IN AND OUTSIDE THE SQUARE



VOLUME II

REPRESENTATIONS AND IDENTITIES OF
HIGH POWERS IN NEOLITHIC AND
BRONZE CHINA

Chapter 1: A Case for Neolithic Chinese Representations on Earth of the Sky

Iconography found on proto-Chinese Neolithic jade, earthenware, and bones, as well as early bronze artifacts, can be argued to depict several star patterns that center in the ancient northern celestial pole, though without any existing written records from these preliterate cultures any interpretation of the iconography that they produced can remain only speculative. The essential thread that intertwines most of what may be these polar depictions is the simplest of forms, the square or rectangle. In Chapters 1 and 2 we will review these patterns produced by cultures of the Yellow and Yangzi River watersheds in China c. 4500–1000 BC, including the Yangshao, Dawenkou, Hongshan, Hanshan, Jing'an, Qingliangang, Tangjiagang, Songze, Liangzhu, Longshan, Qijia, Erlitou, Erligang, and Shang cultures and civilizations. In Chapters 3 through 5 we broaden the sweep of evidence considered to include now text of the Shang period, as found inscribed on both bronzes and bones, while simultaneously we narrow our temporal focus to determine what this quadrilateral form may have represented religiously and politically in the civilization of the Shang. It was during the Shang that the meaning of the quadrilateral appears to have become most explicit, or at least most explicitly expressed in a diversity of ways. Chapters 4 and 5 attempt a new formulation to explain the nature of the high godhead of the Shang and how it operated in the context of the ancestral cult that constituted the structural center of the Shang palace- and thus polity-centered religion.

Yangshao Culture, Xishuipo Puyang Tomb 45 (M45)

The discovery in 1987 of a Yangshao culture tomb changed dramatically the willingness of scholars to accept the continuity of traditions from Neolithic to Zhou times. However, just what the artifacts found in Tomb M45 at Puyang, Xishuipo, Henan, which date to between circa 4500 and 3000 BC,¹ mean has remained uncertain. While K. C. Chang not surprisingly interpreted the

¹ See the archaeologists' report, "Henan Puyang Xishuipo yizhi fajue jianbao" 河南濮阳西水坡遗址发掘简

arrangement of Tomb M45 to reflect shamanic practices among the Neolithic people who created it, no particular evidence supports or even suggests this interpretation.² On the other hand, Feng Shi and others have argued that this tomb configuration represents certain asterisms.³ In fact, it appears that the burial was situated in a way that mirrored certain circumpolar and non-circumpolar asterisms.

Four human bodies lie in the tomb that is shaped overall like a turtle plastron, while the center skeleton, that of a young man, represents the "owner" of the tomb. At least one of the other bodies, prior to being interred in the tomb, had been sacrificed or otherwise killed with blade applied to the throat. The owner's head faces south and his feet north, and at each of his sides lies an animal figure, head positioned toward the north and lying at the feet of the grave owner. The animal figures were constructed from cowrie shells. The figures appear to be guarding the tomb owner. Strikingly, they very obviously take the forms of a dragon and a tiger. (**Figure 1**)

报 *Wenwu* 文物 1988.3: 1–6. In the earliest reports of this tomb its artifacts were dated to 4500 BC. Since then some question has arisen as to the reliability of this date for human remains in the tomb accompanying the grave owner. However, this seems not to call into question the date of the central figure, i.e., the grave owner, and the cowrie shell animal figures surrounding him. At any rate, the tomb's artifacts confirmably date to between 4500 and 3000 BC. On the apparent Neolithic post-interment disruption of M45, see David N. Keightley, "Neolithic and Shang," in *Journal of Asian Studies* 54.1 (Feb. 1995): 130.

² Chang Kwang-chih, "Puyang sanjiao yu zhongguo gudai meishu shang de renshou muti" 濮陽三躡與中國古代美術上的人獸母題, in *Wenwu* 文物 11 (1988): 36–39.

³ Feng Shi 冯时, "Henan Puyang Xishuipo 45 hao mu de tianwenxue yanjiu" 河南西水坡 45 号墓的天文学研究, in *Wenwu* 文物 1990.3: 52–60. For similar interpretations see, for instance, Bo Shuren 薄树人, *Zhongguo Tianwenxue shi* 中國天文學史 (Taibei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1996): 9–10. For a quality photograph of the site, see Chen Meidong 陈美东, ed. *Zhongguo guxingtu* 中国古星图 (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996): 2, Color Plate 1.

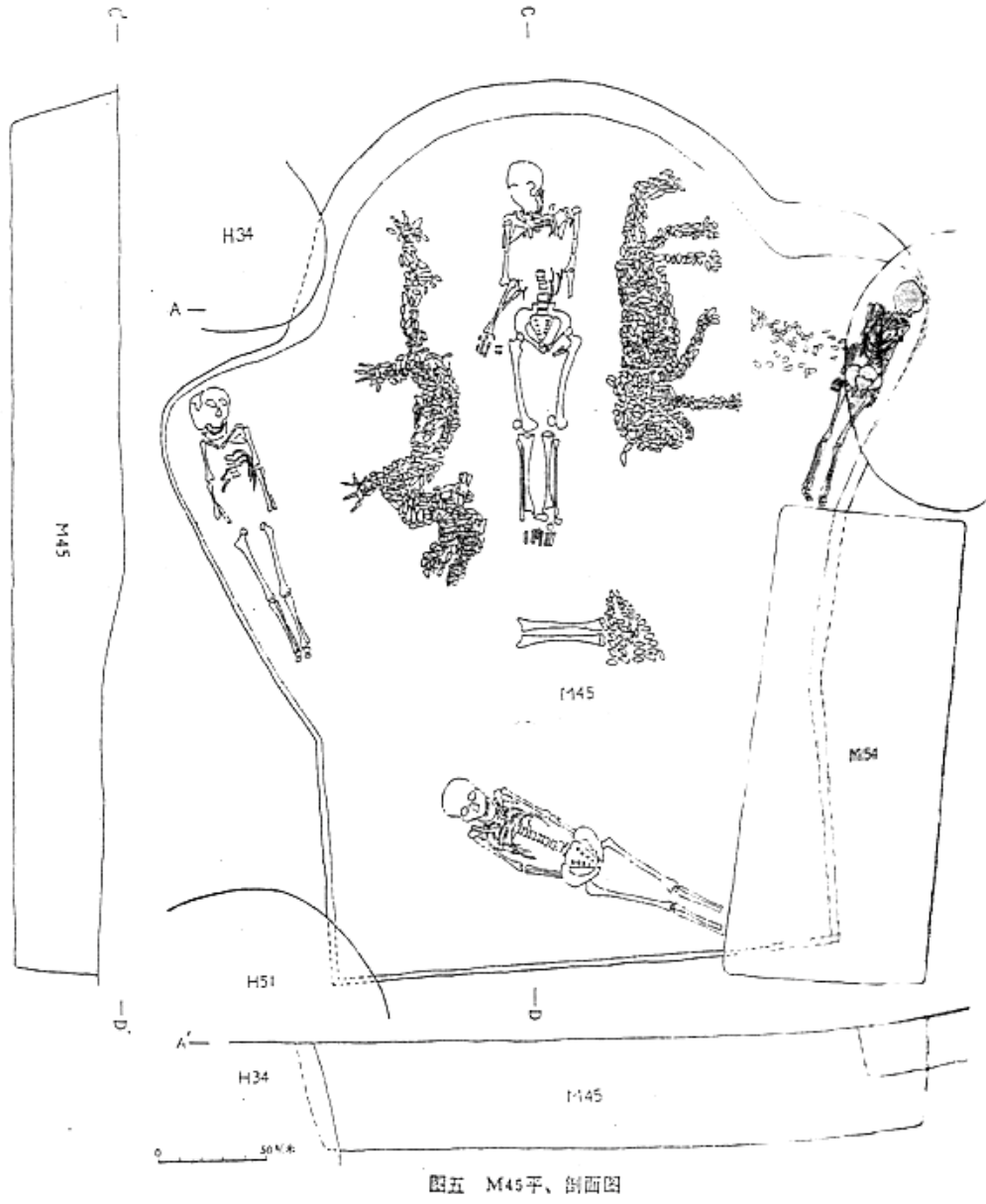


Figure 1. Yangshao tomb 45 (M45) unearthed at Puyang M45, Henan. From Feng Shi (1990.3: 53).

It is well known that during and after the Warring States period the dragon and tiger became spirit protectors / mythical creatures of the directions of east and west, respectively. Indeed, by as early as the 5th century BC their respective positions and apparent roles as helper spirits (*shen* 神) were already established: on a lacquer clothes chest dating to 433 BC and found in

the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng in Hubei province the dragon and tiger appear in precisely the same arrangement surrounding the pole star as they do in M45 at Puyang.⁴ (Figure 2)

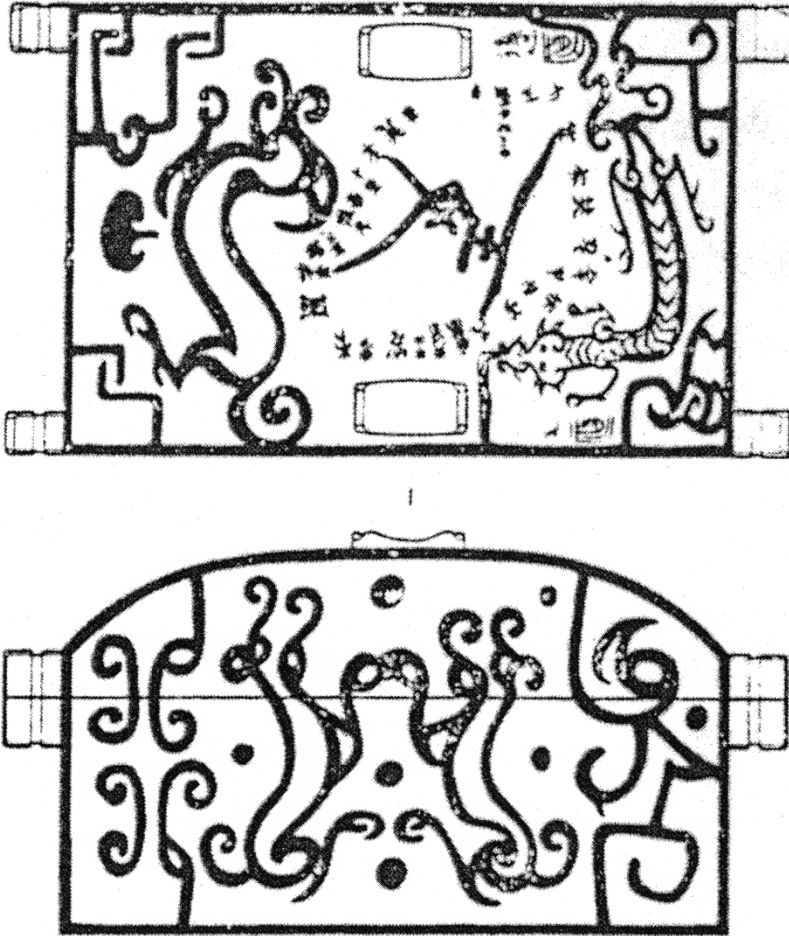


Figure 2. Pole, dragon, tiger, Dipper, and celestial lodges depicted on a 5th (c. 433) BC lacquer

⁴ Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Zenghou yi mu* 曾侯乙墓 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1989): 356 (Fig. 216). That the design adorning the chest represents the northern celestial polar region of the night sky is certain from the fact that surrounding the figures on the side of the box are the Chinese characters for the names of the twenty-eight mansions into which the sky was divided in later Chinese astronomy / astrology. The Dipper also appears near the center (pole) of the diagram. The only difference between the Puyang dragon and that on the marquis' box is that in the latter the dragon is distinct from the Dipper, while in the Puyang grave the dragon is formed from the Dipper (see text and Figure 2, below).

clothes box recovered from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. From Zenghouyi Mu (1989): 356.

In Han and later correlative cosmology, and therefore in traditions of internal alchemy, as well, the dragon and tiger, together with the tortoise / snake (north) and vermilion bird / phoenix (south), became the Four Spirits (*si shen* 四神) of the four directions.⁵

In fact, yet another of the later Four Spirits seems to lie in tomb M45, in a position directly north of the owner's feet. This figure, consisting of a head and stem, is constructed of cowrie shells (head) placed in contact with two human femurs (stem) taken from another skeleton interred nearby. (**Figure 1**) Feng Shi has proffered that this figure represents the Northern Dipper (*beidou* 北斗), which, as we know, in the West forms the body and neck of Ursa Major, the Great Bear constellation. Since between c. 4500 and 3000 BC the Dipper lay very close to the northern stellar pole, Feng Shi believes that this figure in the grave then represents the pole as embodied in the asterism of the Dipper.⁶ However, this figure, which is laid out very purposefully north of the feet of the tomb owner's skeleton to communicate meaning, looks nothing like the Northern (or Big) Dipper. It resembles more a spear and head of broccoli, or, considering later Four Spirit traditions associated with the dragon, tiger, tortoise, and bird, bird plumage. The head or plumage is formed from the Western constellation Auriga, while the stem correlates with the Western constellation Gemini. These arrangements are shown in **Figure 3**.

⁵ For a description of the zoomorphic four spirits of the four spatial directions as they were understood in the Former Han, see *Huainanzi* (Zhang Shuangdie, ed., *Huainanzi jiaoshi* [Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997]) 15: 1605. For their later development as the Four Spirits (四神) in alchemical teachings, wherein they usually have been known as the Four Manifestations (*sixiang* 四象), see Didier (1998): 681–688 (n. 5).

⁶ See Feng Shi (1990): 52–53.

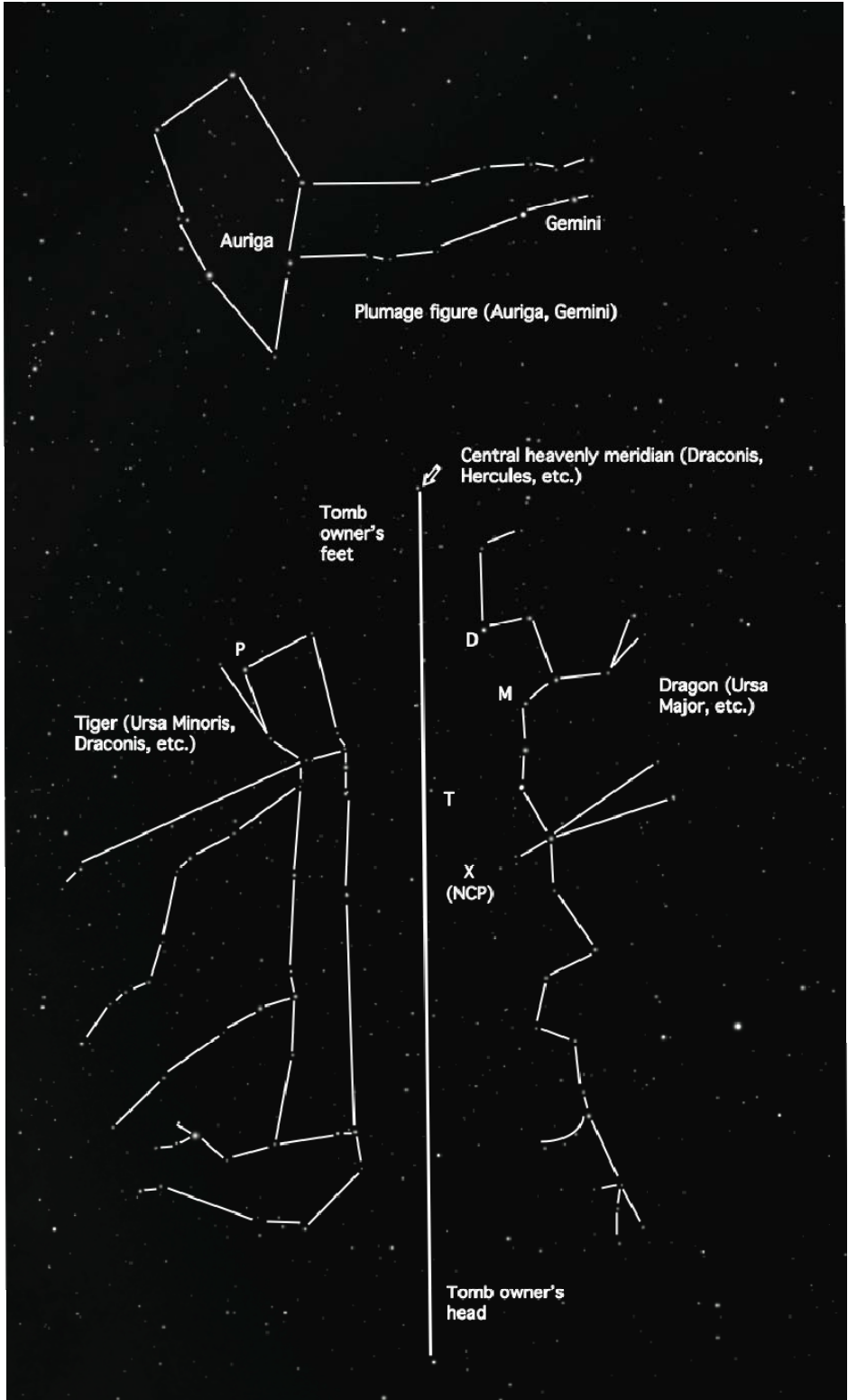


Figure 3. Puyang M45 stellar patterns, 4500 BC.

Meanwhile, in this tomb it is the neck of the dragon that mimics the Northern Dipper, or Ursa Major. In fact, the M45 dragon follows nearly precisely the outlay of Ursa Major, except that instead of connecting the stars that form the rim of the Dipper (Megrez and Dubhe; "M" and "D" in **Figure 3**) with an imaginary line, in their projection the Neolithic proto-Chinese left this space open and thus saw in the curve of the Dipper a serpentine — or dragonsque — neck and shoulder. Furthermore, the dragon's companion lying opposite the celestial pole, the tiger, also quite apparently is formed from parts of the Western constellations Draco (Draconis) and Ursa Minor (i.e., the Little Dipper, at whose extreme is found the current pole star, Polaris, or "P" in **Figure 3**).

The tomb owner lay between the beasts in a position that correlates in the heavens with a very clear meridional line. This heavenly meridian, mentioned previously in Volume I, Chapters 2–4, is formed by parts of the Western constellations Ursa Major, Draconis, and Hercules (we have noted it previously as both the tail of Draconis and the spear of Taiyi). Note both that Thuban (11 Draconis, "T" in **Figure 3**) and 10 Draconis ("10D" in **Figure 3**) fall along this long heavenly meridian and that the tomb owner's central section, his torso, lies in a position between the beasts and along the meridian that correlates precisely with the position in the heavens of 4500–3000 BC of the northern celestial pole. That the grave arrangement probably reflects the stellar patterns that center on the pole of 4500–3000 BC is apparent already from the pictorial correlations, but the fact that 3000 to 4000 years later, in or just before 433 BC, someone depicted on Marquis Yi of Zeng's clothes box a dragon and tiger revolving specifically around the northern celestial pole seems to confirm this.

The primary value of this finding to our study is to demonstrate that the people of this ancient Yangshao culture at Puyang appear to have looked to the *night* sky to establish a sense of security, and that already in the 5th–4th millennia BC ancient people of China seemingly observed the northern celestial pole and considered it central in their religion. It might be that the stellar configurations in the night sky centering on the stellar pole were thought to provide, likely sympathetically, the dead with protection by or communion with the high stellar powers of the pole. Furthermore, their religious recognition and sympathetic imitation of the pole also would have provided those who remained alive with the assurance that some form of life continued after death, for otherwise the living would not have incurred the enormous expense and taken such

remarkable care to bury someone so elaborately to conform to nocturnal stellar patterns, especially considering that they placed the center of the corpse of the deceased precisely where the northern celestial pole would be in relation to the stellar dragon and tiger.⁷

Indeed, the presence of the three other skeletons lying in the tomb with the tomb owner, at least one of which was apparently a sacrificial victim, and placed as they were in special niches carved into the walls of the tomb as if in shrines to gods of the north, east, and west, appears to confirm that the grave layout was not merely imitative but also religious in meaning. Thus, in this Neolithic culture of China of the 5th and 4th millennia BC, human death, and therefore most certainly also life, seemingly were locked intimately into the mysteries of the night sky's pivot, the northern celestial pole.

Additional Stellar Designs Produced by People of the Yangshao Culture

The Banpo Face of Repose

In the middle of the last century Chinese archaeologists uncovered an important Neolithic site of the Yangshao culture, on the banks of the Wei River, at Banpo village, in Xian, Shaanxi. The Banpo phase of the Yangshao culture dates to approximately 5000–3500 BC. Notable among the finds there and at the related Yangshao sites of Jiangzhai and Beishouling were several painted ceramic bowls that served as lids for child-burial urns. On these bowls were painted a face that combines features of a human visage and several fish. (**Figures 4ab**) Common to nearly all of the faces is a pair of conical appendages that emerge laterally from the base of the circular head. Both their shape and serrated surface (scales?) cause them to appear to be fishes. In addition, usually there is a similar third cone emerging from the top of the round head and, further, two fish or antenna touching the sides of the head at the ears.

⁷ It is unclear why the grave is turned 180° vis-à-vis the heavens such that the head of the corpse faces south. Perhaps these Yangshao people of Puyang saw the earthly existence as an inverse reflection, as a face reflected in a pool, of the primary, stellar, world.

As Jessica Rawson pointed out, while the overall meaning of this motif is likely religious, explanations do not come easily. She has suggested that the fish images represent the importance of that creature to the livelihood of the people of the Banpo riverside village,⁸ much as we saw of Father Heras's and Parpola's interpretations of the loop-in-square design found on Harappan tablets. In a general way this likely explains the origin of particularly the fish designs, but the overall complex facial motif in which the fishes participate remains unexplained, and the fish images themselves, thus projected by the people of Banpo, perhaps possess metaphorical meaning, as well.



Figure 4a

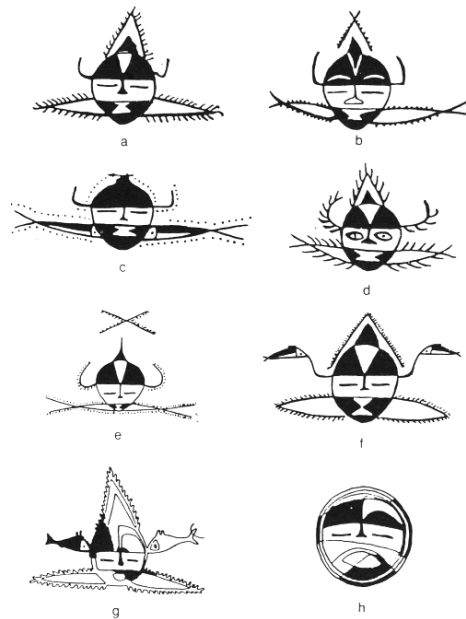


Figure 4b

Figure 4a. Fourth millennium BC Banpo (Yangshao) bowl painted with the face of repose and fish.

Figure 4b. Various renderings of the face found on Banpo pottery. From Rawson (1996): 33.

⁸ Jessica Rawson, ed., *Mysteries of Ancient China, New Discoveries from the Early Dynasties* (New York: George Brazillier, Inc., 1996): 34.

Various theories about what deeper concurrent meaning this facial motif might have possessed of course have also been proffered, including Marilyn Fu and K. C. Chang's suggestion that it is the face of a shaman, the fish being his/her familiars, but no evidence indicates in any way that Yangshao religious practices were shamanic.⁹ David Keightley offers that the painted lids might have belonged to the children when alive and thus accompanied them atop their burial urns in death. No evidence in particular supports this opinion, but Keightley is careful to indicate as well that of course the lids could be at the same time a child's possession and a religious symbol or artifact.¹⁰ Perhaps closer is the proposition that the motif is an early representation of the sun god — after all, the lids were directed toward the sky in burial.¹¹ Still, this theory does not explain anything about the complex motif beyond the simple outline of the spherical shape of the head, and no other evidence specifically supports this interpretation.

However, to direct our attention toward the sky may be appropriate, for we have seen from M45 at Puyang that as early as the 5th millennium BC people of the Yangshao culture seem to have recreated in their funerary arrangements stellar patterns on earth. Just as ancient Southwest Asian, Greek, Roman, Arab, and later European observers projected elaborate figures onto simple patterns that they discerned in the stars, so, it appears, did ancient peoples of China. In both cases we should not expect to find actual representative pictures of the constellations in the stars, but only suggestions. Just as we naturally allow room for imagination in considering the enormous disparity that exists between the stellar population that forms the outline of a constellation and the fully imagined image, so should we treat the stellar patterns from which the Yangshao Banpo people — as well as others, to be treated below — may have developed constellations as basic and suggestive only. Moreover, we should not be surprised at all by the fanciful or exotic nature of the

⁹ K. C. Chang (1983): 114.

¹⁰ Keightley (1998): 783.

¹¹ Other scholars have perceived a possible astronomical — and specifically solar — origin of the meanings of designs found on various Banpo artifacts, including (1) Z. T. Xu and Y. T. Jiang, in their *The Ancient Study of Sunspots in China and Its Modern Application* (Nanjing: Nanjing UP, 1989), and (2) David Pankenier, Z. T. Xu, and Y. T. Jiang, in their *East Asian Archaeoastronomy* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association [Gordon and Breach Science Publisher Imprint], 2000), p. 1–2.

creatures and forms that ancient peoples projected onto the stars. **Figure 5**, showing a 2nd millennium BC representation of the constellation Capricornus, the fish-goat, demonstrates both points richly.



Figure 5. Early form of Capricornus found on a boundary stone, c. 1600–1200 BC. From Hinke (1907).

Viewing the northern polar region of the night sky of c. 4000–3500 BC, we discern immediately in the center of the figure our familiar rectangle formed from the stars Mizar, Alioth, Pherkad, and Kochab (as well as Thuban / 10 Draconis). Moving outward from that rectangle, however, one's perception also gathers the impression of a circular pattern enveloping the rectangle. It is not a single circle but a larger, less precisely formed pattern created in fact from several concentric roughly circular star formations, including, it is noteworthy, the stars of (1) the handle and upper rim, and (2) the base of the basin of, the Dipper (**Figure 6a**). Thus, the outlining geometric forms of the motif of the face of repose appearing on the Banpo artifacts, the rectangle and the circle, are apparent in the stellar patterns found at and encircling the ancient northern celestial pole. This we can see clearly when we draw a crude circle (**Figure 6b**) following roughly the two innermost concentric rings (from **Figure 6a**) and the rectangle. We then can see how the rest of the motif, including the eyes, nose (from Thuban / 10 Draconis), and particular angular patterns of the forehead, mouth, and antennal fish, can be drawn into the fundamental outline. **Figure 6c** shows a stylized version of the completed stellar motif. If this projection is correct, then

the face formed by these stars would have circled the sky incessantly at the pole, never leaving the night sight of the Yangshao villagers as it maintained its tight circumpolar revolution. Its constant, unswerving presence might have been both the object and subject of much local myth and conjecture.

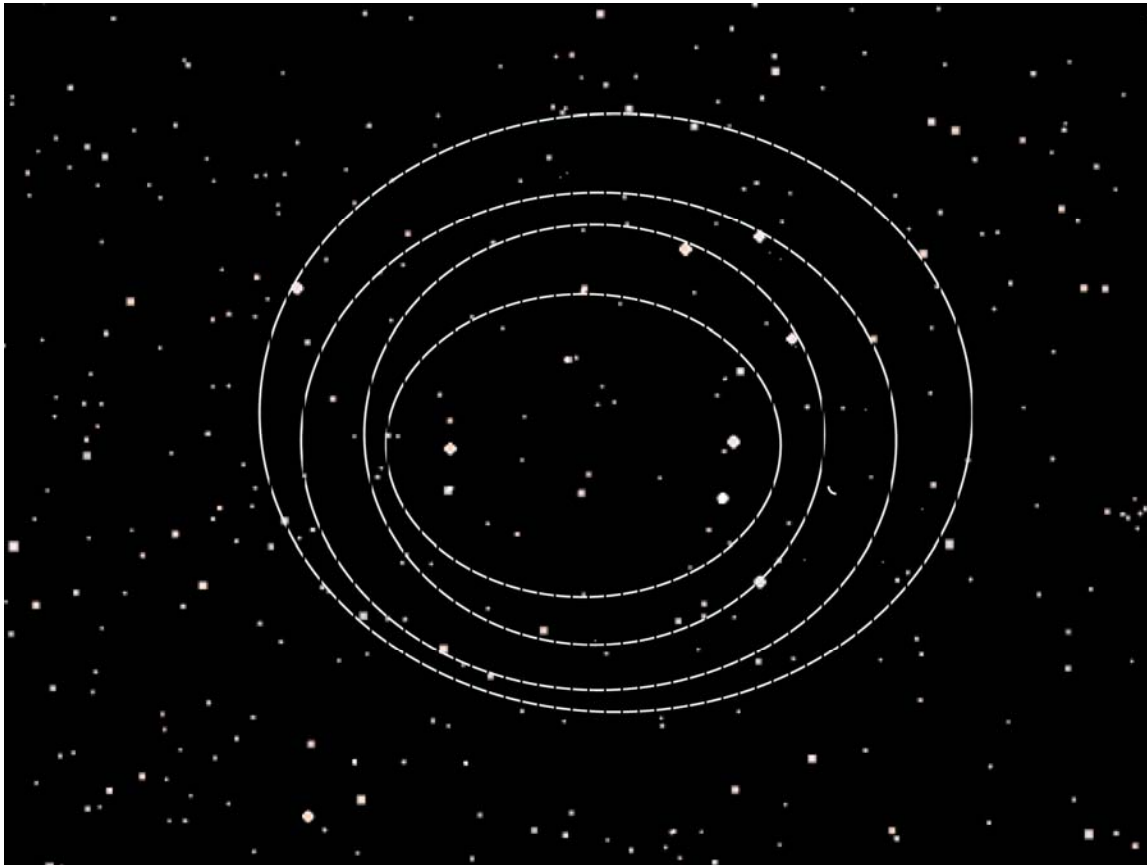


Figure 6a. Concentric circles discernible in the patterns of stars surrounding the polar rectangle of the 4th millennium BC.

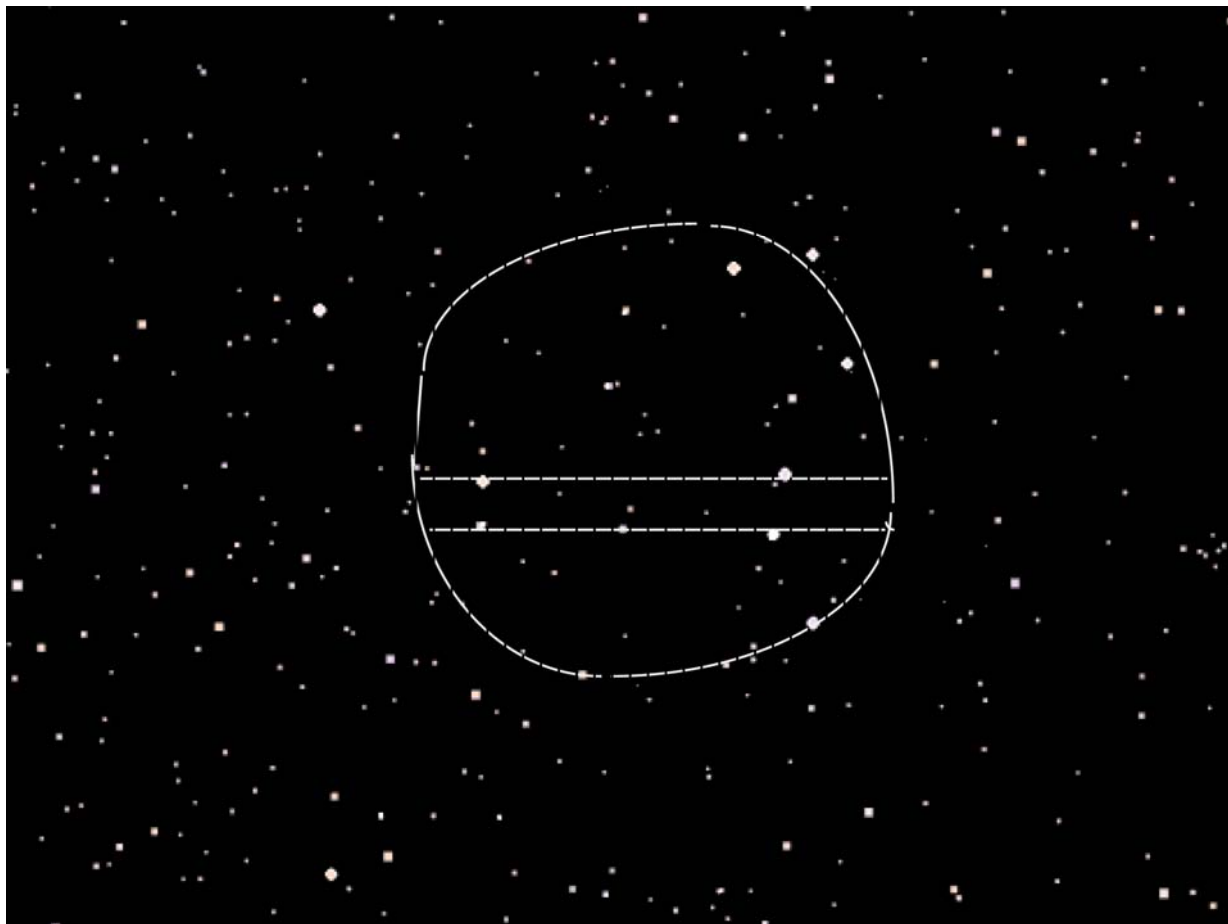


Figure 6b. Circle drawn around the polar quadrangle at the 4th millennium BC pole.

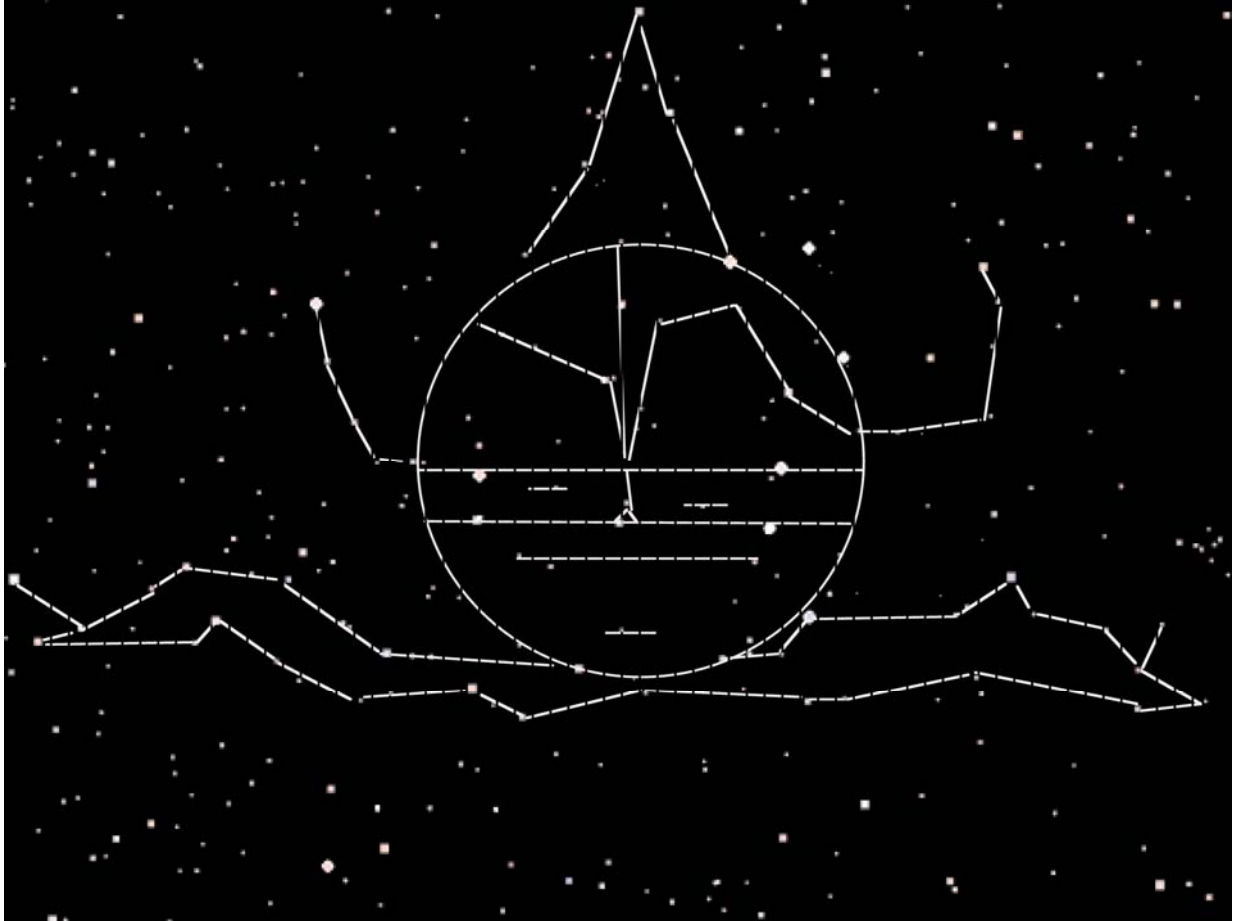


Figure 6c. Full representation of Banpo face of repose in the stars of the pole of the 4th millennium BC.

People of this culture would have projected onto patterns in the sky the images that were important to their lives — and deaths — and that thus they first formulated in their minds. Therefore the fish likely appear because, as Rawson suggested, in reality fish were a source of livelihood for the people who envisioned and painted the designs. We recognized a similar apotheosis of the important fish in the 3rd millennium BC Indus civilization.

The fact that these bowls were covers for childrens' burial urns suggests the possibility that the fish were intended as food for the dead child who had been placed within the urn.¹² On the

¹² For an analysis of Neolithic burial patterns and rites that demonstrates that the Neolithic peoples of China had already developed a concept of afterlife that caused the living to take care of the dead — including feeding them, much as we find in China from the Shang onward, see David Keightley, "Shamanism, Death, and the Ancestors:

other hand, the fish could also have symbolized comestibles intended for the god represented in the painting and who may have watched from the night sky. Like the ritual space provided by hollow bronzes in Chinese Bronze cultures some 1500–2500 years later, the rectangular center of the mask on the burial urn's lid could have represented symbolically the mouth of the god that would consume the goods and/or the opening through the heavens (the polar rectangle) to the dwelling enjoyed by the high god (and its "people" in death?) on the other side of the portal. It also could have symbolized the ritual space beneath the lid, the hollow urn, where the child slept in death, and thus could have been thought to represent an offering to the god.

We might ask further questions of the meaning of this face: Does the expression of repose or sleep represent death? If so, since people normally sleep at night, then is death associated with night, and is this the sleeping and deathly aspect of a god that in the daylight acts as the awakening and life-nurturing sun? Thus, is the painting intended as a death mask so that the sky god of parallel features will recognize it? Is the face thus simply the projection of the kin's hopes that the sky god will recognize its own face and, seeing itself propitiated with the fish, accept the child into this new dimension of life, i.e., what we call death, and protect it? Or, taking a different, cosmological, tack, does the face represent the high central polar god surrounded by its adjutant fish spirits, spirits that perhaps in a Platonic way represent the divine stellar souls created by the central high god to animate (and feed) the worldly creation below? That is, are they the spirits that animate the fishes in the rivers that feed the people who pray to the high god at the northern celestial pole? This very well could be.

On the other hand, Yang Meili has found, in the later north-central proto-Chinese and Chinese cultures of Erlitou, Erligang, Shang / Yin, and the early-mid Zhou, that blades (*ge* 戈) made from jade, stone, and bronze and placed in graves all served to protect the dead, and she has drawn connections between the burial customs of the Yangshao and these later cultures. From this one might wish to conjecture that the face-painted burial urn lids were intended to protect the dead within the urn from violent treatment in the afterlife.¹³ However, we need not read such a specific

Religious Mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000–1000 B. C.)," in *Asiatische Studien* LII:3 1998: 774–793.

¹³ Yang Meili 楊美莉, "Shi, yu ge de yanjiu" 石, 玉戈的研究 (下), in *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 15.3 (1997): 173–205. On Yangshao influence over the design of ritual objects used in the Erlitou culture, see idem,

practice of later civilizations back into this early culture, related as it is or not. After all, the childrens' burial urns are not weapons even symbolically, as are *ge* blades, and the face of repose appearing on the urn lids surely is not a warrior god. Rather, this gentle visage seems more akin to the described God of Psalms who protects his flock and provides their bounty. In Psalm 65 the bard sings in celebration to his Lord,

Thou dost visit the earth and give it abundance,
as often as thou dost enrich it
with the waters of heaven, brimming in their channels,
providing rain (or corn) for men.
For this is thy provision for it,
watering its furrows, levelling its ridges,
softening it with showers and blessing its growth.

Thou dost crown the year with thy good gifts
and the plam-trees drip with sweet juice;
the pastures in the wild are rich with blessing
and the hills wreathed in happiness,
the meadows are clothed with sheep
and the valleys mantled in corn,
so that they shout, they break into song.¹⁴

This is, of course, not at all to suggest that there was any connection of transmission between Banpo of the 4th millennium BC in the Wei / Yellow River corridors and the Psalmist of the Levantine 1st millennium BC, but rather to proffer that in any given geo-climatic region on earth ancient peoples tended to attribute their receipt of whatever sustained them to the good

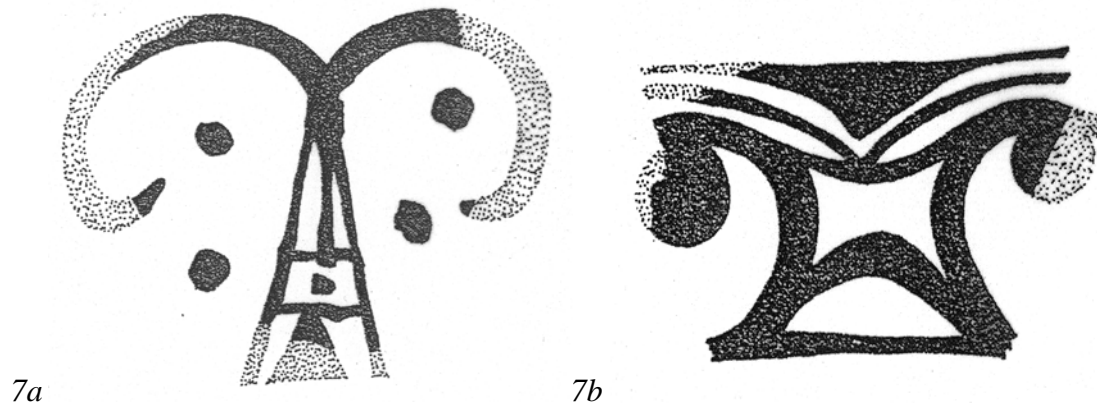
"Duokong shi, yu dao de yanjiu" 多孔石，玉刀的研究 in *Gugong xueshu jikan* 16.2 (1998): 17–74 (esp. 69).

¹⁴ Psalms 65:9–13, *The New English Bible, with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford UP, 1970): 663–664.

graces of their god(s). A similar and again culturally unrelated (untransmitted) example can be found in the exaltation among the people of the Indus civilization of the fish to become, apparently, a or the high god of this civilization. Where fish were critical, so were fish gods: gods feed and clothe the people, thus providing security. It therefore should not surprise us if the reposed visage produced by the riverine and thus fish-reliant Banpo folk, which was accompanied by attendant fishes, were conceived in the same way.

The Banpo Horned Ungulate's Head

Another design produced in the Yangshao culture perhaps lends further credence to the postulation that the rectangle visible at the center of the heavens of 3500 BC was important to these Neolithic people. This is the stylized design of what likely is a goat's or antelope's head, with horns. The design adorned pottery at the Banpo site (**Figures 7ab**).¹⁵



Figures 7ab. Yangshao Banpo designs on pottery. From Chang (1986): 115.

¹⁵ The horns in the recovered design could be those of either a goat or an antelope, since the remains of both types of animals — one domesticated and one hunted — have been found abundantly in Yangshao remains. See K. C. Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China, Fourth Edition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986): 112–113.

Viewing the celestial polar region in precisely the same orientation relative the northern horizon as in **Figures 6a-c**, we can see that aside from concentric rings surrounding the pole, there are also visible horn-like arcs spreading up and out from above the polar rectangle (**Figure 8**).

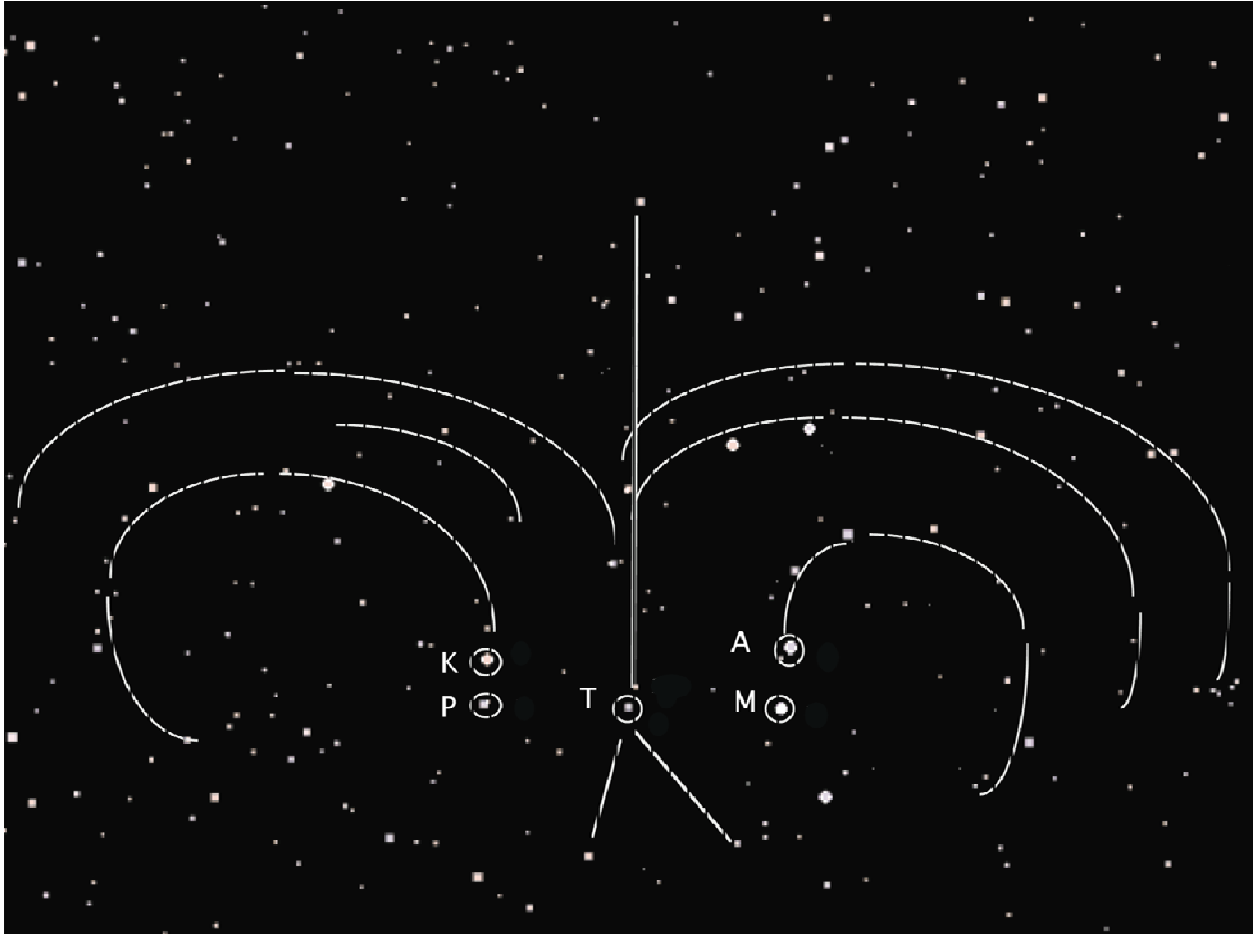


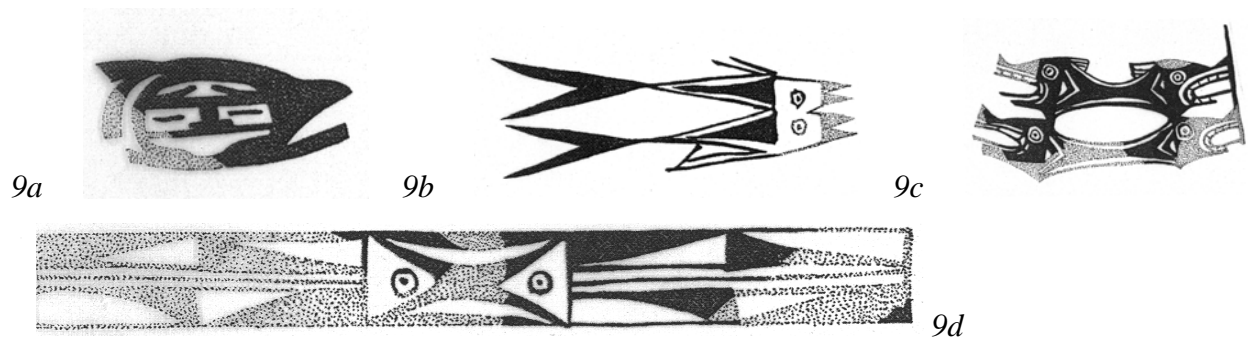
Figure 8. Ungulate head and horn patterns projected onto polar stars, viewed from the Wei River valley (34°N, 107°E), 3500 BC.

Here again familiar stars constitute the arcs (cf. **Figure 6b**). The only difference in the way that the images form in the pole is in how the viewer allows his or her mind to complete patterns that the polar stellar arrangements suggest. Both patterns, the face of repose and the ungulate's head and horns, can be discerned, even during a single viewing of the nocturnal celestial pole of c. 3500 BC. In the Banpo artistic representation of the ungulate's head (**Figures 7ab**), the exact placement of

the five stars within and beneath the arcs, possibly mimicking the five stars of the polar rectangle with Thuban at the center of the lower horizontal, suggests that this representation of an ungulate's head may have originated in an image visible in the northern celestial pole (**Figure 8**). Similarly, antler-shaped decorative designs recovered from other, later, northern cultures (the Dawenkou and Qijia) appear to be related to this Yangshao depiction of the horned ungulate's head/horns that appears to source in the northern celestial pole (cf. **Figures 7, 8, 13, and 14**). As in the case of the motif of the face of repose, it is again the five stars of the polar rectangle that could constitute the anchoring form of the image of the ungulate horns.

Surely the ungulate's head and horns, like the fishes adorning the visage of the face of repose, appear in artistic representation in this culture's artifacts because the ungulate was a crucial source of food and clothing (hides). Moreover, it now seems more likely, with this additional evidence of Banpo Yangshao people associating important foodstuffs with the northern celestial pole, that the polar god was, as in the near-contemporary Indus and the much later Levant, considered responsible for providing this beneficence.

Other Yangshao designs, including the rectangular-shaped dual-fish motif and yet another facial motif formed from two fish heads (**Figures 9a-d**), might also be abstractions of the rectangular pole. On the basis of these and other artifacts to be reviewed below it is reasonable to postulate that for people of the Neolithic Yangshao and other proto-Chinese cultures the northern celestial pole may have played a critical role in their religious — and artistic — life.



Figures 9a-d. Banpo, Yangshao squared fish decorative facial and other designs. From Chang (1986):115.

The Hanshan Jade Disk

A jade disk discovered in a tomb in east-central China is among the most remarkable ancient artifacts that archaeologists have uncovered in China in recent decades. Found on the chest of a corpse interred in a tomb in Lingjiatan, Anhui and dating to c. 3000 BC, the Hanshan jade disk was sandwiched between two pieces of jade of similar size that together form a tortoise — plastron and shell.¹⁶ This recalls immediately Sarah Allan's thesis that the turtle represented to the Shang ruling culture of the middle to late 2nd millennium BC Yellow River corridor the shape of the cosmos, the round shell being round heaven, the plastron being square earth. Indeed Li Xueqin has interpreted the shape in this way.¹⁷ In Volume III we will see, contrarily, that most likely just the opposite cosmographical interpretation of the geometry of the tortoise plastron and shell would be most appropriate.

From the placement of this jade disk at the center (over the heart) of the corpse and between jade pieces carved in the shapes of the shell and plastron of a tortoise, it seems, whether it relates to burial or other ritual, that the piece represents cosmogonical / cosmological thinking, much as in the case of the Banpo facial motif and other designs. Adding weight to this assessment is the diagram inscribed on the disk (**Figure 10**), which, through the directional arrows of which it largely consists, clearly represents a centrifugally active force with which it may have been hoped the deceased would in some way be able to identify in death.

¹⁶ Chen Jiujin 陈久金 and Zhang Jingguo 张敬国, "Hanshan chutu yupian tuxing shikao" 含山出土玉片图形试考, in *Wenwu* (1989.4): 14–17. The jade pieces were removed from a tomb at Lingjiatan, Hanshan, Anhui. They are catalogued as M4: 29 (plastron), M4: 30 (plaque), and M4: 35 (shell).

¹⁷ Li Xueqin, "A Neolithic Jade Plaque and Ancient Chinese Cosmology," in *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 27.5–6 (Nov.-Dec. 1992, Jan.-Feb. 1993): 1–8.

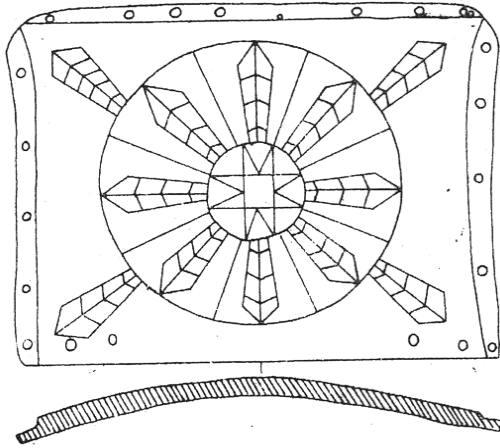


Figure 10. Hanshan (Anhui) jade disk, showing an apparently cosmogonic square-in-circle-in-square design that depicts the center and source of movement outward as a pair of double-trapezoid hexagons, with a square constituting its absolute center. From Zhang and Chen (1989): 15.

Around the edges of each of the three pieces are series of holes drilled entirely through the jade. Chen Jiujin and Zhang Jingguo have attempted to show very specifically how these patterns demonstrate that the Neolithic people responsible for making these patterns might have been thinking in terms of the temporal and spatial concepts that much later, in the Zhou and Han periods, drove the development of Chinese numerology.¹⁸ Of this I am less convinced, as the drilled holes seem to have served a physical rather than theoretical or religious function,¹⁹ but Chen and Zhang's theory is interesting and worthy of further investigation.

The shape and designs etched on the jade disk offer a rich symbolism. Beginning from the edges and moving inward, the first element of symbolism consists of the rectangle described by the borders of the jade. Second, an arrow points to each of the four corners of the disk. The stems of

¹⁸ Chen Jiujin & Zhang Jingguo (1989): 15–17.

¹⁹ The initial archaeologists' report describes the holes on the jade plastron and shell to be mutually opposed and used likely to tie the two halves together. See Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 安徽省文物考古研究所, eds., "Anhui hanshan lingjiatan xinshiqi shidai mudi fajue jianbao" 安徽含山凌家滩新石器时代墓地发掘简报, in *Wenwu* 1989.4: 6.

these arrows begin along the circumference of the outer of two concentric circles. Between the two circles are eight more arrows, again pointing outward. Within the inner circle lie two double-trapezoid hexagons hollowed in on the short sides such that the eight points of these hexagons (two points to each end of each hexagon) touch the inner circumference of the inner circle. On this inscribed pattern, then, as Chen Jiujin and Zhang Jingguo have indicated (independent of the drilled holes), in terms of numbers, things evolve apparently from something singular in the center to a multiplicity toward and at the edges. Although Wang Aihe explains this to be the sun in the center and arrows (indicating four among the eight in the space between the two concentric circles) pointing to the four directions (*siwei* 四維, i.e., N, S, E, & W),²⁰ this is not consistent with the symbolism expressed through the disk's engraved pattern: Why would the sun be square? And why would eight arrows represent four directions?

If we posit that the disk is a cosmogonic diagram, then the immobile center of the sky, the pole, would seem to be the more likely candidate to identify the meaning of the center of the jade disk's cosmograph: The square in the center of the symbol that is defined by the intersection of the two perpendicular double-trapezoid hexagons might portray the center of the heavens during the fourth millennium BC, which was a quadrilateral. In addition, just as in the case of the Banpo sleeping face motif, a circular pattern encompasses the central square form. This, then, could be another representation of the northern celestial pole, which, drawing from the jade illustration's imagery of outward expansion and increasing multiplicity from a singular center, the ancient people of the Hanshan region may have conceived to be the cosmogonic origin of all. From the placement of the tortoise-shaped jade apparatus on the chest of the grave owner over her heart and the inscribed diagram on the *upward-facing* central rectangular disk, it may be possible to postulate, as in the Yangshao cultures of the Puyang site and Banpo complex, that the center of the heavens was identified with a supreme celestial polar power possessing significant influence over issues of both life and death, or life and afterlife.

²⁰ Wang Aihe (2000): 55.

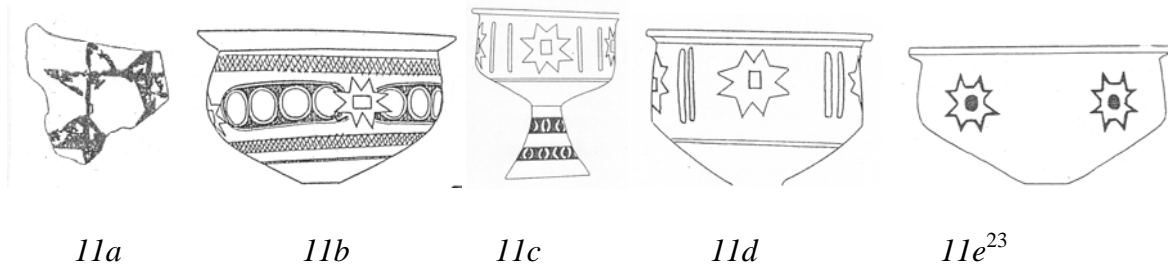
Double-Trapezoid Hexagon & Circle Designs

We have seen how various patterns of bright stars located at and near the northern celestial pole of the 5th–4th millennia BC may have influenced Neolithic people's development of images expressive of power in their lives. Artifacts recovered from other proto-Chinese Neolithic cultures may also reflect a similar importance to them of the rectangular / square center of the heavens. In cultures in China's traditional northwest (Shanxi / Gansu), east / northeast (North China Plain), and central / eastern Yangzi basin (from inland Lake Dongting to coastal Lake Tai, or Shanghai), a design combining angular and circular patterns strikingly similar to the center elements of the inscribed Hanshan jade disk appear inscribed on pottery. As others have noted of these occurrences of this "eight-point star" pattern, as it is often called,²¹ the design's widespread adoption across cultures signifies that it conveyed an important symbolism, and it occurs too similarly across cultures to have occurred independently. In this light, moreover, the wide geographic distribution of the design indicates that significant cultural interactions occurred among these diverse regions throughout the 4th and 3rd millennia BC.²² Below we consider these designs in rough chronological order as they occur on late-Neolithic and early-Bronze artifacts (to c. 2100 BC) from this region.

First, this design appears on numerous clay vessels recovered from many Dawenkou (Shandong; Yellow River effluvial plain) tombs that date to c. 5000–3000 BC: an eight-point-star shape composed of two double-trapezoid hexagons surrounds — or forms — a central square whose boundaries define the intersection of the two trapezoids (**Figures 11a-e**).

²¹ I employ this appellation only begrudgingly, for although its syllabic simplicity is attractive, this same simplicity distorts unnecessarily salient elements of the structure of the design. First, it ignores the circle within which the "star" usually occurs. Furthermore, it neglects the fact that in most cases the design is formed from the intersection of two double-trapezoid hexagons, not simply eight points.

²² While Yang Meili believes that this pattern developed from the flower-petal or leaf designs painted on pottery from the Miaodigou phase of Yangshao culture in the northwest (1998: 25–29), I do not see a correlation between the square-perimetered four- to five-petaled designs from Miaodigou and the circular-perimetered double-trapezoid/eight-pointed hexagon design found in later Dawenkou, Qingliangang, and Daxi cultures. The latter design is so particular that it must be considered separate and to have been developed consciously.

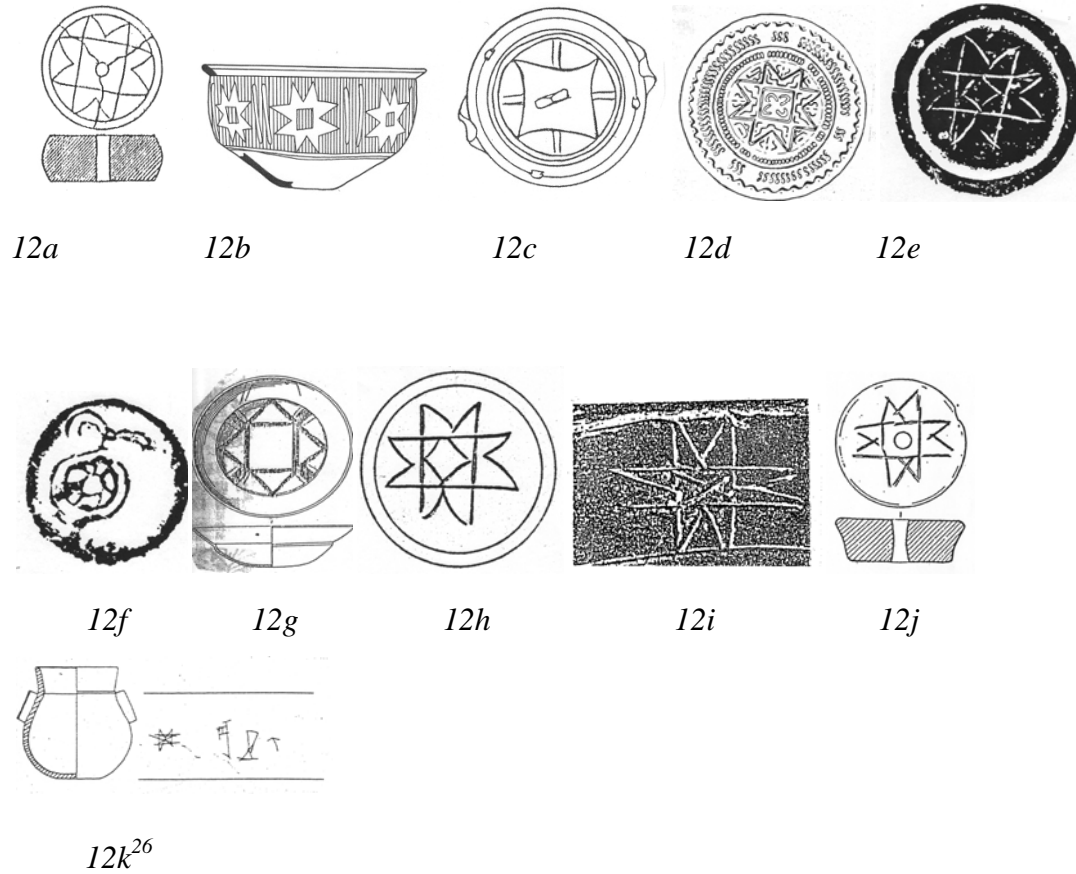


Second, a series of later (c. 4th–3rd millennia BC) cultures of the Huai and Yangzi Rivers effluvial valleys and coastal plains, from the Huai River in the north to beyond Hangzhou Bay in the south, and from as far west as Lake Dongting in inland Hunan to coastal Lake Tai and Shanghai in the east, like the Dawenkou culture, employed the eight-point-star design to adorn mostly their grave-good pottery. These cultures belonged to the two large cultural complexes of Daxi 大溪 in the Yangzi central-west (Lake Dongting region) and Qingliangang 青蓮崗 (Lake Tai region) in the coastal east. They include the Daxi cultural site uncovered at Tangjiagang 湯家崗 (Lake Dongting) and the Qingliangang cultural sites of Qingliangang (at Huai'an, Jiangsu),²⁴

²³ 11a: Shandongsheng wenwu guanlichu, eds., *Dawenkou* (Beijing: Wenwu 1997): 114; 11b: Li Zongshan (1996): 284; 11c: Shandongsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, eds., *Dawenkou xuji — Dawenkou yizhi di er, san ci fajue baogao*, hereafter *DWXXJ* (Beijing: Kexue, 1997): 163; 11d: *DWXXJ*: 163; 11e: *DWXXJ*: 167.

²⁴ Aside from the Tangjiagang, all of these cultures (except technically also Jing'an, for which see the following note) helped comprise what usually is called the Qingliangang complex. The Qingliangang in fact is considered to have both a northern and southern component, the northern (represented by the site of Qingliangang itself in Huai'an, Jiangsu) being virtually identical with the Dawenkou complex of Shandong. The southern Qingliangang complex includes most of the cultural developmental phases of the Nanjing-Shanghai-northern Jiangsu region during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC. In the text above Qingliangang refers to both this broad group of cultures and to the specific dig site of that name. Lothar von Falkenhausen has commented on how the names given the culture represented by the Qingliangang cultural complex, i.e., Qingliangang or Dawenkou, represent no real difference in interpretation of the material record but rather modern political differences based on local provincial affiliation, i.e., Jiangsu (Qingliangang) versus Shandong (Dawenkou). See von Falkenhausen's "The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology," in Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, eds., *Nationalism, politics, and the practice of archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 203. Still, as my description above in this footnote demonstrates, the bifurcation of the Qingliangang into northern and southern groups, with the northern group identified with the Dawenkou, appears to have resolved this minor archaeo-political tug-of-war while not sacrificing

Jing'an 靖安 in Jiangxi,²⁵ Bei Yinyangying 北陰陽營 in Nanjing, and Maqiao 馬橋, Songze 崧澤, and Liangzhu 良渚 in the Lake Tai/Hangzhou Bay region. These cultures' recreations of the double-trapezoid hexagon design with square center are shown in **Figures 12a–k**.



archaeo-anthropological accuracy.

For many of the artifacts shown in **Figures 11 & 12**, one may also consult Shanghai shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 上海市文物管理委员会, "Shanghai shi minxing qu maqiao yizhi 1993–1995 nian fajue baogao" 上海市闵行区马桥遗址 1993–1995 年發掘報告 (*Kaogu xuebao* [hereafter *KGXB*] 1997.2); Shanghai shi wenwu bowuguan weiyuanhui 上海市文物保管委员会, "Shanghai shi qingbuxian songze yizhi de shijue" 上海市青浦县崧澤遗址的试掘 (*KGXB* 1962.2): Fig 6, after p. 8; Fig. 12, p. 16; Fig. 14, p. 19.

²⁵ Technically the Jing'an site belongs to the late-Neolithic Xuejiagang cultural complex whose sites are found mostly in Anhui province, but since Xuejiagang was close to and fluent with the Majiabang-Songze Qingliangang complex, here I lump it together with these cultures that obviously influenced it.

²⁶ 12a: Bei Yinyangying culture, from Nanjing bowuyuan, eds., "Jiangsu pixian sihuizhen dadunzi yizhi tanjue baogao," *KGXB* 1964.2: 18; 12b: Bei Yinyangying culture, from *ibid.*: 34; 12c: Bei Yinyangying culture, from

In the Tangjiagang and some Songze cultures' representation of the design, within the central square formed by the intersection of the two hexagons lies a regular diamond, or square swiveled 45° to stand on its end (**Figures 12e, 12g, 12h**). If we allow that the square may have recreated the polar quadrilateral, then this pivoted, squared diamond may reflect a simple turning of the polar square vis-à-vis the earth. In two cases, one on a Songze artifact (**Figure 12f**) and the other on a Jing'an artifact (**Figure 12j**), this diamond becomes simplified to be a circle within the central square. These designs could depict the pole star Thuban symbolically cocooned within the polar square/rectangle.

It is further noteworthy that in these cultures' adaptation of the motif of the square formed from the intersection of two dual-trapezoid hexagons, in most cases a circle, or a series of concentric circles, surrounds the "eight-point star" that forms the central square. In its circumscription of the internal square / eight-point star by a circular perimeter, this redesigned square-in-circle motif of mostly the Yangzi effluvial basin seems to relate closely to the jade disk of nearby Hanshan (square plate with square-center / eight-point-star design enclosed within two circular plates) and the earlier Banpo face of repose (square within circle) painted on burial urn lids. These Yangzi cultures, then, may have shared with the other cultures of Neolithic China reviewed thus far what could be a tendency to observe the geometry of the contemporary heavenly pole.

The perpendicular double-trapezoid hexagons motif surfaces again late in the 3rd millennium BC in not a Neolithic but now an early Bronze culture, and not among the eastern cultural complexes but now back in the old northwest, out in Inner Asia, beyond even the old Banpo and related sites of the Yangshao cultures of the Wei and Yellow River basins. This northwestern culture, the Qijia, which, as we have seen in Volume I, Chapter 1, is known for its metalworking, produced a copper mirror that on its reverse side is decorated with a design too

ibid.: 35 & Plate 14, no. 2; 12d: Daxi Tangjiagang culture, from Mou Yongkang, "Heki sô no kinô," *Nitchû bunka kenkyû* 11: 111; 12e: Songze culture, from Shanghai shi wenwu baoguan, eds., "Shanghai shi qingpuxian songze yizhi de shijue," *KGXB* 1962.2: 8–9; 12f: *Ibid.*: 8–9; 12g: Songze culture, from Yang Meili (1998): 28; 12h: Songze culture, from *KGXB* 1962.2: 19; 12i: Songze culture, from Yang (1998): 28; 12j: Xuejiagang Jing'an culture, from *ibid.*: 28; 12k: Liangzhu culture, from Zhimin An, "Liangzhu wenhua ji qi wenming zhuyinsu de pouxi — jinian liangzhu wenhua faxian liushi zhounian," *Kaogu* 1997.9: 79.

similar to the samples from Dawenkou and especially the Huai-Yangzi valley and coastal plains cultures to have emerged independently (**Figure 13**).



Figure 13. Qijia culture bronze mirror back. From Lin Yun (1986): 252 (51, no. 9).

In this case several concentric circles encase a darkened circle that contains a seven-pointed star. The star shape appears to derive from the earlier double-trapezoid hexagons but distorts the original design with the loss of one of the points. (Apparently the original specific meaning of the carefully etched hexagons was by this time, c. 2100 BC, in this culture lost.) Within yet two more concentric circles in the center of the seven-point star are two half-circles, like two halves of a grain seed, within each of which is a single line drawn parallel to the diameter of the circle. This recalls particularly the circular centers of the three designs found on the Songze, Jing'an, and Tangjiagang artifacts (**Figures 12a, 12f, & 12j; cf. also Figure 11e**), and the lineal movement of the design far upstream the Yangzi from the coast suggests strongly that this particular incarnation of the motif moved to Qijia north / northwest from the upper-Yangzi Hunan Daxi cultural complex, of which the Tanjiagang site constitutes a member.

Finally, on this Qijia design adorning the copper mirror, near its periphery and set between two peripheral concentric circles, two mounds arise like antler stubs. Similar antler stems appear elsewhere in Neolithic imagery, atop circle designs, but often, as we have seen in the case of the Banpo goat's head design, the small mounds extend into full horns or, perhaps, feathers. A similar design occurs in an object made from bone and tooth, and it was produced by the Dawenkou culture (**Figure 14**).

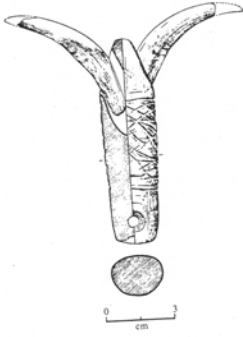


Figure 14. Bone and ivory object mimicking ovicaprid horns — and the pole? From Chang, AAC (1986): 170.

Dualism at the Pole

Thus far we cannot help but notice a dualism apparent in these designs occurring across cultures: while in most examples two hexagons dominate the area within a central circle, in the mirror from Qijia the halved circle in the center of the piece, along with the single line within each half, provides the dualism. Other dualisms of the center are apparent across late Neolithic and early Bronze cultures, and, as we shall see in our continuing review, they appear to increase in significance over time throughout the Bronze period.²⁷ This dualism might arise from the clearly dualistic nature of the absolute pole of the night sky from between approximately 3500 to 2000 BC. As we know, during this period the stars Thuban and 10 Draconis shared the central position at the pole. It is possible that this pair of stars forms the two halves of the center of the Qijia mirror design. We recall from Volume I, Chapter 3 that the later Chinese called these two stars Taiyi (Great One) and Tianyi (Heavenly One) and that, Taiyi indicating the pole star, this tradition had to have begun during the period when Thuban was situated spot on the pole and thus qualified to be “Taiyi,” whatever the people of these various Neolithic cultures may have called it. It is precisely these Neolithic cultures reviewed in these chapters of Volume II that could have begun singling

²⁷ Some similar designs, including crosses, swastikas, and what look to be split-nut or — grain seed motifs, occur on pots found in sites of the Yangshao and related northwestern Neolithic cultures; see AAC: 143–150.

out Thuban and Draconis 10 to take on religious / cosmological significance that later, in the case of Taiyi perhaps c. 1500 BC and on (see Volume III, Chapters 3 and 6), took on the celestial polar names of first Taiyi and much later Tianyi. As we shall see in Volume III, "Taiyi" began as a Shang invention, and "Tianyi" was a late-Zhou creation. Thus can be explained both of these later names and the contemporary dualism of the center.

It is also possible that the dualism of the perpendicular double-trapezoid hexagons motif that appears in noteworthy designs of the Dawenkou-Qingliangang, Hanshan, Songze, Maqiao, Bei Yinyangying, Xuejiagang Jing'an, and Daxi Tanjiagang cultures after about 3000 BC reflected instead the rotation of the two sets of stars, Mizar & Alioth of Ursa Major and Pherkad & Kochab of Ursa Minor, that form the short ends of the now-familiar rectangle that dominated the pole virtually throughout the late-Neolithic period and even down to approximately 1000 BC (**Figure 15**).

The perpendicularly placed double-trapezoid hexagons, or, more simply, the end-imploded rectangles, of these designs may reproduce the polar rectangle in two cardinal orientations amid its diurnal 360° spin at the pole. Thus, this design may well constitute an attempt to reflect not a static picture but a time-lapse portrait of the spinning of the rectangle at the NCP — China's first movie? It therefore may represent an attempt to depict a four-dimensional view of the polar godhead, in three spatial and one temporal dimensions. The dualism here, then, would be one of both space and time.

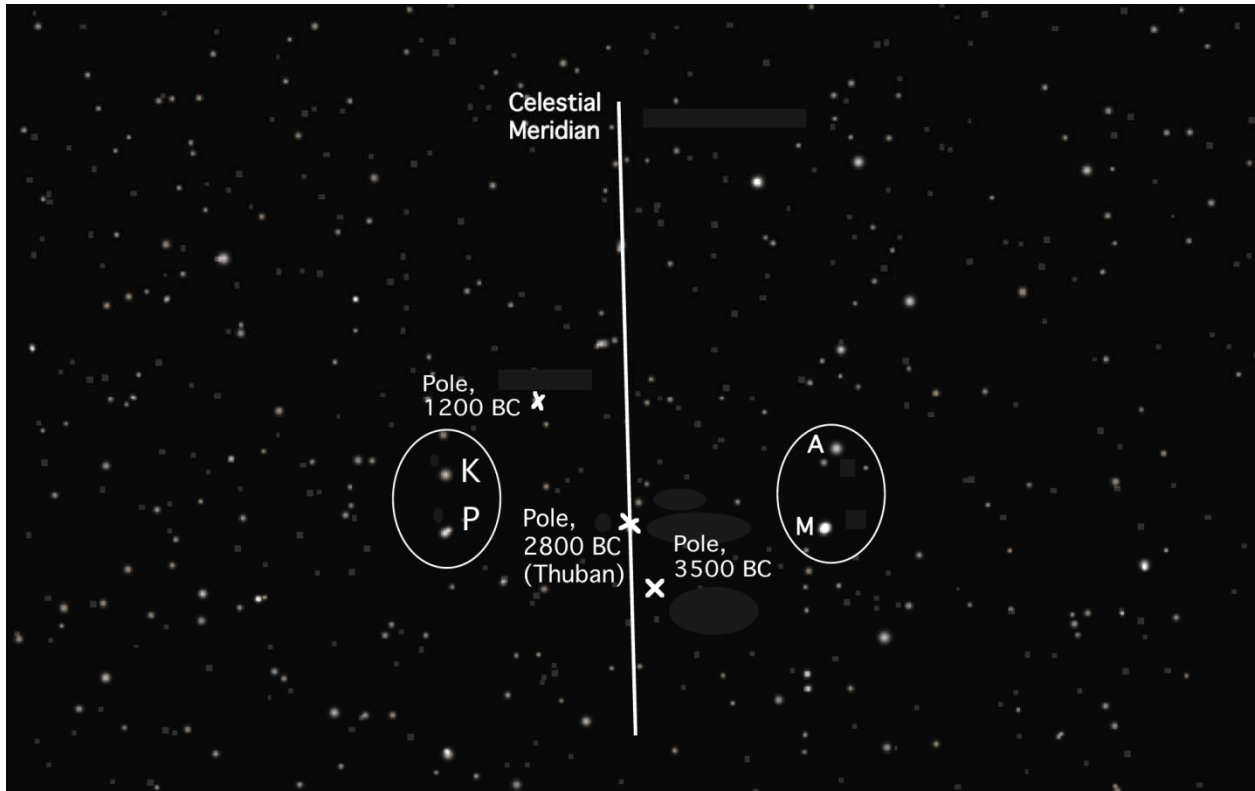


Figure 15. Dualism at the pole, c. 3500–1200 BC, constituted from two pairs of stars: (1) Thuban and 10 Draconis, and (2) Kochab-Pherkad and Alioth-Mizar. Actual pole is shown (X) for 3500, 2800, and 1200 BC.

Another dualism involving the polar rectangle may be afoot in additional Neolithic designs. The central meridian of the contemporary heavens that bisects the rectangle at the absolute pole of the period is formed partly from the pole stars Thuban (11 Draconis) and 10 Draconis, and it constitutes the tail of the Western constellation Draconis, the Serpent. Drawing this line through the center of the rectangle creates the geometry that eventually, in the Shang, came to mean “center” in the character 中 (**Figure 16**), which in Mandarin is pronounced *zhong*.²⁸ In the Neolithic Dawenkou culture this consciously constructed geometric design was already extant, etched into pottery remains that have been recovered from 4th-millennium BC Dawenkou

²⁸ For archaic pronunciations of words attached to graphs, see Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). For *zhong*, see p. 621.

sites.²⁹ The design is not so casual a construct as to be meaningless, and it may well reproduce the stellar patterns at the Neolithic NCP that later, in the Shang, came indeed to possess meaning that was critical both politically and religiously.

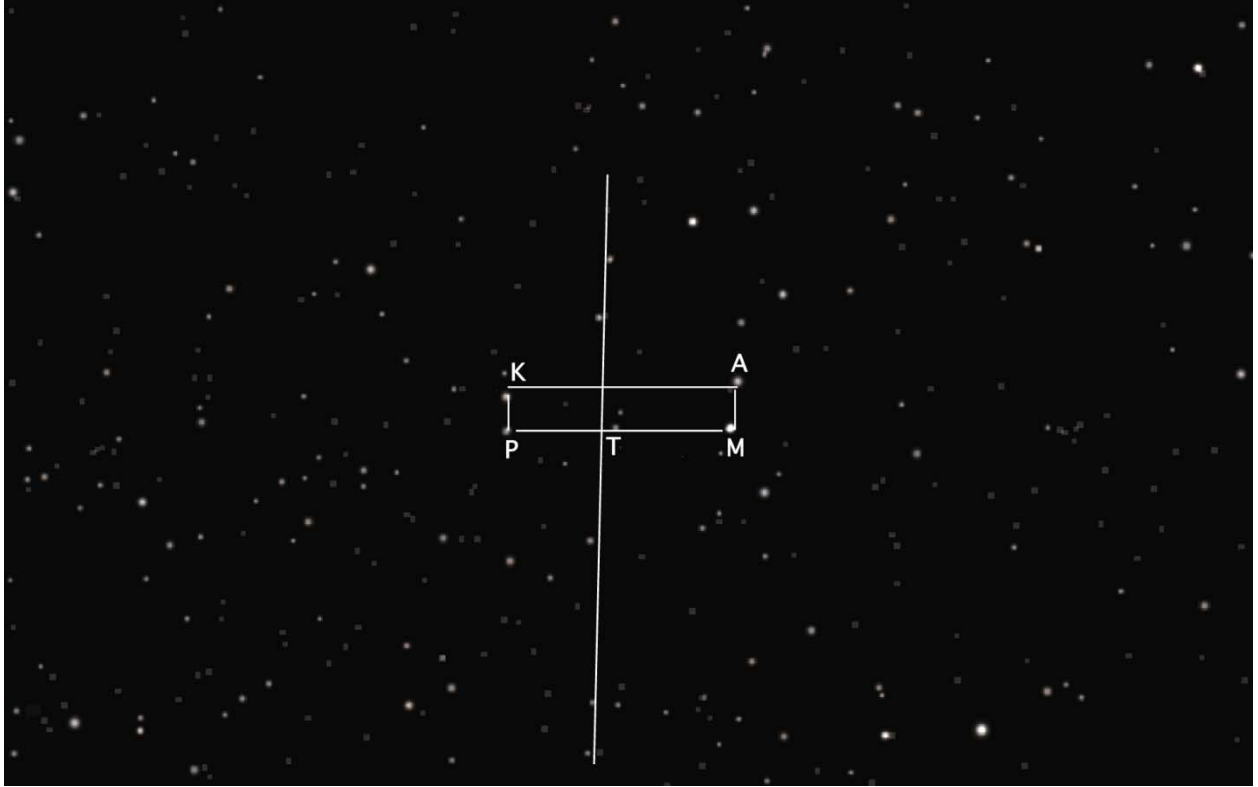


Figure 16. "Centrality" (*zhong*): the celestial meridian bisecting the northern polar rectangle of c. 3500–2000 BC.

The point here is that the dualism of the two sets of circumpolar stars Mizar & Alioth and Pherkad & Kochab may have been recognized, since their geometry surrounding the meridian of the heavens and polar center might have been mimicked on earth in the form of the early symbol of 中, a design that from Shang times and on has meant, very significantly, center (and, specifically, *political* center that in turn necessarily relied on a *sacred* center; see Volume III, Chapter 6, below). This dualism of the polar rectangle's two sets of bright circumpolar stars appears ever

²⁹ Chang (1986): 151.

more prominent in motifs produced from coastal jade and Yellow River bronze-working cultures from about 3000 BC down to c. 750 BC (see below, this volume, Chapter 2).

Thus, two related traditions of the pole may have developed from the 4th millennium BC and on. One may have involved observation of a tight dualism of the pole stars, Taiyi and Tianyi (Thuban and 10 Draconis), while the other could have evolved from a looser view of the pole that recognized the two bright sets of stars marking the ends of the lengths of the polar rectangle, or the spinning rectangle itself, or both.

In a brief aside, here we may question whether or not the dualistic nature of later Chinese numerological schemes that formulated particularly in or alongside the *Changes of Zhou*, i.e., the *Zhou Yi* 周易 or *Yi Jing* 易經, may have developed from this dualism of the pole during the Neolithic period. We speak here not primarily of the dualistic system of *yin* and *yang*, for these originally environmental terms that denoted the exposed and shaded sides of hills and mountains were applied to the binary system of the *Changes* only as late as the 4th century BC. But the elemental bifurcation of the universe into primary principles of light and dark, on and off (generation and rest), and so on, on which the *Changes* was based and which dates to no later but perhaps earlier than the early-Zhou period, and which binarization experienced its full foliation in the numerological schemes of ontogenic and ontological philosophies of the Han period, might have originated in the dualistic nature of the Neolithic-Bronze pole, in Thuban and 10 Draconis. For Thuban is the brighter, and 10 Draconis, its mate at the pole, the significantly dimmer, of the two.

In fact, in what is probably a middle-Han numerology (1st century BC?), the "Numerology of Taiyi" (*Taiyi shu* 太乙數) system that by the Latter Han period had become adjudged apocryphal,³⁰ the celestial polar god Taiyi is demonstrated to have encompassed these two aspects of the binary universe. According to this system, Taiyi's charge was to oversee the created universe. Inherent in his central management of the cosmos from his perch atop the sky was his embodiment of the odd and even numbers that were believed to constitute that universe, that is,

³⁰ For more involved discussions of this text and its cosmogonic / cosmogenic system, see both Volume 1, Chapter 3 (Appendix) above, and Volume III, Chapter 6, below.

respectively *yang* and *yin* or light and dark powers or principles of creation, sustenance, death, and regeneration. Although, as we are aware from the discussion in Volume I, Chapter 3, in Han times Taiyi was projected onto the star Alioth, we understand that likely in Neolithic (as well as confirmably in later imperial) times Taiyi's seat was at Thuban. Thus, when we note the Han-period Taiyi's embodiment of both *yin* and *yang* creative pneuma, we can wonder if this endogenous dual nature of Taiyi was a product of the ancient pole's having been dual — light and dark — in nature. If so, then "Taiyi" would have represented both Thuban and 10 Draconis, for in these numerological schemes Taiyi is singular but its nature dual: it produces all dualistic numerological permutations from within its singular essence (e.g. all of the *yang* numbers 9 and 7 and the *yin* numbers 8 and 6 emerge from the 1 of Taiyi). Indeed, the surviving Han text of the system of the "Numerology of Taiyi," the *Qian Zuo Du*, explicitly identifies Tianyi with Taiyi, explaining that the former is an alternative name for the latter.³¹ Therefore, in such schemes, Taiyi has absorbed the essences of light and dark that originally may have been embodied in the *two* ancient polar stars Thuban and 10 Draconis. In fact the naming of the two stars Taiyi and Tianyi might reflect this: during the Shang and throughout most of the Zhou periods the Sinitic and early Chinese forms of *tai* 太 and *tian* 天 were cognates with both one another and the basic character from which they both derived, *da* 大. All three characters were used as loans likely to differentiate in written form people or objects whose spoken names were homophonic (see Volume III, Chapter 6 for further discussion of this issue). Then it is very possible that the name Tianyi originates in a Zhou-period recognition and delineation of this dimmer mate of the main star of polar Taiyi and that the name of Tianyi, so similar to that of its brighter partner, was chosen simply in order to differentiate the dimmer aspect of Taiyi from the main, bright, old pole star, Thuban. It did not hurt, either, that from Zhou times and on *tian* has meant "sky" or "heaven(s)." Then Tianyi seems to have been recognized to be simply the dimmer aspect of Taiyi, while the name Taiyi thereafter came to refer to only its brighter aspect, the star Thuban (or, in the Han, Alioth). This is supported by the fact that, as mentioned previously in Volume I, Chapter 3, according to Sima Qian the

³¹ *Yi wei* 易緯, "Qian Zuo Du" 乾鑿度, *juan* 卷 2, p. 2a (2:2a), in *Juzhen congshu* 聚珍叢書, collected in *Baibu congshu* 百部叢書 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1965), Series 27, Case 4.

primary name of Tianyi in his time was not Tianyi but "Yinde," or "the Power of *Yin*."³² In the *HNZ*, too, Tianyi was identified to be also Taiyi, or "Great Yin," the primary indicator of spatial-temporal revolutions of the heavens.³³ Although to Sima Qian the name Yinde (and Tianyi) denoted not 10 Draconis but three stars lying in front of the open top of the cup of the Dipper, we know that Sima did not necessarily follow traditions strictly but in fact updated them with what surely were Han observations. As in the case of Taiyi, Sima's "Yinde" (Tianyi) certainly was an inherited name that he then applied to his updated stellar cartography. Then as an alternative, but really Sima's primary, name for Tianyi, "Yinde" expresses of the traditional star of Tianyi, 10 Draconis, precisely what I have argued above, that it very well could have evolved its identity by having been recognized to be the dim, dark, or "off" aspect of Taiyi, while Thuban was seen as the bright, light, or "on" aspect of this high polar god or spirit. As the ancient and primary seat of Taiyi, in some traditions Thuban continued as that spirit's namesake. In or soon after the 4th century BC, when the concepts of *yang* and *yin* were applied to the systems of the *Changes* and related correlative cosmological constructs, then these aspects would have come to be known as *yang* and *yin* — thus did the name Yinde, Power of Yin, develop for Tianyi.

At any rate, the dualism of the polar stars can explain how Taiyi could have been conceived as a singularity that by its nature creates all multiplicity. Taiyi's inherent multiplicity in its singularity is also consistent with Han treatments of the pole as a stellar region (*Zigong, Ziwei*) rather than a single star (*beiji xing* referred to the collective *stars* of the northern celestial polar region), which as we have seen was necessitated by the fact that by the Han there existed no true pole star. And this latter fact being so, then the tradition of observing the dual aspects of the polar Taiyi could have begun when Taiyi (11 Dra) and 10 Draconis were at or very near the pole during the 4th-3rd millennia BC.

³² *Shiji* 27: 1290.

³³ *HNZ* 3: 387.

Hongshan Astronomical Observation and Ritual Platforms

In most cases the pictorial evidence from Neolithic China presented thus far invites a possible cosmogonic / cosmological interpretation. The contexts and the specific and common square-in-circle designs of the painted Banpo face of repose and the inscribed Hanshan jade disk, as well as the configurations found in the Puyang M45 grave, support, but of course cannot confirm, this explanation. In addition, the double-trapezoid hexagon (double perpendicular rectangle) designs produced by Yellow and Yangzi River effluvial valley cultures, which can be adduced to further support an astronomical interpretation of the religions of people of Neolithic cultures of China, are so similar that they must have emerged from a related, and likely diffused, symbolism.³⁴

With regard to this latter design as it appears in artifacts produced by the Neolithic eastern coastal cultures, as Yang Meili has proffered, it seems to demonstrate these people's very early recognition of astronomical and calendrical patterns.³⁵ Indeed, although with so much left to be discovered archaeologically it remains hazardous to attempt to identify the *locus primus* of a system from which an astronomical awareness (and not merely heavenly observation) may have diffused, the northeastern Hongshan culture (c. 3300–2800 BC) of present Liaoning province seems at present to be a reasonable target of consideration. For example, concentric circles that, as we have seen above, perhaps abstracted a cosmogony (cf. the Banpo face of repose and the

³⁴ The intimate relations that obviously existed between the northeastern coastal Dawenkou and the cultures of the Qingliangang complex of the eastern Huai-Yangzi effluvial and coastal regions have been recognized since the 1970s. K. C. Chang has seen a diffusion to have occurred moving mostly from north (Yellow River) to south (Yangzi River) both inland along river valleys and along the seaboard (Chang Kwang-chih, "Zhongguo kaoguxue lunwen ji" 中國考古學論文集 [Taipei: Lianjing, 1995]: 51), although he has also recognized the likelihood of mutual influences having occurred among northern and southern, as well as inland and coastal, cultures from early times (see his "China on the Eve of the Historical Period," in Loewe and Shaughnessy [1999]: 54–59). See Luan Fengshi's article for a brief account of how a complex interchange must have occurred among west and east Yellow River civilizations (e.g. Yangshao and Dawenkou) and up and down the seaboard for millennia during the Neolithic (Luan Fengshi 栾丰实, "Shi lun Yanshao shidai dongfang yu zhongyuan de guanxi" 试论仰韶时代东方与中原的关系, in *Kaogu* 1996.4: 45–58).

³⁵ Yang Meili (1998): 17.

Hanshan inscribed jade disk), also occur in the design of a circular stone ritual platform atop a hilltop grave that was unearthed near a massive contemporary temple complex at the Hongshan culture site of Niuheliang. Doubly striking is the square stone ritual platform atop a second grave directly adjacent to the concentric-circle platform, on which was found at the center of the platform a rectangular altar lying concentrically within a second — and also concentrically placed — square: the presence of a rectangle in the center of the two concentric square shapes that apparently together formed an altar of worship and strongly connote the polar rectangle of this time, c. 3500–3000 BC, may indicate that these people were inclined toward astronomical observation. (**Figure 17**)³⁶

Feng Shi has attempted to identify the concentric circles at Niuheliang as together forming a three-ring astronomical observatory that measured the sun's movements (i.e., the ecliptic) through the year. On this basis he has argued further that the rings constitute an altar to circular heaven; he has taken the concentric squares to be an altar to the earth.³⁷ These platforms can be plausibly explained to have served as astronomical observatories, and, as Feng indicates, their use probably involved marking the movements of heavenly bodies, though such marking would have been very crude and astrological, by no means either astronomically or mathematically

³⁶ For a general description of this site, along with the site at Dongshanzui (also covered here, below), see Lei Congyuan, "Neolithic Sites of Religious Significance," in Rawson (1996): 220–223.

³⁷ Feng Shi, "Hongshan wenhua sanhuan shitan de tianwenxue yanjiu" 紅山文化三環石壇的天文學研究, in *Beifang wenwu* 北方文物 1993.1: 9–17. According to Feng's speculations, the three rings signify the ecliptic at the summer and winter solstices (two rings) and, between them, the spring and fall equinoxes (one ring). The center of the circles was then the pole of the heavens. Therefore, Feng suggests, the platform of rings describes an early, rough vision of the heavens and should be understood to be an altar to heaven. Feng's vision is admirable and his explanation of the circular platform very credible. However, Feng also attempted to define the square/rectangular platform (Z2) as an altar to earth, to accompany its circular neighbor, his altar to heaven. Feng thus wished to trace what is universally believed to be the timeless Chinese conception of heaven as circular and earth as square back to the Hongshan culture of the late-4th millennium BC (which position when applied to any time prior to the 2nd c. AD is, as I will show in Volume III, utterly mistaken). This is far too tendentious, lacking as it does appropriate analysis of the intervening thousands of years of intellectual and cultural developments. I suggest rather that known contemporary sources of stimulus to Neolithic people, as well as other contemporary evidence reflective of it, should be considered as more authoritative for the period. As we have seen, such evidence suggests that the Neolithic use of a rectangle or square motif may rather connote and reflect the center of the heavens.

sophisticated. All of their proximity to the large temple complex, their placement on a nearby hill to enhance viewing of the heavens, and their shapes suggest an astrological symbolism.

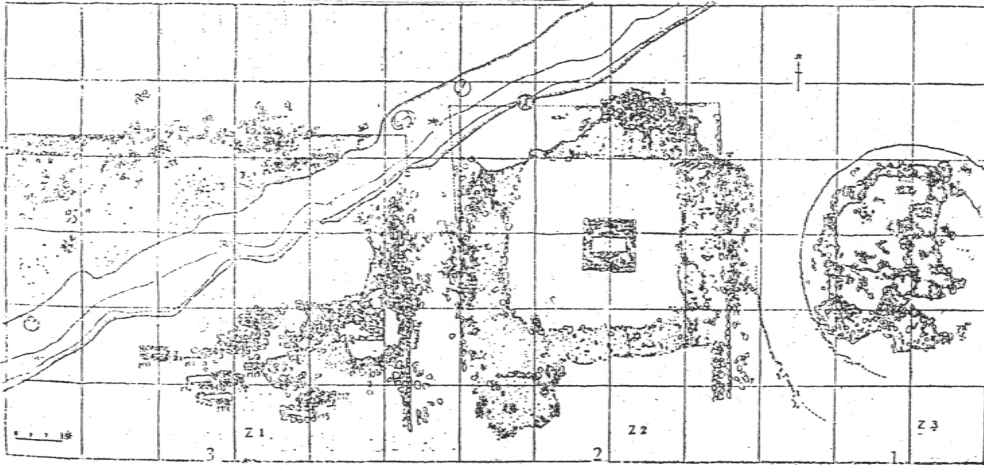


Figure 17. Square and circular platforms, Hongshan culture, Niuheiliang, Liaoning. From Feng (1993): 9.

However, there is no reason to believe that the square-and-rectangular structure related to the worship of the earth. Rather, if these platforms do relate to astronomical / astrological observation, then it is far more likely that *both* sets of concentric squares and circles would represent altars to heaven, or skyborne gods, and constitute the Hongshan people's (1) awareness that both designs described shapes in or of the heavens, v.i.z. the rectangular polar pivot in the heavenly center and the circular circumference of the heavens described by the horizon, and (2) attempt to borrow the religious and political potency of these designs by mimicking the rectangular heavenly center / dome on earth and thus create their own "sacred center" amid its domical environs. It is further possible that at the same time these platforms served a purpose identical to part of what the design of Stonehenge provided the contemporary Britons: perhaps the square established the square pivot of the heavens (the pole) as the center of the circle of the sun's path that was formed from the sun's ecliptic tracking across the day sky and its imagined continuation and completion of the circle, unseen "beneath" the earth, through the night — though it is unlikely that these Neolithic folk understood the obliquity of the sun's apparent circular path,

for we recall from Volume I, Chapter 2 that, despite some 2000 years of astronomically oriented observation and record-keeping, the astrologer-astronomers of the various courts of Mesopotamian political centers did not alight on this discovery until c. 600–400 BC. Still, it may be that, like Stonehenge, these platforms evince these ancient people's recognition of the unity of the night and day skies, i.e., that the day star, just like the night stars and planets, apparently cycled endlessly about the northern celestial pole of the night sky. It should not be lost that the Britons and the people of the Hongshan culture were viewing the sky and building their astronomical observation structures at roughly the same time. Thus they would have been observing at the same time the identical rectangle at what was then the pivot of the known universe.

Perhaps even more telling of Hongshan observation of the polar rectangle, in a second discovery of circular and square platforms at a Hongshan culture site, this one at Dongshanzui in Chifeng, is the placement of a rectangular stone altar platform in the northern end of a square plaza, across which to the south lie two circular platforms, one of which, as in the case of Niuheliang, comprises concentric circles (**Figure 18**).³⁸ Again, the rectangular altar may be interpreted to suggest the rectangle at the northern stellar pole, especially since, reminiscent of the Puebloan *kiva* aligned with the cardinal directions and with its rectangular fire-pit altar situated toward one end of its circle, this platform lies near the northern terminus of the ritual plaza.

³⁸ Guo Dashun 郭大顺 and Zhang Keju 张克举, "Liaoning sheng kazuo xian dongshanzui hongshan wenhua jianzhu qunzhi fajue jianbao" 辽宁省喀左县东山嘴红山文化建筑群址发掘简报, in *Wenwu* 文物 1984.11: 1–11. For brief descriptions in English of this site see Lei Congyuang (1996): 221–222, and Chang (1986): 184–186.

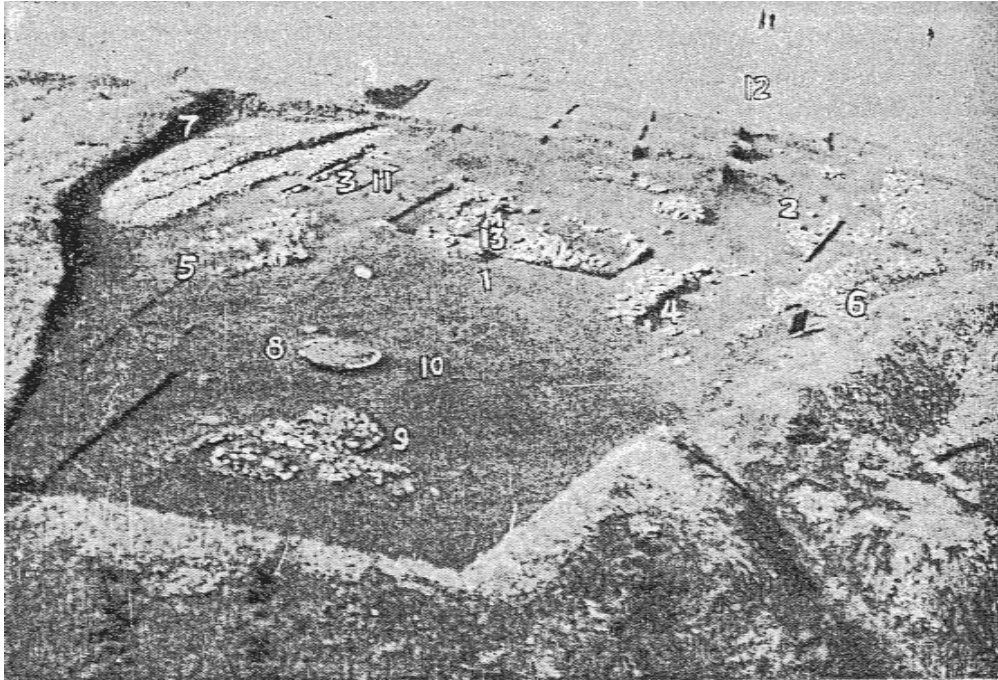


Figure 18. Ritual plaza at Dongshanzui, showing rectangular and circular raised stone platforms. The central rectangular platform in the north end of the plaza (upper center in photo), numbered 13, may mimic the polar stellar rectangle. From Guo and Zhang (1984): 2.

What might further strengthen this interpretation of the platform is the presence within the rectangle of three small cairns formed of stones. It could be that these three cairns reconstruct three stars that lie within the polar stellar rectangle. One is 10 Draconis, and the other two, HIP 69373 and HIP 65728, as we have seen previously, otherwise might have constituted the eyes of the Banpo face of repose. (**Figure 19**)

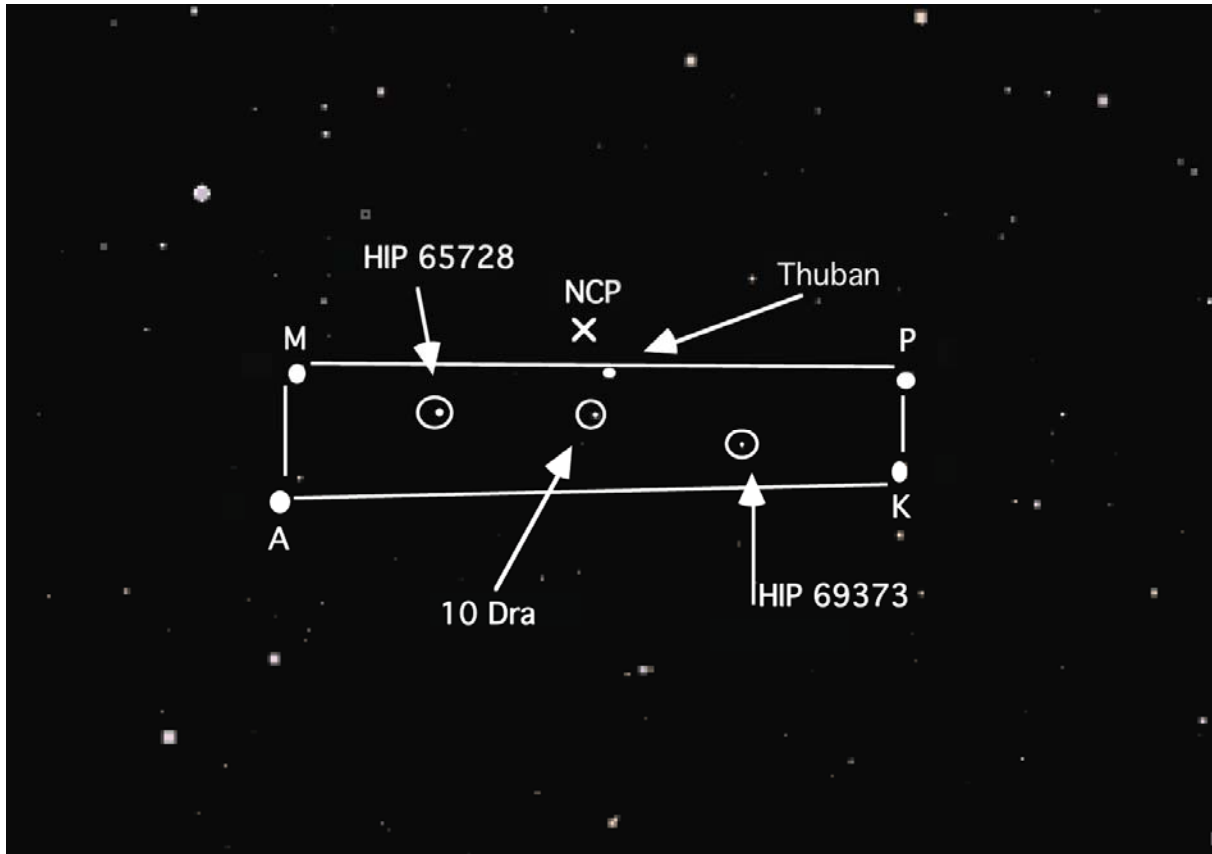


Figure 19. Northern celestial polar region viewed from northeast coastal China in 3200 BC, showing within the polar rectangle the possible stellar models for the three stone cairns in the rectangular altar at Dongshanzui, Hongshan culture. "NCP" identifies the contemporary northern celestial pole, which is indicated with an "X".

Finally, considering in combination with the rectangular northern platform the odd assemblage of mostly circular raised platforms in the southern half of the plaza at Dongshanzui, one cannot help but wonder if they do not themselves also represent, on the basis of stellar observation, asterisms of the southern sector of the sky (the ecliptic) that were formed in the minds of the creators / users of the cosmographic plaza and projected back onto the stars in the heavens. At the very least, from their recreation in their observation / ritual platforms of what could be the celestial polar square, we can postulate that the people of the Hongshan culture might have observed, imitated, and ritualized the heavens and, in particular, their polar center.

In this chapter we have seen how the people of various Neolithic cultures of China may

have observed carefully the northern celestial pole and treated it as a high power. It has been shown that these Neolithic peoples may have conceived of and treated the pole in one or more of the following manners: as (1) an object of ritual; (2) a protector and benefactor; (3) the cosmogonic origin; and (4) the central pivot of the heavens. In Chapter 2 we will witness how these roles possibly assigned to the northern celestial pole appear to have intensified in late-Neolithic and early-Bronze cultures, as traditions deriving from Thuban's (and 10 Draconis') position at the northern celestial pole seem to have flourished and the technologies of religious and artistic expression advanced in particularly the jade and bronze media.

Chapter 2: The Celestial Pole and the High God in Jade and Bronze Cultures, c. 3500–1000 BC

Neolithic Jade-working Cultures

Several scholars have identified artistic motifs and artifact designs that can link a series of proto-Chinese Neolithic cultures with one another. Although the designs are too numerous to review in detail here, the cultures so linked include the Dawenkou and its successor Longshan of the northeast Yellow River effluvial plain/coastal region (NE) with the Songze (and thus the Southern Qingliangang complex), Hemudu, and their successor, Liangzhu, cultures, all of which developed in the eastern coastal (Nanjing/Shanghai/Jiangsu) region (E).

One such link is the apparent bird/sun motif that appears on artifacts of both the Dawenkou and Liangzhu cultures, which Du Jinpeng demonstrated successfully (**Figures 1a–c; cf. Figures 4d & 6**).¹ Elizabeth Childs-Johnson has also drawn this connection, but she has posited further how the bird/sun motif likely developed through the intermediary Hemudu into the Liangzhu culture.²

Another link between the Dawenkou, sundry Qingliangang (and Xuejiagang and Daxi), and subsequent Liangzhu cultures is demonstrated by the appearance on a Liangzhu pot of our familiar dual double-trapezoid hexagons, or eight-point-star, design (Volume II, Chapter 1, **Figure**

¹ Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬, "Guanyu dawenkou wenhua yu liangzhu wenhua de jige wenti" 關於大汶口與良渚文化的幾個問題, in *Kaogu* 1992.10: 915–923. For bird/sun designs of both cultures see Du's Figures 3, 8, and 10 in particular.

² This claim must be tempered with the explanation that the Majiabang-Songze phases of the Qinglian'gang complex were the direct predecessors of the Liangzhu, but that the nearby but separate and parallel Hemudu culture, located south of the Majiabang-Songze region across Hangzhou Bay, influenced and in turn was influenced by the cultures of the Qingliangang complex. Thus, although the Hemudu could not have been, as Childs-Johnson suggests, a direct intermediary culture between the southern-travelling Dawenkou influence and the Qingliangang Liangzhu of the Lake Tai area northwest of Hangzhou Bay, its transformations of Dawenkou cultural elements certainly could have influenced the development of Liangzhu culture.

12k).³ While this is the only occurrence of which I am aware of this specific design's having been reproduced by the people of the Liangzhu complex, as we know its design is too involved to have arisen separately here, particularly when we consider that

Figures 1a-c. The bird-and-sun motif.

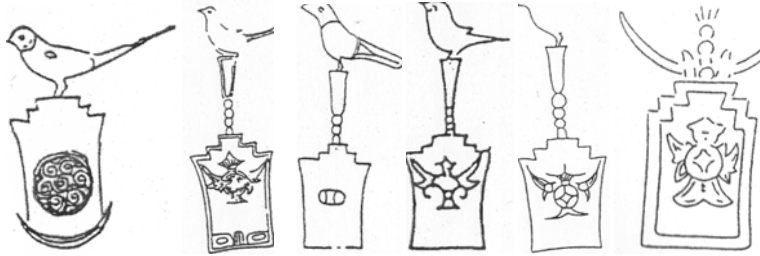


Figure 1a, from Du (1997.2): 55.

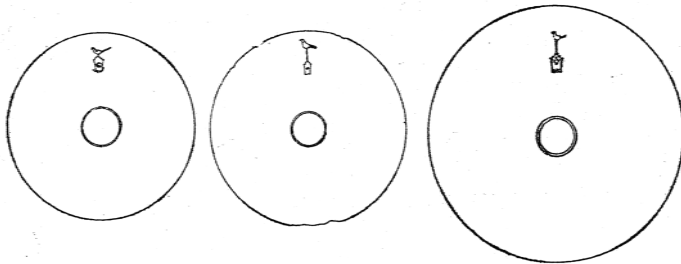
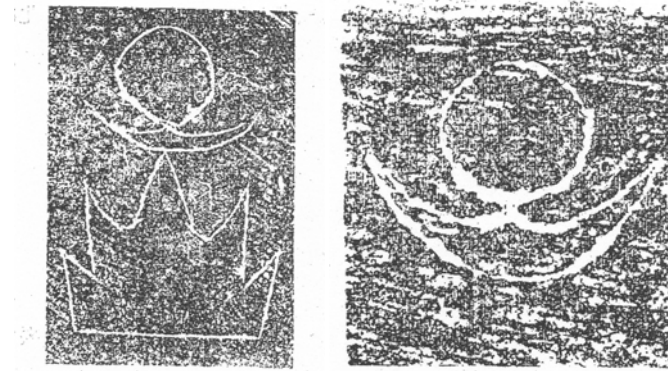


Figure 1b, from Zhang Minghua (1994): 1012.

³ Quite apart from the appearance of the eight-point star on a Liangzhu pot (Volume II, Chapter 1, **Figure 12k**), Mou Yongkang has attempted to identify the eight rays suggested by the eight-point star on a pottery basin found among the remains of the Tangjiagang culture (discussed previously; see Volume II, Chapter 1, **Figure 12d**) with the normal square shape of the Liangzhu jade *cong* (for *cong* see below, this chapter). On this, see Mou Yongkang 牟永抗, "Heki sô no kinô" 璧琮の機能, tr. Ozawa Masahito 小澤正人, in *Nitchû bunka kenkyû* 日中文化研究 11: 111. But to do this Mou has had to argue that four imaginary rays can be projected outward from the flat sides between the four square corners of the *cong*. This is needlessly complex, for the square shape of the *cong* already conforms precisely with the square formed by the intersection of the two perpendicular hexagons of the eight-point-star design. Besides, an eight-point star, as just introduced above in the text, has been discovered among Liangzhu remains. Therefore, that the Liangzhu culture inherited the tradition of the square-in-center motif is clearly evident without our needing to manipulate the shapes of the artifacts recovered.

Figure 1c, from Dawenkou (1997): 118.



already a natural and direct transmission (traceable via sedimentary strata, among other things) occurred among the Songze and Liangzhu cultures between the 4th and 3rd millennia BC. From this discovery of the eight-point-star on a Liangzhu artifact we know that what might have been an awareness of the quadrilateral at the northern celestial pole also was transmitted to the Liangzhu.

That the Liangzhu people held the rectangular and square shapes sacred is shown most clearly by the two raised (about 4 meters above surrounding earth) rectangular ritual and burial grounds found at Yaoshan and Fanshan in coastal Zhejiang province. In the centers of these large *cardinally oriented* rectangles are additional raised *square* altars measuring twenty meters a side. It is from the cardinally oriented graves accompanying these central square altars at Yaoshan and Fanshan that many of the Liangzhu jades depicted in illustrations in this book were excavated.⁴ This evidence of the Liangzhu cardinally oriented rectangular and square ritual plazas and altars not only strengthens the case for the Liangzhu's intimate relationship with all of the Neolithic cultures discussed in the previous chapter (and particularly the seemingly astronomically observant Yangshao Puyang and Banpo, and Hongshan, cultures), but it strongly supports an astronomical interpretation of all of the artifacts left by these cultures and studied in the present book.

Both Du Jinpeng and Elizabeth Childs-Johnson additionally have connected what we might call "combined anthropo-zoomorphic" facial designs (hereafter "AZ motif"; see section

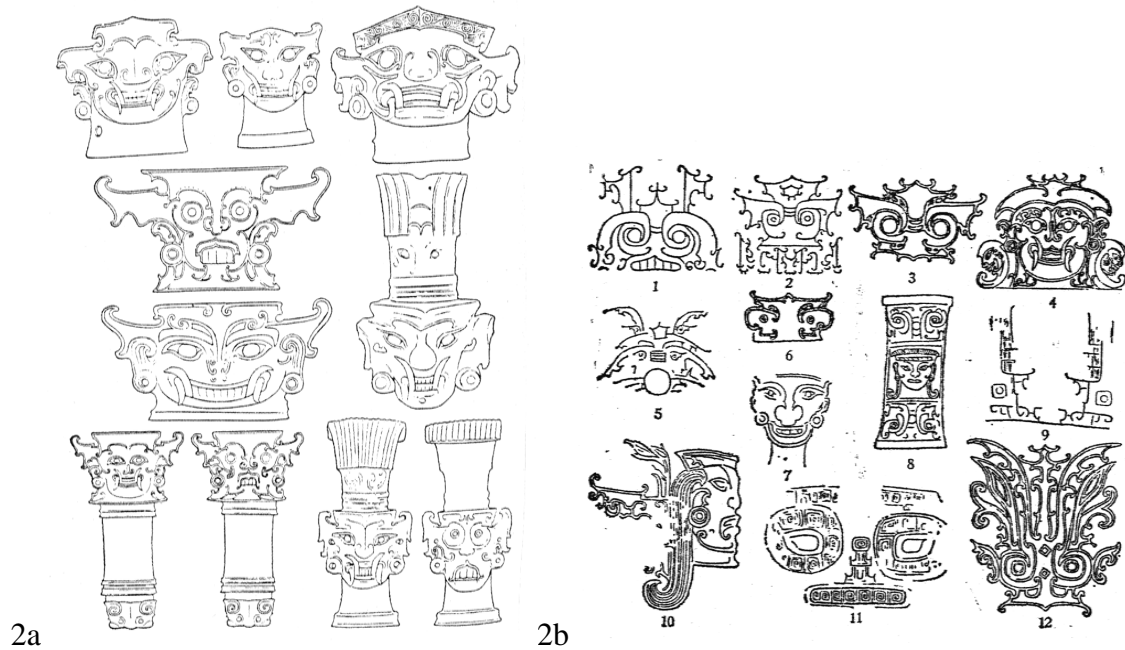
⁴ On these sites see Lei Congyun (1996): 223–224.

below, as well as **Figures 5–9, 11**) found on Liangzhu and Longshan jades,⁵ indicating with clear evidence that the post-Dawenkou culture of the Yellow River basin, the Longshan, developed its style of this motif from the earlier Liangzhu and that it generally simplified the Liangzhu designs by making them more geometric (**Figures 2a-b**).⁶ Furthermore, it has become a given, with but a few holdouts, that the Liangzhu AZ motif evolved into the similar so-called Taotie motifs that adorn so many Shang bronzes.⁷

⁵ See Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "Dragons, Masks, Axes, and Blades from Four Newly Documented Jade Cultures of Ancient China," in *Oriental Art* (April 1988): 30–41; Du Jinpeng, "Lunjian qu zhufeng longshan wenhua yuguanshi ji xiangguan wenti" 论监胸朱封龙山文化玉冠饰及相关问题, in *Kaogu* 1994.1: 55–65.

⁶ On this see also Rawson (1996): 51–59. I maintain a consistent use of the appellation "AZ motif" even though in many instances only the "Z" (zoomorphic) portion of the design appears. This is not only for simplicity of reference but also because any partial representation of the motif appears to imply the complete dual-faced visage.

⁷ On this connection see, for instance, Rui Guoyao 芮国耀 and Shen Yueming 沈岳明, "Liangzhu wenhua yu Shang wenhua guanxi sanli" 良渚文化與商文化關係三例 in *Kaogu* 1992.11: 1039–1044. In English see Li Xueqin, "Liangzhu Culture and the Shang Dynasty Taotie Motif," tr. Sarah Allan, in Roderick Whitfield, ed., *The Problem of Meaning in Early Chinese Bronzes* (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1993): 56–66.



Figures 2ab. Facial designs carved in jade, Longshan culture. Figure 2a from Rawson (1996): 118; Figure 2b from Du (1994): 96.

Bolstering significantly the argument that we can trace, all the way from the Hongshan and Dawenkou to as far as the Shang cultures and civilizations, the transmission of not only design motifs but also, from the subject of their representation, perhaps an awareness of and focusing on the northern celestial pole, is the appearance on Shang bronze artifacts (dating to c. 1200 BC) of a design exceedingly similar to the eight-point star (**Figure 3**).⁸

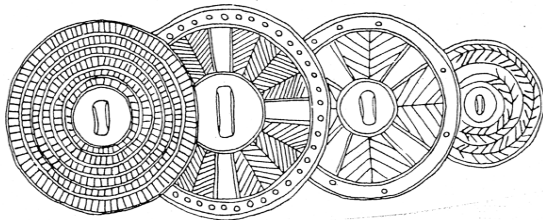


Figure 3. Bronze artifacts recovered from the tomb of Fu Hao, Shang, c. 1200 BC. From Lin Yun (1986): 252.

⁸ See Lin Yun, "A Reexamination of the Relationship between Bronzes of the Shang Culture and of the Northern Zone," in K. C. Chang, ed., *Studies of Shang Archaeology* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986): 252.

On these circular artifacts, bronze mirrors recovered from the tomb of Shang King Wuding's consort Fu Hao (c. 1200 BC), we note that a rectangle forms their center. Lin Yun traces these mirrors' designs to similar designs found on artifacts of the far northwestern Qijia culture, including the bronze mirror displayed in the previous chapter as **Figure 13**, and through Qijia to Inner Mongolia and beyond. Lin thus argues for the influence of the Qijia and other "Northern Zone" cultures on the Shang. Writing not long after Lin, Louisa Fitzgerald-Huber hoped to demonstrate that the design of the seven-point motif on the same bronze Qijia mirror had arrived specifically from Bactria and thus constituted early-2nd-millennium BC direct Western influence on developing Chinese civilization.⁹ (**Figure 4**)

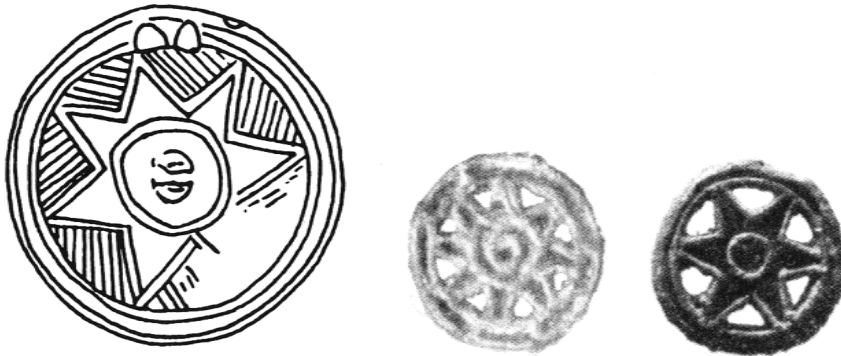


Figure 4, from Fitzgerald-Huber (1995): 53. Left: Qijia mirror, early 2nd millennium BC (Lin Yun [1986]: 252); middle and right: bronze seal-amulets from Bactria, early 2nd millennium BC. Fitzgerald-Huber argued that the star shapes of the Bactrian amulets directly influenced the design of the star on the back of the Qijia mirror. However, we know from Chapter 1 above that the movement of the star motif seems to have been in the opposite direction, from east to west China, from the 4th millennium BC and on.

While it is doubtless that such influence did impact early Chinese / proto-Chinese civilizations, and ample artifactual evidence carefully unearthed and analyzed by archaeologists such as Lin

⁹ Louisa G. Fitzgerald-Huber, "Qijia and Erlitou: The Question of Contacts with Distant Cultures," in *Early China* 20 (1995): 52–65.

supports beyond a doubt the Northern Zone cultures' influence on the Shang, and, further, it is widely held that the Qijia was among the cultures that introduced bronze technology to China from Central / Northern Asia circa 2100 BC (see Volume I, Chapter 1 of this study), in this particular case we know that the square-in-circle motif, most often represented as a circle encompassing two double-trapezoid hexagons (the "eight-point star"), dates to much earlier (4th millennium BC) and much further east (Dawenkou in Shandong) than the Qijia, and, as explained in the previous chapter, it likely moved up the Yangzi, from the Qingliangang complex to the Daxi, and from there made its way north through stream valleys to the central and western Yellow River basin, where it remained to later influence the Shang and also diffused further upstream the Yellow and beyond to affect Qijia design as well. The design and its meaning very well could have moved directly up the Yellow River basin from earlier Dawenkou origins near the coast, as well. Furthermore, the much later appearance in Bactria of an eight-point and a six-point star on these amulets (**Figure 4**) may suggest that influence was not unidirectional. That is, the developing Chinese civilizations probably exerted a long-distance impact on Eurasian cultures west of China, from Xinjiang to the Pamirs and Central Asia.

The Liangzhu phase of the transmission of the square — and thus perhaps pole-centered representation of high spiritual power — was crucial, for it is in the Liangzhu cultural artifacts that we find the most fantastic and durable embellishment of the square or rectangle. This is in the anthropo-zoomorphic, or AZ, motif, which becomes the subject of our study immediately below.

The Liangzhu AZ Motif

The Liangzhu AZ motif takes as many forms as it does jade media of expression. It appears on small jade ritual objects, jade *cong* ritual tubes, and many other plaque-shaped jades, as well as jade beads, headdress-type ornaments (often trident-shaped), pendants, pins, awls, and so on, that people wore as jewelry when alive and which thereafter accompanied them in their graves (**Figures 5a-i**).

Figures 5a-i. The AZ motif on Liangzhu jades.

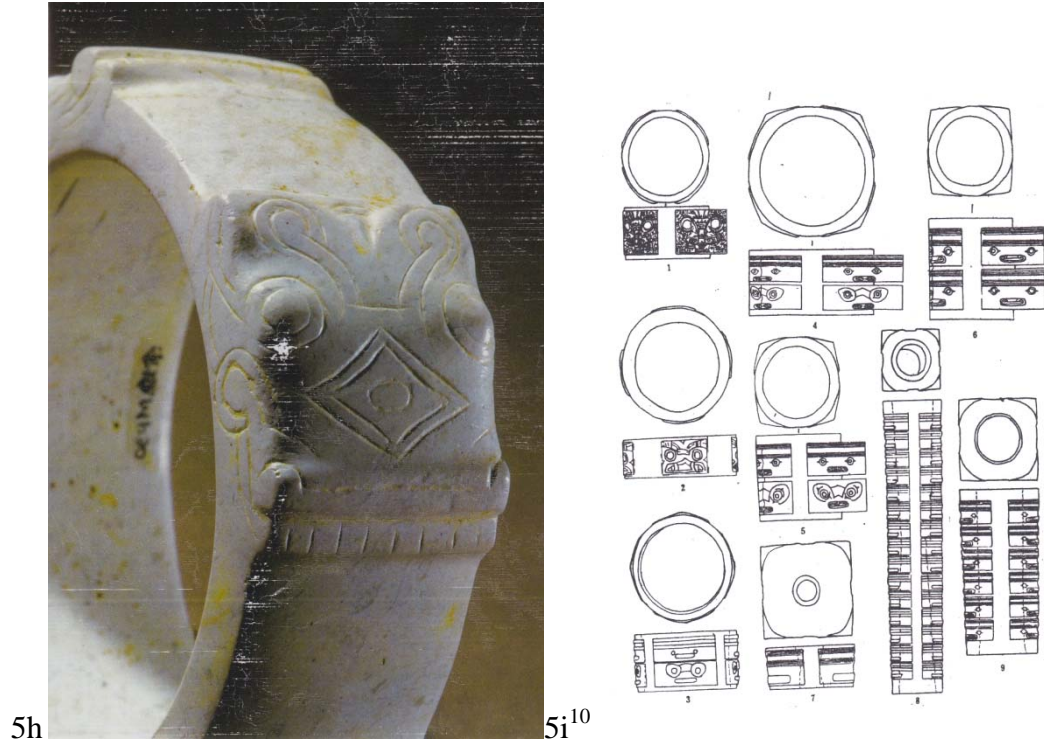




5f



5g



Considering the enormous variety in both design and number of the AZ motif found on jades in tombs of this culture, Jessica Rawson has speculated that the differences could reflect real-life inequalities in wealth, status, or even gender of the original owners or patrons of the artifacts.¹¹ In addition, each village seems to have followed slightly unique traditions in the rendering of the AZ motif and even in patterns of burial custom. Certainly, this was a highly complex and stratified society, and the variations in stylistic representation of the AZ motif appear to reflect this.

Another factor that certainly engendered distinct renderings of the motif is the medium of

¹⁰ 5a-e, 5g-h from Zhejiangsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, eds. *Liangzhu wenhua yuqi* (Beijing: Wenwu, 1989) — hereafter *LZWHYQ*; 5f from Liangzhu wenhua bowuguan (Hong Kong), eds., *Dongfang wenming zhi guang: Liangzhu wenhua yuqi* (Hong Kong: Liangzhu wenhua bowuguan & Xianggang zhongwen daxue wenwuguan, 1998) — hereafter *DFWM*; 5i from Liu Bin, "Liangzhu wenhua yucong chutan," in *Wenwu* 1990.2: 31.

¹¹ Rawson (1996): 51. For evidence of social stratification in a Liangzhu settlement, see Gao Menghe 高蒙河, "Cong Jiangsu Longnan yizhi lun Liangzhu wenhua it juluo xingtai" 从江苏龙南遗址论良渚文化的聚落形态, in *Kaogu* 2000.1: 54–60.

application: differently shaped jades used for distinct purposes required carvers to create unique applications of the motif. Finally, we must recognize that while artisans likely followed a common fundamental pattern, they allowed themselves some freedom in conjuring and etching an image to please themselves or, more likely, their patrons.

Aside from the anchoring rectangle, which usually forms the mouth of the Liangzhu AZ motif, particularly notable features include the grotesquely exaggerated size of the eyes of the zoomorph and the fact that these eyes are formed of various layers of concentric circles (**Figures 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5f [bottom]**). Often this zoomorphic face appears alone on an object, but in the most fantastic renderings of the motif it is subdued within the arms of a second figure above it, an anthropomorphic grimacing visage that looks like an angry warrior wearing a mountain-shaped headdress (**Figures 6a-c**). It is notable that the design, whether simple or complex in any given rendering, consists mostly of circles and squares or rectangles: the head of the anthropomorph is a contorted square and its headdress a morphed rectangle, and the nasal bridge of the zoomorph and the mouths of both faces are all rectangles; in addition to the eyes, even the detail filling in the appendages of the two figures of the motif consists of round or squared spirals. The entire motif appears to have been inspired by the two simple forms of the circle and the square.



Figure 6a. Detail of the AZ motif appearing on the side of a large cong (Figure 7).

This combined dual anthropomorphic-zoomorphic (AZ) motif, or the “spirit-man & beast dual-face portrait” (*shenren-shou ermian tu* 神人獸二面圖), as many Chinese writers have come to call it, appears on numerous types of ceremonial / burial jades, but usually most spectacularly on *cong* tubes. A *cong* normally takes the form of a hollow jade tube whose inner shape is circular and external form square or squared (**Figures 5a-c, 5i, Figure 7**). While we cannot confirm with what purpose the *cong* served their living owners, we do know that they were buried with the dead, having served a particular and fiery ritual purpose during the burial process.¹² In many cases on one *cong* several versions of the combined AZ motif have been etched and carved, with simplified

¹² Keightley (1998), p. 787, reporting the findings of the Nanjing Museum, Wang Zunguo 汪遵国, and K. C. Chang.

stylings appearing at the corners of the squared sides and fully detailed depictions set in the centers of the flat sides of the square-shaped objects. (**Figure 7**).



Figure 6b. The AZ motif appearing on a ceremonial axe.



Figure 6c. AZ motif and squarish hole. Figures 6a-c from LZWHYQ (1989).

Figure 7. Large cong showing simplified AZ motif at square corners and the replete motif on the flat sides. Detail of an AZ motif from this cong is shown in Figure 6a. Note bird motif on each side of each simplified AZ motif. From LZWHYQ (1989).



To understand the AZ motif, we need to consider its full context. Aside from *cong*, essentially the motif adorned jade jewelry and decorative pieces, which, like their ancient Harappan rectangular stone and faience counterparts also likely bearing the likeness of a spiritual power, must have been worn by the living as protective and/or beneficence-bringing charms. In fact, holes were drilled in many of the pieces through which to thread cord by which the pendants were hung from the body (**Figures 5d, 5g, 6c, 9ab**). But we find the jades as they were laid out carefully all around and on the deceased owner's corpse. Therefore, the AZ motif surrounded the wealthy person, the tomb owner, in both life and death. This speaks rather strongly for interpreting the motif to be a protector spirit or god. And the fact that it was employed so extensively throughout the Liangzhu culture demonstrates that this design represented something culturally very significant, perhaps the high spiritual power. Furthermore, the fully elaborated AZ motif also appears singly on a ceremonial jade axe (**Figure 6b**), both (1) suggesting that the figure so

represented bestowed or confirmed martial power and/or ceremonial authority to the axe's wielder, and (2) adumbrating similar representations of what likely is the high god and its powers on bronze axes of the Shang civilization (for such an axe, see **Figure 14**). A being so exclusively gracing so powerful a symbol as a jade ceremonial axe likely would have been conceived in people's minds as some high power, a god. Indeed most theorists have considered the AZ motif to represent a god or gods of some sort, and usually the high god.¹³

In some Chinese circles discussion has centered on whether the motif represents two beings or one, that is, god and beast or a single god in dual roles of god and beast. Mou Yongkang and Li Xueqin have taken this a step further to suggest that both interpretations might be valid simultaneously, in that Neolithic jade carvers (or their patrons) could have intentionally created so ambiguous a religious symbolism in order to serve a complex religious belief.¹⁴ Although this idea is philosophically attractive to a modern reader, there is no reason in particular to suspect that the Neolithic people were philosophically advanced to the point that they would have consciously abstracted their conceptions of their gods.

Thus, many elements of the motif remain unexplained. Most obviously we may ask, why, in the replete form of the motif, are there *two* godly visages? And what does the elaborate headdress, or what Chinese writers tend to call the "imperial crown," mean? And what, if any, physical referent does the motif indicate? That is, was there a stimulus in the natural or human world that can explain the motif's appearance(s)?

Some believe that the crown relates to Native American Indian headdresses.¹⁵ While an Asiatic motif shared among divergent mobile Asiatic and Asiatic-American tribes is always

¹³ For such a view see, for instance, Du Jinpeng, "Liangzhu shenqi yu jitan" 良渚神祇与祭坛, in *Kaogu* 1997.2: 52–62.

¹⁴ Li Xueqin 李学勤, *Zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古时代 (Liaoning Daxue, 1994): 90; Mou Yongkang 牟永抗, "Liangzhu yuqi shangshen chongbai de tansuo" 良渚玉器上神崇拜的探索, in *Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwunian lunwenji* 庆祝苏秉琦考古五十五年论文集 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1989): 187. A reduced discussion of these and other theories can be found in Yue Hongbin 岳洪彬 and Miao Xia 苗霞, "Liangzhu wenhua 'yucongwang' diaowen xinkao" 良渚文化“玉琮王”雕纹新考, in *Kaogu* 1998.8: 71–80 (743–752).

¹⁵ Mou Yongkang, "Heki sô no kinô": 110.

possible, it seems a stretch to expect traditions to have remained so similar over ten or tens of thousands of years. It is far more likely that they evolved separately. A more measured estimate comes from David Keightley, who offers the possibility that the motif represents ancestral spirits.¹⁶ Although Keightley surely was reading Shang tendencies back into a prior civilization, there is no reason to reject his thesis off-hand and to insist rather that that the religious beliefs of these civilizations were incommensurate. The fact that the AZ motif appears, albeit in somewhat distinct skins, in both cultures tells us that there was a connection. However, this is not to say that the Liangzhu and Shang motifs were thoroughly equivalent, and Keightley's rather informally offered hypothesis leaves much unanswered. As An Zhimin has noted, no theory offered thus far suffices to explain the meaning of the motif and its context.¹⁷

Much of the problem of solving the puzzle of the motif lies in a failure to identify solidly the god apparently represented with any known physical referent (i.e., a beast, mountain, river, boulder, etc.), although many have seen in the motif either a bird imagery that suggests a sun god, or a boar image.¹⁸ Certainly, the feathery look of the headdress of the anthropomorph and the sometimes beaky look of the nose-mouth design of the zoomorph suggest the bird image (**Figure 5a-c**), and the tusks that sometimes emerge from the zoomorph's mouth (which become more pronounced in the later Longshan masks) are the source of the perceived boar imagery (**Figure 6c**). While indeed at times the design appears to display both bird and boar (or monster) qualities,

¹⁶ Keightley (1998): 789–793.

¹⁷ Hundreds of articles have been written on the Liangzhu AZ motif and the ritual objects that it adorns. For an overview, see An Zhimin 安志敏, "Liangzhu wenhua ji qi wenming zhuyinsu de pouxi—ji nian liangzhu wenhua faxian liushi zhounian" 良渚文化及其文明諸因素的剖析, in *Kaogu* 1997.9: 77–83 (845–851). An sees no theory offered thus far that suffices to explain either the *cong*'s ritual usage or the meaning of the motif.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Jiang Song 江松, "Liangzhu wenhua de guanxing qi" 良渚文化的冠形器, in *Kaogu* 1994.4: 343–354. Although Elizabeth Childs-Johnson does not explicitly claim that a connection exists between the motif and the sun, her common identification of bird imagery in both the Liangzhu motif and in other clearly bird-like designs, found on various ritual objects of several cultures and which were clearly associated with the sun, suggests that she makes this identification implicitly. See Elizabeth Childs-Johnson (1988): 30–41. Childs-Johnson also sees a boar imagery in the motif, which suggests that she also implies a connection with the jade pig-dragon that was significant in Hongshan ritual at that culture's aforementioned ritual platforms.

on the other hand additional representations of the design display a froggish look (**Figure 8**), and, in fact, most portrayals of the zoomorph design both lack the tusks and clearly delineate a separate and un-bird-like, un-boar-like bridge, nose, and mouth in the face. In light of this diversity, therefore, neither the sun / bird nor boar interpretations of the AZ motif can represent its core meaning.



Figure 8. Froggish looking Liangzhu AZ motif. From LZWHYQ (1989).

More realistic an explanation of the enormous variety of the design is Jessica Rawson's view that there is no real-world referent for the motif. She has suggested that the motif represents something outside normal real-world experience, an imagined world in the realm of religious belief and abstract ideas.¹⁹ Rawson appears to be on the right track, in that this seems indeed to be an imagined visage lying outside the everyday experience in the *tangible* world. On the other hand, there must be a real-world referent or outline from which the imaginers drew their inspiration and onto which they projected back the completed imagined images of the AZ motif. All visions, after all, necessarily stem from a physical interaction of the human being with its real-world external

¹⁹ Rawson (1996): 51.

environment, even if those visions mature when the imaginer draws on internal psychological processes (but which in turn depend for their evolution on the continued interaction with the external).

The AZ motif's referent in the visible — if distant and intangible — world might be found in the stars of the central axis of the heavens that form around the rectangular pole with which we've become so familiar: the stars belong to a suspended world that is neither "real-world" nor fully abstract; this is precisely the nature of gods and spirits who inhabit human religious thinking — they are neither physically real nor fully abstract but usually originate in a physical referent or environmental experience and forever remain active within the perceived human and physical realms.

Thus, perhaps similar to the way that Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Greeks, and other ancient peoples around the world created in their minds images stimulated by stellar patterns and then projected those images back onto the stars, it is possible that the Liangzhu Neolithic people likewise saw in the pattern of the celestial pivot their god(s) that governed their lives. Neither real nor not real in the sense of what they meant to the Neolithic observer, the polar stars in fact would have provided a visible, referable source and object of the Liangzhu AZ motif's creation, and they would have offered a simple but stable gnomon to act for people as a psychological tether in the ever-transforming and often frightening world. These stars forming a rectangle and, by the radiance of the light that they emit as individual stars, also circles, are easily recognizable, and in the simplicity and universality of their forms they might have offered infinite possibilities for development within fertile minds, minds that obviously were active but intellectually contained by their limited experience in and understanding of the wider world.

The simple polar rectangle and the circular radiance issuing from each star then might constitute the essential forms of which the entire AZ motif was constructed. Usually at least one set of circular eyes appears with the rectangular mouth in any representation of the AZ motif, but in some cases only the rectangle appears, without the presence of any other components of the motif (**Figures 9ab**). The rectangle, then, is the most fundamental element of the AZ motif. The double sets of eyes, the next most standard form of the motif, are suggested by the same four stars that constitute the rectangular mouth, which, as we know, are Kochab, Alioth, Pherkad, and Mizar.

Thuban and 10 Draconis, of course, helped to form the rectangle as they both constituted its pivot of revolutions in the center of the heavens, lying as they do along the length that stretches from Pherkad to Mizar (**Figure 10**).

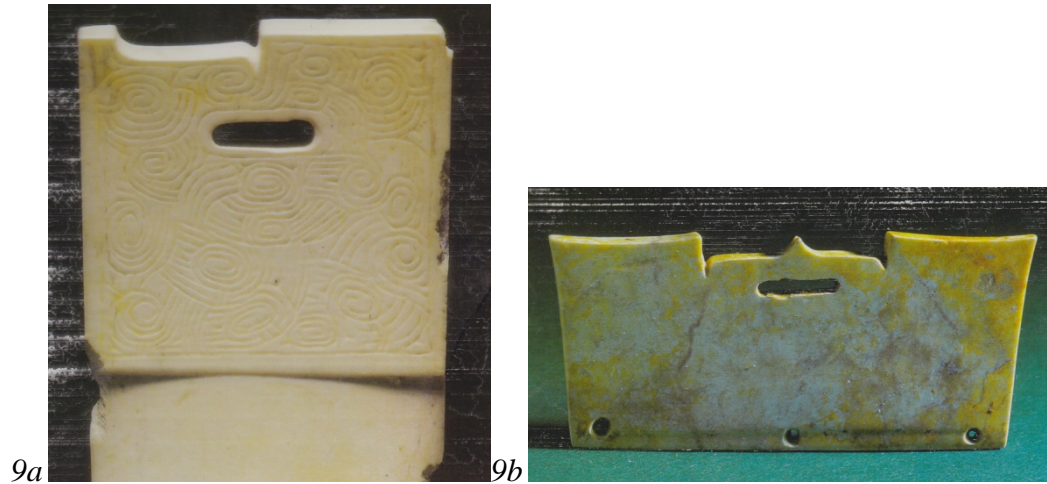


Figure 9a: rectangular hole in the handle of an arched jade blade. Figure 9b: rectangle and other, threadable, holes in a crown-shaped pendant. 9a from DFWM; 9b from LZWHYQ .

It is particularly noteworthy that the eyes of the motif, whether the upper or lower set, often appear with horizontally extending lines that suggest rays of light emanating from the centers of the eyes (**Figures 5a-c, 5f, 11**). These rays resemble nothing except the distortion of starlight caused by our bare and imperfect eyes as they strain from behind the cloud of soupy terrestrial atmosphere to focus on the distant bright objects in the heavens.

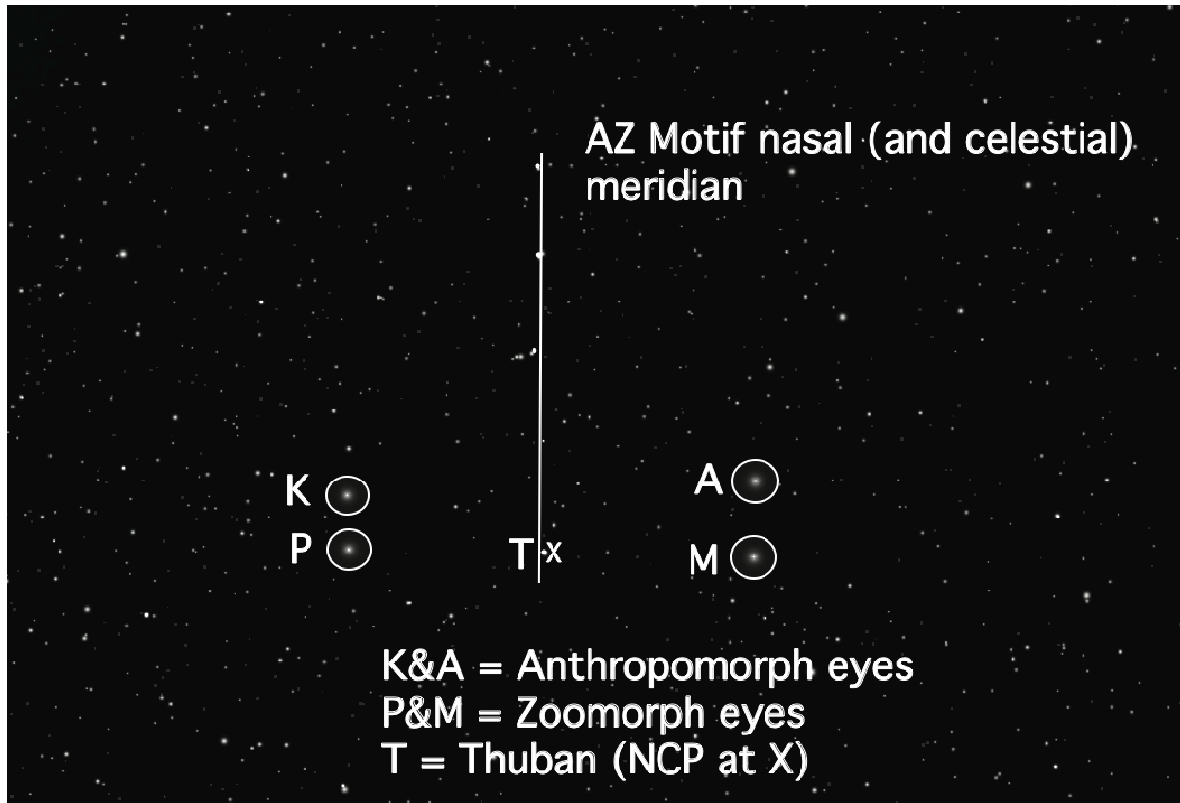


Figure 10. A possible inspiration for the two pairs of eyes of the Liangzhu AZ motif, with Thuban occupying exactly the northern celestial pole of c. 2800 BC (X).

Thus the eyes of the motif appear to depict stars. Beyond this, it is impossible to identify, from so many 100s of distinct replete motifs that follow this basic outline, the 1000s of different possible combinations of stars with which the sundry elements of the individual figures might correlate. Without transmitted diagrams showing us how to draw them in the sky, to attempt to pin the figures individually to the stars would be folly.

This is virtually as much as we can attain from simply viewing the various forms of the motif. But what about the context in which the motif occurs, the jades? Some theorists, noticing that the AZ motif is most generously represented on Liangzhu *cong*, center their study and speculation on this jade form, as well as on the form that often accompanied the *cong* in ritual and burial alike, the *bi*. The latter is a circular jade disk with circular-bored center that was a favorite Liangzhu (and later Chinese) burial item (**Figure 12**). Chen Zungui has made a case for the combined employment of a *cong* and a notched-edged type of *bi* to form an astronomical

measuring instrument. However, even if he were correct in his suppositions regarding these objects' fit, and of this we cannot be certain, we must recognize that the number of smooth-edged *bi* far exceeds that of the notched-edged *bi*, and Chen's thesis does not account for the former.²⁰



Figure 11. Starry eyes of an AZ motif, from the corner of a cong. From DFWM.



Figure 12. Liangzhu bi disc. From Rawson (1996).

²⁰ See Chen Zungui 陳尊媯, *Zhongguo tianwenxue shi* 中國天文史, Vol. 6 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1990): 1737–1742.

Hayashi Minao, likely inspired by Mircea Eliade, Chen Mengjia, and others, traced the later Chinese use of ritual space back to the hollow tubular center of the *cong*. That is, he viewed the *cong* as a ritual utensil, employed in sacrifice to the high god, in which were placed sacrificial comestibles that would entice the god to enter that space and thus also the ritual.²¹ Such a ritual process, of course, entailed borrowing the high god's powers, through its intimate presence in the space, for one's own human use. This interpretation of the *cong* is certainly plausible, it being consistent with not only Shang and later uses of bronze and other ritual vessels, but also with worldwide understanding and use of sacred ritual space, whether such space is defined as open space (e.g. Eliade's sacred mountain), a building (temple or shrine), table (altar), utensil (ritual vessel), or adornment (pendant). The fact that the *cong* were normally *square* and thus correlated in shape with the celestial pole, not to mention the mouth of the AZ motif, supports this view.

In a related way, and surely influenced to a degree by the same sources as Hayashi, K. C. Chang suggested that the *cong* represents the *axis mundi* by which the shaman's spirit communicated with spirits of the heavens.²² David Keightley took Chang mildly to task for this theory, suggesting that rather than an *axis mundi* the *cong* were, as we have seen Hayashi Minao also interpreted them, receptacles for ritual offerings.²³ Keightley also detailed, partially on the basis of K. C. Chang's other writings, how the *cong* were used in burial rituals, which Keightley suggests is exclusive of understanding the *cong* to have served as an *axis mundi* that facilitated communication with heavenly spirits.²⁴

Chang's extension of his shaman theory into this Neolithic culture truly enjoys no evidential support, but his application of the Eliade / Wheatley idea of the *axis mundi*, if employed here without the unnecessary baggage of an unsupported shamanism, is not at all incommensurate with the evidence that demonstrates the ways in which the *cong* were employed. We know that

²¹ Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫, "Chûgoku kôdai no gyoki: so ni tsuite" 中國古代の玉器：琮について, in *Tôhō Gakuhō 東方學報* 60 (1988): 1–72 (esp. 60–61).

²² Chang (1986), p. 418, Figure 336 and caption.

²³ Keightley (1998): 774.

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 786–788.

during burial the *cong* and other jade goods were placed in a grave surrounding the deceased. Therefore, this use had nothing to do with the *living* communicating with the spirits of the heavens, and therefore it relates not at all to shamanism. But the real issue concerns the idea of an afterlife for the dead: the fact that the *cong* were often placed in the grave surrounding the corpse supports the idea that they were spiritual communication tools, whether the communication was for the welcoming or protecting of the spirit of the dead. Further support for the communicative nature of the *cong* comes in the form of its *square* shape and its employment in an incendiary burial ritual. The meaning might be that the spirit of the deceased was indeed being sent off to join the gods on high — at the rectangular / square pole, we might add. The issue relates to the way in which we interpret the AZ motif, since the *square*-mouthed motif adorns the *square cong* object, and both might be identified through this shape with the contemporary pole.

But the issue also involves directly the question of whether or not, on a broader scale, the Liangzhu grave goods (and the designs that grace them, i.e., the AZ motif) can be viewed as signifying a cosmogonic / cosmological outlook. The *axis mundi* thesis deserves support, albeit not exclusively, because cosmogonic and/or cosmologic interpretation falls within the purview of concerns expressed through funerary ritual. The way in which a society treats its dead reflects directly both (1) the way in which it views the nature and structure of the universe in which its dead and living exist, and, thus, also (2) its view of life in this cosmological structure and cosmogonic process. That is, in early cultures, one's view of life after death most certainly would have been connected intimately with her or his understanding of both (1) the cosmogonic processes of creation and the cosmological sustenance of life (and, equally, death), and (2) the heavens and their patterns. Therefore, we should not question the relevance of a culture's cosmogonic or cosmological outlook to its funerary practices, and vice versa. Nor should we think it excessive to consider the role played by the sky in the cosmogonic and cosmological beliefs of ancient peoples, as the volumes of this study endeavor to demonstrate.

But beyond their uses in burial, the various jade jewelry pieces were also worn by the living, and the fact that so recognizable a figure as the AZ motif adorned so large a percentage of pieces owned by a great variety of people over some 1300 years signifies that unquestionably this motif served a central purpose in this long-surviving civilization. As Hayashi has suggested, very

likely the *cong* themselves were used as ritual vessels of some sort, and, as such, they were tools of communication with the spirits who imbibed of comestibles occupying that space. Thus the AZ motif likely represents a spiritual power that was the object of worship and a source of personal protection.

Consequently, we can imagine a plausible outline of the religious significance of the AZ motif in the context of the nature and use of the jade artifacts that it adorns. It seems most reasonable to draw from all of Du Jinpeng's (et al.), Rawson's, Hayashi's, Chang's, and Keightley's theses about the meaning of the motif to offer a simple explanation: the motif might represent the high power(s) sustained in the beliefs of the Liangzhu people. This godly motif animated the visible but physically intangible — and thus in normal, living, experience unattainable — stellar rectangle of the northern celestial pole. Those who could afford to do so wore on their person representations in jade of the stellar polar power, likely to enhance the protective efficacy of that power. Employing the *cong* hollow ritual implements the wealthy also may have offered sacrifices to the celestial polar power. When such a wealthy person (likely a household head) died he was buried in an incendiary ritual that ended with his interment among precious and expensive jade objects that bore the face of the high power. In anticipation of the dead's making a journey to join the high power, people surrounded the corpse with these various jades, hoping to both (1) strengthen the tie that bound the deceased with that high power in the sky, perhaps as a measure of security against the deceased's spirit's becoming lost during its skyward journey, and (2) provide the deceased with wealth, as a further means of protection in the afterlife.

Particularly the *cong*, the jades that usually bore the most replete form of the AZ motif, on the basis of their correlatively magical *square* form, would have assisted the spirit in reaching the pole. Thus sympathetically the *cong* may have "aimed" the soul in its journey to the northern celestial pole, much as the *square* shaft of the *square* Great Pyramid of Giza apparently *physically* aimed the pharaoh's soul toward the same celestial pole. We note particularly that the Great Pyramid was built at about the same time that the AZ motif was being etched onto the *cong* and other jade ritual objects. The correlation between the pyramid and the *cong* extends even further: the tubular form of the *cong* resembles a shaft that, like the shaft of the pyramid, may have been

thought to physically, not just sympathetically, aim the spirit of the deceased at the rectangular pole.

Finally, once arrived, the deceased person's spirit might have formed part of the high power toward which it was escorted ritually (and physically, via *cong*). Therefore, the AZ motif might have personified ancestral spirits themselves, which helps to explain the great diversity of expression demonstrated among representations of the common, simple anchoring form of the rectangular mouth.

Bronze Civilizations, c. 2000–1000 BC

Inheritance from Neolithic Traditions

Archaeologically unearthed strata indicate that the Longshan culture developed into the Erlitou culture. The latter then developed, through the intermediary Erligang culture, into the early Shang culture (or the Erligang represents early Shang culture). Recalling that the Liangzhu jade AZ motif evolved into similar facial designs found commonly among the Henan Longshan cultures, then it is no surprise to find the Liangzhu AZ motif transforming into like designs of both the Erlitou (**Figure 13**) and Shang Bronze cultures. That a cultural transmission in fact occurred beginning with even earlier cultures is borne out by the appearance of the Neolithic dual double-trapezoid hexagons with square center in all of the Dawenkou, Southern Qingliangang (Qingliangang, Songze, Maqiao, Bei Yinyangying), Xuejiagang Jing'an, Daxi Tangjiagang, Hanshan, Liangzhu, Qijia, and Shang (for the Shang see **Figure 4** above) cultures and civilizations. Casting our net broader still to focus on the central rectangle / square itself, we can include in this transmission the Yangshao and Hongshan cultures, as well.

And yet in the case of the AZ motif, the Shang version, the so-called Taotie motif (or, as

one scholar has suggested we identify it, the "two-eyed motif"²⁵) that adorns many of that civilization's bronzes obviously differs from all of the previous cultures' similar motifs depicting the visage of a god. On the one hand, the generally ornate complexion of the Taotie face resembles the more elaborate Liangzhu and Henan Longshan motifs, especially in its three-dimensional relief and possession of fangs, claws, and horns (headdress). On the other hand, the spare, austere nature of the Erlitou facial design (**Figure 13**) appears to have transmitted to the Taotie the simple five-point-and-antler design of the Yangshao ungulate's head. Thus, we might trace two geographic diffusions of facial motifs that resulted in the synthesis of the Shang Taotie face, including the Liangzhu-Henan Longshan-Erlitou-Shang influence that moved from the Shanghai region up the coast and then inland along the Yellow River (or directly north from the Yangzi to the Yellow River basin), and the Yangshao-Erlitou-Shang influence that moved down (eastward along) the Yellow River to the region of Zhengzhou-Anyang from the Wei River valley in the vicinity of today's Xi'an. In all cases of these facial motifs' appearance, however, their most

²⁵ See Wang Tao, "A Textual Investigation of the *Taotie*," in Roderick Whitfield, ed., *The Problem of Meaning in Early Chinese Ritual Bronzes* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993): 102–118. Since the 4th–3rd centuries BC this Shang motif has been called Taotie, meaning essentially "greedy glutton," but this is to students of Shang culture seemingly inaccurate as a name and description, its having been adopted historically mostly for the sake of convenience. However, there has been no other encompassing term offered that might be applicable across the broad range of motifs that fall under the rubric. Wang Tao has suggested the appellation "two-eyed motif," and in this he rightly calls attention to the most readily recognizable aspect of the design, but to apply this would be to dismiss other elements of the motif that, while perhaps not as obvious as the eyes, contribute equally significantly to the motif's meaning. Like Wang, more recently Elena Moreno has focused on the eyes as the most salient aspect of the Taotie design ("The problems in the interpretation of the *taotie* motif on Shang bronzes," in *East Asia Journal* 1:1 [2000]: 9–15). I proffer rather that all constant elements of the design need be considered equally significant to the design's meaning in historical context. Consequently, I retain and employ the old appellation Taotie in part in order not to slight any element of the motif's design.

The Shang Taotie motif graced Shang and Zhou bronzes for about 800 years, from the 16th to the 8th centuries BC. The Zhou followed the Shang use of the motif likely out of religio-political conservatism but also simple habit and due to the Zhou's direct inheritance from the Shang of the bronze industry and craftsmen. The motif was abandoned in the middle 8th century BC when the Zhou court was moved eastward and the Eastern Zhou thus began. Aside from considerations of offering equal weight to various elements of the design, I continue to employ the name Taotie because the meaning of a feeding monster that its "greedy glutton" implies accords in a loose way with the motif's likely original symbolism — a feasting spirit.

significant and identifying elements include (1) the depiction of a beast; (2) stereographic bilateral symmetry across a vertical meridian; (3) two large, exaggerated, often bulging eyes; (4) a squared nose and mouth in the lower portion of the face; (5) horns (or, similarly, a headdress); and (6) the overall square or rectangular frame within which the motif nearly always occurs.



Figure 13. Bronze and turquoise unguulate face, Erlitou culture, c. 1700 BC. From Li Xueqin (1995): 102.

The Shang Bronze Taotie Motif

The Taotie has been interpreted to represent a number of meanings. Some believe rather that it conveyed no meaning but was a mere decorative motif, a style of filling in of blank space on the sides of bronze vessels that developed over a period of several hundred years. But while some

continue to support this, Max Loehr's once-dominant, thesis dating to the 1950s that states that the Taotie possessed no religious meaning, most scholars now agree that, given the obvious Neolithic and early Bronze heritage of the Taotie motif, its presence on bronzes did in fact serve a central religious purpose.²⁶ K. C. Chang and others have proffered that the Taotie is a shaman's mask,²⁷ though once more we can only repeat that no evidence whatsoever proves even a little the existence of shamanism as a part of royal Shang religion. K. C. Chang also saw the Taotie as a representation of the dualistic or dual-stemmed but unified Shang system of kingship rotation (the two symmetrical halves of the face divided by the vertical meridian).²⁸ Though Chang's findings with regard to the dual-stem nature of the elites among the Shang ruling clan have been ground-breaking, his application of his research findings to the geometry of the Taotie motif seem stretched. (In Chapter 5 we will review in more detail Chang's thesis of the dual-stem system of Shang kingship.) Still others see the Taotie as a high god, while some also interpret the design to constitute totemic representations of ancestors or an ancestral clan.²⁹ In fact, some of these theses can be combined in a synthetic, more encompassing and appropriate, approach to the meaning of the Taotie.

The motif surely transmitted to the Shang more than a mere empty stylistic motif void of any religious significance. We know this because, first, the Taotie appears on ritual bronze vessels,

²⁶ On the other hand, Loehr's stylization stages do in fact describe how bronze vessel decoration developed chronologically. See Max Loehr, *Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China* (New York: Asia Society, 1968). For a brief synopsis of Loehr's thesis, see Robert Bagley, "Shang Archaeology," in Loewe and Shaughnessy, eds., *Cambridge History of Ancient China* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999): 146–155.

²⁷ See K. C. Chang (1983): 70; see also the recent work by Elizabeth Childs-Johnson supportive of Chang's position (1998: 5–171), but see as well in Volume I, Chapter 3, note 81, above, my brief critique of her method and findings.

²⁸ See Chang Kwang-chih 張光直 (K. C. Chang), "Shangwang miaohao xinkao" 商王廟號新考, in idem, ed., *Zhongguo qingtong shidai* 中國青銅時代 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1982): 85–106. See also Chang (1983): 75–80.

²⁹ See Xiong Chuanxin, "Zoomorphic Bronzes of the Shang and Zhou Period," tr. from the Chinese by Gillian Simpson, in Whitfield (1993): 96–101.

which were used both in religious rituals and, like the Yangshao, Liangzhu, and Longshan wares displaying facial motifs, to accompany the deceased in burials. A people so highly religious as the Shang royal clan and those associated with it would not have wasted precious (and thus very expensive) and power-invoking ritual space with decoration that was meaningless. Furthermore, the Taotie motif also appears on various martial bronze implements, including, in an altered form, *yue* executioners' axes (**Figure 14**). The Taotie form in **Figure 14** appears to depict gods imbibing the human head severed by the ritual axe from a victim's torso.³⁰ We might assume, then, that the Taotie represents the faces of the spirits that received cult and in turn offered assistance and protection to those offering the honor and comestibles.

³⁰ See Rawson (1996: 103) for the Sinitic character *yue*, which seems to depict the axe's severing of the sacrificial victim's head.



Figure 14. Bronze axe with human head surrounded by two tigers. From Rawson (1996): 104.

Then the Taotie, like its predecessors, appears to connote the faces of spirits whose assistance or favor was sought in both life (via sacrificial and communicative rituals) and death (via elaborate burials). Access to these spirits must have been a privilege reserved for the royal family, or those associated, usually by kinship, with it. It is well known that during the Shang access to bronze and bronze-making technology was a jealously guarded right of the politically connected Shang

wealthy and powerful.³¹ Access to the visages of these spirits therefore also was highly restricted to those enjoying great wealth and political might. We thus may conclude that the diverse faces of the spirits highlighted on these most precious of ritual and burial bronze vessels probably are the faces of many spirits whose favor and acquiescence to Shang royal wishes were crucial to Shang success, as we shall see in the chapters below. This we knew was likely already from the fact that the Taotie motif was synthesized from earlier cultures' similar designs in which, for the most part, we understand that the faces depicted most probably were those of spirits.

The Taotie and the Northern Celestial Pole

What does any of this have to do with the northern celestial pole? Perhaps quite a lot. Recall from our previous review in Volume I, Chapter 3 that in Zhou and Han traditions the Shang high god Di was identified with the Dipper at the northern celestial pole; as we know, two of the stars of the handle of the Dipper, Mizar and Alioth, help to form our polar rectangle. Di thus was identified with the pole by classical people who inherited the most ancient traditions; these were people, we may add, who really had no pole star with which to identify Di, which means that this tradition must not have been their invention but an ancient one that they inherited. I will argue through the remainder of this volume that the highest spiritual authority observed by the Shang, which was also the most eminent element of Di, was composed of these many Taotie spirit faces that we find on the Shang bronzes. They appear to be of the quadrilateral resting at or near the center of the heavens, ancestors who, represented perhaps totemically as occupying the square ritual space of the sides of the bronzes, were besought to inhabit sympathetically the bronze ritual space and thus consume the comestibles offered to them in that space. We should note also that almost always the Taotie indeed occupied a rectangular or squared space on the sides of the bronze vessels. It was the magic of the shape of the square or rectangle that appears to have been able to conduct the spirit sympathetically from the polar rectangle above to the ritual rectangle below, on

³¹ See especially K. C. Chang (1983): 95–106.

both the altar and the bronze. The square thus possessed great power for the politically centralizing Shang. It was not merely their political center but also, more crucially, their absolute center.

But what we might understand to be the spirit faces known collectively as the Taotie that adorned Shang bronzes seem not to have been purely abstract constructs that artisans created out of the void of the rectangle alone; they, like their Liangzhu, Longshan, and Erlitou predecessors, may have taken their fundamental lines from circumpolar stars that included both those of the polar rectangle and other stars proximate to them. Much as were the Liangzhu and Longshan motifs, the Taotie was highly fluid. That is, no two representations were identical, and significant variance in representation was the norm.

The Taotie was, like its Neolithic predecessors, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, but it generally took the form of either real animals found in the natural world (goats, rams, tigers, rhinoceroses, owls, turtles, birds, deer, buffalo, bears, swine, horses, etc.) or dragons and other imagined beasts (**Figure 15**), though in fact often the distinction between the types is difficult to determine.³² The fluidity of the design suggests that the outline form from which artists worked was both a consistent and simple basic pattern. That is, the artists worked from a constant guide that, in its raw simplicity, did not constrain their embellishment of the outline in a unique manner.

As in the cases of the Yangshao, Liangzhu, and Erlitou motifs, we might identify the salient elements of the Taotie face with the stellar patterns of and surrounding the polar rectangle. With the polar square oriented toward the northern horizon in the same position as when viewing the Yangshao and Liangzhu polar constellations, that is, with the length of the rectangle formed from the line P-T-M (Pherkad-Thuban-Mizar) in **Figure 16** nearest the northern horizon, then one can see very clearly how the arcs that emanated from the rectangular celestial center (specifically from above the stars Kochab and Alioth) and formed the horns of the Yangshao ungulate similarly form the antlers or horns of both the Erlitou goat-face motif and the Shang Taotie. In addition, the prominent median ridge of the Taotie mimics the meridian of the contemporary heavens, which, again, was apparent in the design of the Yangshao celestial ungulate and also as the tail of the

³² See Elizabeth Childs-Johnson's (1998: 87–139) minute and instructive characterizations of the various Taotie animal and abstracted motifs.

Western constellation Draconis. This lower terminus of this vertical meridian may be found in the old dual-star polar center consisting of Thuban (11 Draconis) and 10 Draconis ("T/10 D" in **Figure 16**). Later, as we know, this meridional line formed the polar god Taiyi's spear.



Figure 15. Styles of Taotie faces. From Allan (1991): 139–144 (from Shang-Zhou qingtong wenshi).

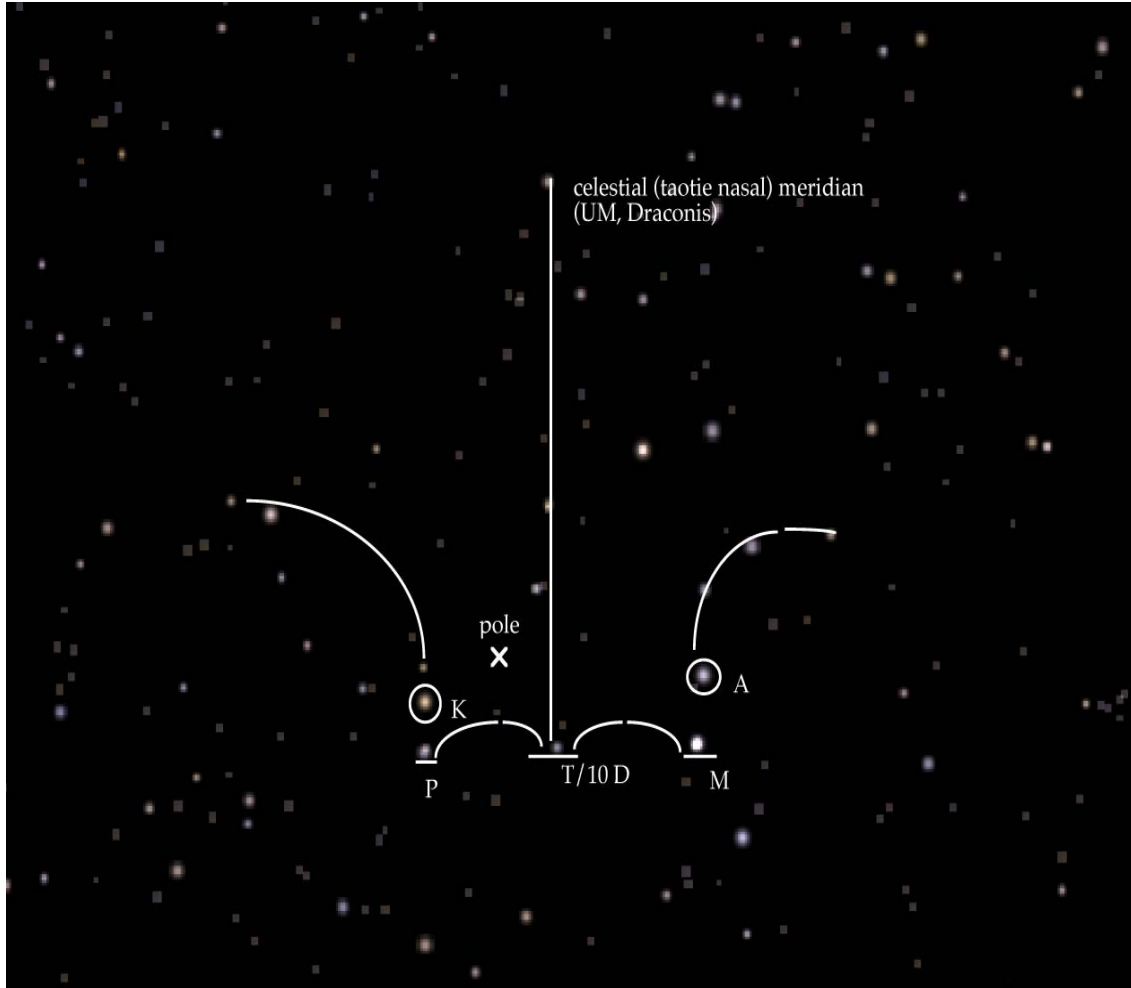


Figure 16. Outline of the stellar Taotie motif, showing the northern celestial pole of 1200 BC (X).

Moreover, the most haunting and awe-inspiring feature of the Taotie, the large eyes that stare quietly from either side of the meridional nasal ridge, might have been formed by the stars constituting the upper length of the polar rectangle, Kochab and Alioth ("K" and "A" in **Figure 16**). The lower terminus of the nose and the lower outside extremes of the integral face of the Taotie occur along a horizontal plane at the base of the motif and in most instances form a three-point lower terminus of the face itself. These three points form a line (projected as P-T-M in **Figure 16**) that parallels a line drawn horizontally between the two eyes of the motif. With all five points connected, together they can be construed to form the polar rectangle, as shown in **Figure 17a**. Then comparing the design of the Taotie motif with the northern celestial polar rectangle (**Figures 16, 17ab**; see particularly **17b**), one can note that the latter produces the basic outline of

the Taotie face, in that the Taotie's five essential points of feature correspond precisely to the stars Kochab and Alioth (the eyes), Thuban / 10 Draconis (the nose), and Pherkad and Mizar (the lower and outside termini of the face). Otherwise, as in the case of the Liangzhu AZ motif, so-called *leiwen* ("thunder lines," i.e., etched swirls) surround the Taotie face and fill out the body of the entire motif. Considering that *leiwen* served to provide three-dimensional context or relief, then, just as in the case of the AZ motif's appendages, it could be that these represent stars surrounding the rectangular celestial pole.

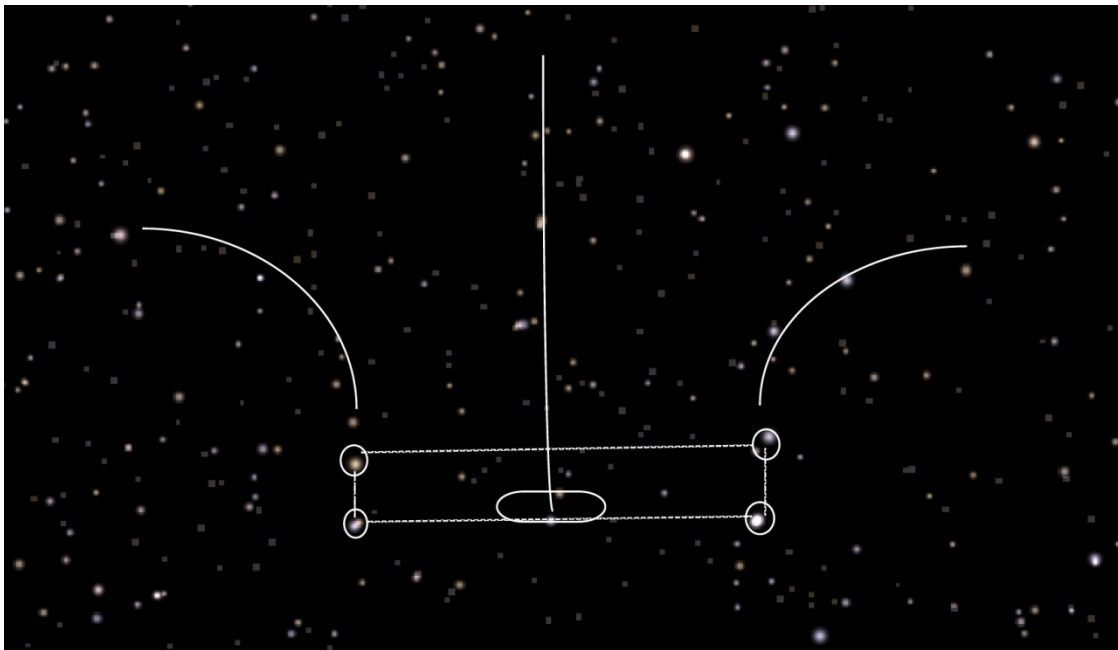


Figure 17a. Outline of typical Taotie motif drawn as a constellation of the stars at the northern celestial pole, 1200 BC. Kochab, Pherkad, Alioth, Mizar, and Thuban / 10 Dra are circled.

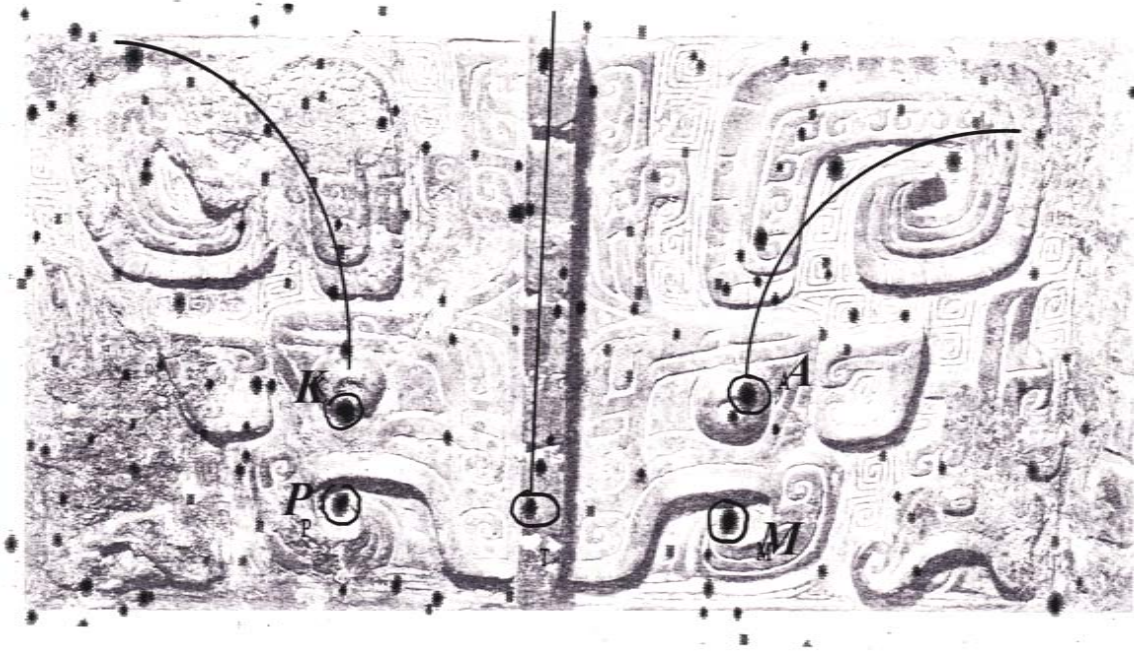


Figure 17b. Composite of a photograph of a Taotie face (Taotie background photo from Yang Xiaoneng [1999]: 165) and a star chart generated to show the polar rectangle of the polar region c. 1500–1000 BC, with the stars of the polar region superimposed on the eyes, nostrils, mouth, and horns of the Taotie. The stars of the polar rectangle are circled and identified employing the following key: K = Kochab; P = Pherkad; A = Alioth; M = Mizar; T = Thuban (bottom center).

In brief summary, the elements of the Taotie that, like its predecessor facial motifs, appear to emulate the northern celestial pole include all of the (1) large, staring eyes, (2) vertical facial meridian, (3) horns (headdress), (4) squared nose and mouth, and (5) *leiwen* swirls that surround the Taotie who resides in the rectangles on the sides of bronzes.

The Significance of the Rectangle and Square in Shang Bronzes

Further demonstrating the possible centrality of the northern celestial pole to the Shang religious and political power structure, there may lie significance in the fact that many of the most elaborate and expensive bronze vessels, that is, the large cauldrons (*ding* 鼎), were rectangular in

shape (**Figure 18a-d**). While, as we saw, possible mimicry of the spiritual power of the pole on jade grave goods may have been intended to send off the spirit of the deceased to the pole, the polar spiritual power's mimicry on ritual bronzes similarly might have been believed to conduct sympathetically the spirit so reproduced to the altar of offering. Therefore, the rectangular form of these *fangding* 方鼎, or "square cauldrons," may have been dictated by the shape of the spirit, which might have been the polar rectangle. Strengthening this postulation is the observation that on many of these *fangding* the central feature in the ritual space otherwise reserved for the Taotie face is, simply, nothing but an empty rectangle (**Figures 18a-d**). We may thus proffer that the polar rectangle itself, and not only the individual spirits that inhabited it, may have possessed immense spiritual power.

*Figures 18a-d. Fang (square) Ding vessels, early to late Shang.*³³



18a

³³ 18a from Rawson (1996); 18b-d from Li Xueqin (1995).



18b



18c



18d

Aside from *fangding* and their rectangular spaces, consider also a rectangular-bodied *you* vessel shown in **Figure 19**. Note that the rectangular openings, one on each of the four sides of the *you*, constitute the center of the ritual space of the vessel. Indeed they *are physically* the ritual space. While the openings on all four sides also served a practical purpose of radiating heat either into or out from the internal chambers of the *you*,³⁴ the rectangular / square shape itself and two pairs of Taotie motifs that accompany each rectangular hole, both above and below it, may demonstrate that the openings possessed religious significance, as well.



Figure 19. Fang (square) you vessel. From Yang Xiaoneng (1999).

³⁴ For a description of this square *you* wine vessel and its function, see Xiaoneng Yang, ed., *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology. Celebrated Discoveries from the People's Republic of China* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1999): number 62 (p. 201–202).

In addition to the previously mentioned fact that the Taotie appears within a rectangular or squared ritual space on bronze ritual vessels, all of these rectangular or square vessels on which rectangular space dominates the form of the vessel make a strong — though still hypothetical — case for the identification of, first, the Taotie faces of spirits with the rectangle, and, second, both of these motifs with the rectangular contemporary northern celestial pole. As will become ever more apparent in the remainder of this volume, it seems that only ancestors depicted, perhaps totemically, could represent a collective spiritual power of the celestial pole that (1) could be expressed in so diverse a way as the Taotie but which (2) also maintained so constant a fundamental structure and meaning.

The Dual-Animal-Flanked Human Heads

Additional evidence strengthens the case for the possible importance to the Shang of the northern celestial pole. This includes a southern motif that entered the eclectic late-Shang culture to adorn mostly executioners' *yue* axes, handles of bronze ritual vessels, and even some spaces of the bodies of ritual bronze vessels. This is the depiction of two *kui*-dragons or tigers with open mouths surrounding a human head (**Figures 14 & 20**).³⁵ Like the related Taotie, this motif surely had meaning for its creators, but we cannot know that the Shang, adopting the design fairly late in the dynasty's life when bronze decorations may have come to mean less and less symbolically, understood or accepted that meaning. K. C. Chang, not surprisingly, interpreted these *kui*-dragon / tiger designs shamanically to represent the animal / spirit familiars or helpers to the shaman king. Chang imagined them to have engaged with the king in the ritual and served as his conduits to or through the spirit world / journey.³⁶ However, once again no evidence supports this shamanically oriented interpretation.

³⁵ For a concise review of the southern origin of this motif, and for a cogent analysis of how we ought to take care in the way that we interpret it, see Rawson (1996): 103–105; and 105, note 5.

³⁶ Chang (1983): 56–75.



Figure 20. Central human and other figures flanked by tigers, as found on bronzes recovered in Anhui (top) and Sichuan (middle) in the South (Yangzi watershed), and Anyang, Shang (bottom). From Rawson (1996).

Evidence does exist, however, to support this motif's speculative identification with the stellar patterns at the contemporary northern celestial pole. Inverting the pole 180° from the angle that has been projected to provide the source outline of the face of the Taotie (**Figures 16 & 17ab**), then it becomes apparent that Thuban / 10 Draconis could have served as the source object of the central human or animal head feature, while the short vertical edges of the polar rectangle might form the open mouths of the dragons or tigers, and the arcs that formed the various zoomorphs' horns could constitute the serpentine bodies of the flanking animals (**Figure 21**).

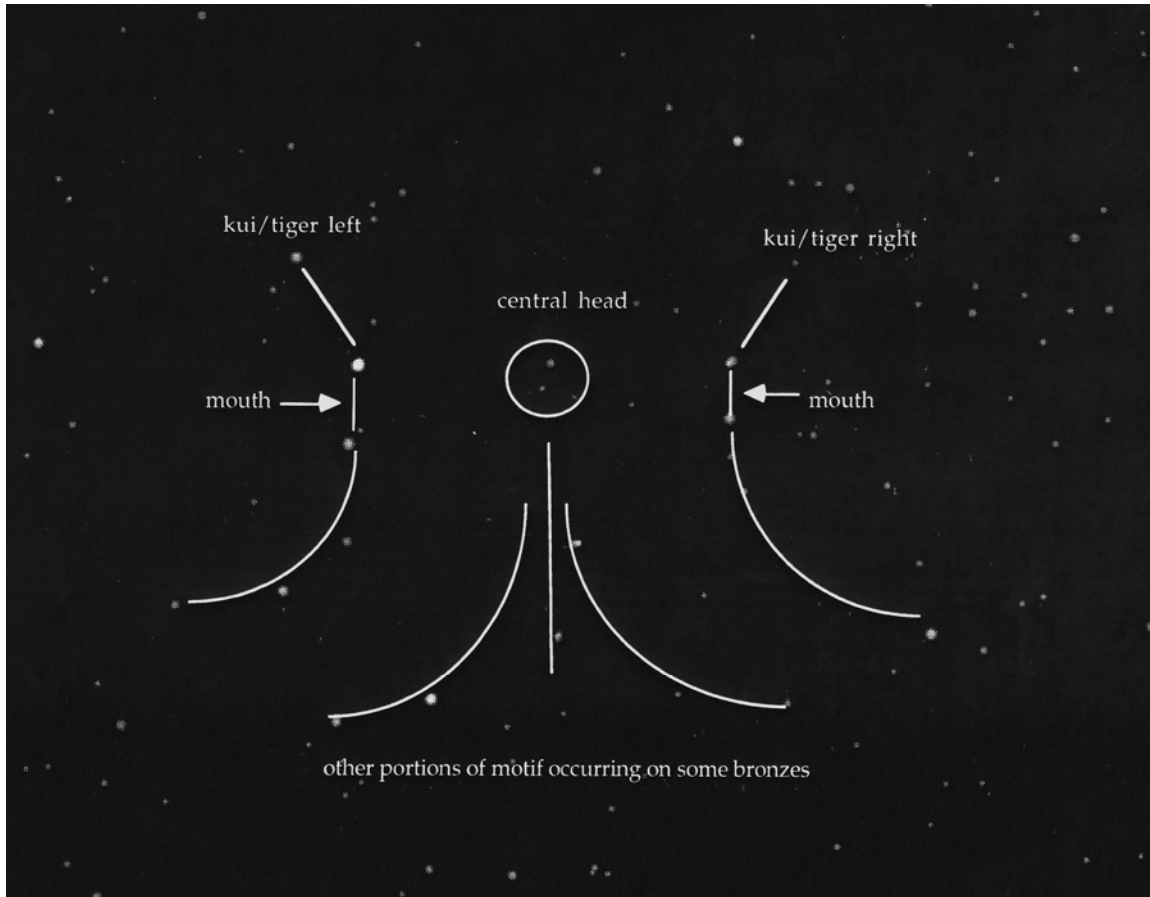
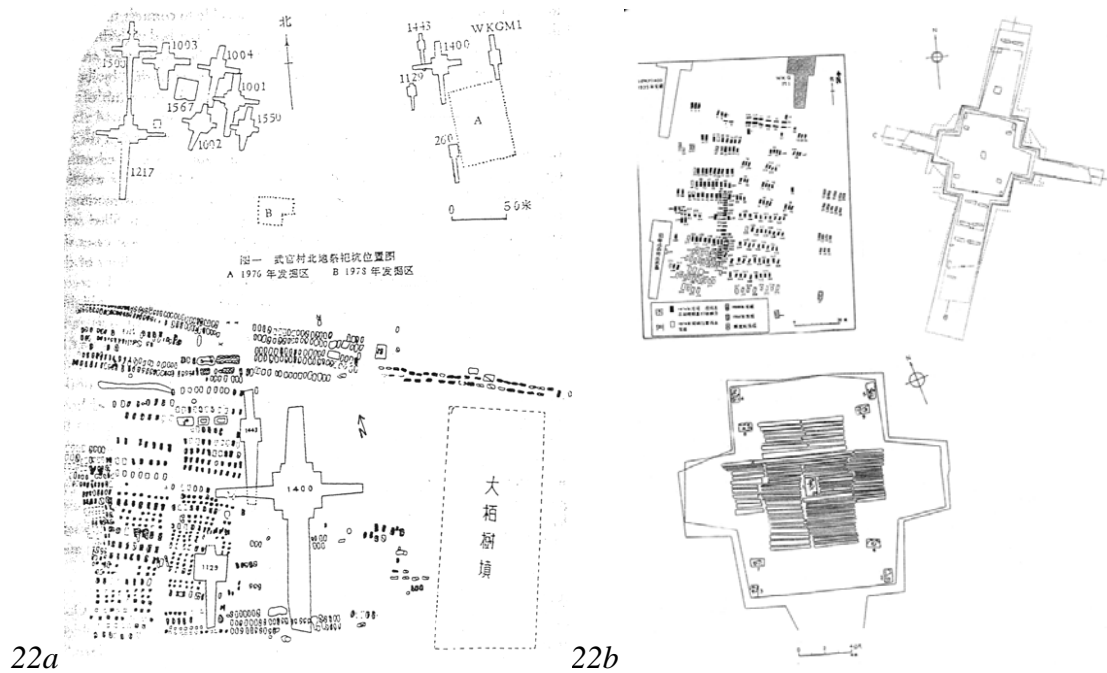


Figure 21. Outline, in the patterns of stars of the northern celestial pole, of the kui-dragons / tigers motif appearing on first southern and later Shang bronzes during the 2nd millennium BC.

One might also conjecture that on the axes the figures represent the executioner's power to take life: such power would have flowed from the absolute central force, the absolute pole (Thuban / 10 Draconis), through the perhaps totemically represented adjutant spirits at its flanks, through the king who could authorize an execution that pleased the high power, and to the executioner who carried out the divinely sanctioned act of taking life. In this way the motif resembles the Taotie, whose appearance on earlier *yue* axes possibly represented this same power to manipulate matters of human life and death.

The *Ya* 亞 Character and Shape, the *Fang* 方, and the Royal Shang Tombs

The square of the center turns up again in the shape of the thirteen royal tombs constructed during the early Anyang period of the Shang, found at Xibeigang, Xiaotun, Houjiazhuang, Anyang, Henan. Consistently all were constructed on the design of the cross, with a square tomb constituting the center and long ramps emanating on all four - *almost* cardinally oriented — sides (Figure 22ab).




Figures 22ab. Shang royal tombs, Xibeigang, Anyang, showing orientations of tombs slightly askance true north at azimuth 4° – 10° .³⁷

Sarah Allan has interpreted this design to represent five squares — one in the center and four at the

³⁷ 22a from Bagley (1999): 186–187, after *Kaogu* 1987.12: 1062, and Yang Ximei, "Henan Anyang YinXu muzang zhong renti guge de zhengli he yanjiu," in *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology*, Academia Sinica, Vol. 42, Plate 13; 22b from Bagley (1999): 188–189, after *Kaogu* 1977.1: 21, and Gao Quxun, *Houjiazhuang (Henan Anyang houjiazhuang yin dai mudi) di er ben, 1001 hao da mu*, Vol. 2 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1962): Plates 1&2, and pp. 24–29.

cardinal directions — on the basis of which interpretation she was able to stress the importance of the *spiritual quadrates* outside of the center of the Shang, that is, the *fang* 方. The *fang* are usually understood to refer to general regions out from the Shang center in which various *fang* peoples lived. The Shang also identified eight *fang* specifically, indicating by directional names those of the four cardinal directions (N, S, E, W) and the four midpoints between them (NE, SE, SW, NW). Allan, following an approximately 1,000-year tradition in China that speculates that the *ya* 亞 character's form describes the shape of ancient Chinese temples, wished to see in the cross shape of the tombs the character *ya*, which in Shang times indeed indicated a tomb, but also an official of the Shang government and, in a related way, noble status.³⁸ By linking the shape of the tombs to the *ya* character and the *ya* character to the five-square center-plus-four-*fang* idea, Allan hoped to convey the importance of the cardinal four *fang* to the definition of the center and, ultimately, to argue that filling in the four *fang* missing from the corners of the *ya* or cross shape produces a large square that represents the Shang conception of earth. Thus, Allan offered, such a Shang square-earth concept presaged what Allan believed was a late-Zhou / early-Han tradition of a round heaven and a square earth.³⁹

The troubles with Allan's thesis are that (1) the cross shape of the royal tombs accentuates the central square tomb, not the cross-forming ramps that lead from ground level to the central tomb's deeply excavated square; therefore the tomb does not in any way connote the four *fang*; rather, it directly and explicitly emphasizes the square in the center; (2) the shape of the Shang OBI form of the character *ya*, or , also emphasizes the central square and so minimizes the stubby four cardinaly oriented appendages that in the *kaishu* form of the character have become exaggerated; it thus accords with the symbolic emphasis on the actual square shape of the centers of the Shang tombs themselves as unearthed in the twentieth century; (3) during the Shang the *fang* first and foremost indicated geographic or geopolitical regions not under central Shang control or

³⁸ Noel Barnard and others have suggested that the *ya* shape connotes clan association or lineage and, thus, also nobility. Of course, in this closed society of the elite, the nobility also would have constituted the governing or official classes. See Barnard's "A New Approach to the Study of Clan-sign Inscriptions of Shang," in Kwang-chih Chang (K. C. Chang), ed., *Studies in Shang Archaeology* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986): 141–206.

³⁹ Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle* (New York: SUNY, 1988): 75–111.

otherwise firmly allied with the Shang. The spiritual value of the *fang* to the Shang depended first on the presence of *fang* peoples of the *fang* regions (on this see Chapters 3–5, below);⁴⁰ and (4) reading the “heaven is round, earth is square” (*tianyuan difang* 天圓地方) tradition attested in written sources only as late as circa 200 AD⁴¹ back into the Shang period is suppositional only and not sustained by any contemporary evidence from either the Shang, Zhou, or Han periods. The important matter of understanding actual Shang, Zhou, and Han cosmographic speculation is a central focus of Chapters 4 and 5 of Volume III.

Rather than connoting outlying regions at all, once again the Shang tombs at Xibeigang appear to emphasize what I have argued to be the absolute center of not only the Shang polity but the known universe of 1200 BC itself, the polar rectangle. Supporting this strongly is the fact that the tombs under question were oriented between azimuth 4° and 10°, or east of true north by these

⁴⁰ To the idea that the *fang* were most fundamentally skyward or spiritual in orientation I take exception on the basis of OBI evidence, which will be reviewed below, in Chapters 3–5. Like Allan, other scholars, such as Feng Shi (1994), also have tended to ignore or downplay the fact that the *fang* were most fundamentally earth-borne regions out from the center in which various and often troublesome *fang* peoples lived. Wang Aihe (2000) corrects this to a degree in her more recent discussion of *fang* (see esp. 23–28), though ultimately even she ignores her own understanding of the geo-political roots of *fang* for the Shang when she argues that the Zhou brought the Shang cosmological *fang* down to earth to refer to a political geography (see Wang [2000], esp. p. 67). For a brief corrective, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Western Cultural Innovations in China, 1200 BC,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 11 (July 1989): 1–2.

⁴¹ Allan (1988: p. 75) quoted what at that time was believed to be a text dating to the 3rd century BC, the *Zhou bisuan jing* 周髀算經, but which text Christopher Cullen subsequently has demonstrated dates to the first two centuries AD (Christopher Cullen, *Astronomy and Mathematics in Ancient China: The Zhou bi suan jing* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]: 138–148). Allan’s thesis also relied on statements made in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 of 139 BC, but as I demonstrate below, in Volume III, Chapter 5, the statements made in *HNZ* do not add up to a square-earth thesis.

But beyond the matter of the dating of the square-earth theory to either the 2nd century BC or 200 AD or beyond, considering how unusually fertile socially, culturally, politically, artistically, and intellectually the entire period of the Zhou, Qin, and Han was, and how that fertility stimulated the creation of new views of the universe, it is highly doubtful that one could without clear evidence stretch so late a tradition back any earlier than to, say, the 4th–3rd centuries BC, when the philosophically most revolutionarily creative period began. Even then, such a stretch would need to be only very speculative. See below, Volume III, Chapters 4 and 5, for further analysis of this late tradition.

degrees (**Figures 22ab**). In this way they matched the angular separation between the starless true pole at true north of 1300–1200 BC and the central pivot of the old polar rectangle, Thuban, which was approximately 8.5° (**Figure 23**).

Many, including Needham & Wang and now also David Pankenier, have noted the angular deviance of the orientation of the tombs from true north, and it has been suggested that the tombs' orientation had to do with the position of the celestial pole.⁴² Wang Aihe averred conversely that the tombs' orientation has less to do with the pole than an alternate system of orientation, which she suggests might have been the rising and setting of the sun,⁴³ but since we know that outside of the earth's now once-frozen northern polar circle the sun's extreme northern declension never approached anywhere near azimuth 4° – 10° (for sunrise; or, for setting, azimuth 350° – 356°), then obviously this could not be the source of the orientation of the tombs.

In noting the orientation of the tombs Keightley has reported more reasonably only that from Neolithic times the proto-Chinese consistently, across most cultures known, buried their dead and/or oriented their burial chambers to the cardinal directions or near them. And, as he wrote,

The orientation of the dead was rarely, if ever, based upon some local feature of the landscape. It appears to have derived from some larger, more abstract plan that these early cosmologists discerned on earth and in the heavens.⁴⁴

⁴² Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China, IV:1, Physics and Physical Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962): 313; David Pankenier, "A Brief History of Beiji 北極 (Northern Culmen), with an Excursus on the Origin of the Character *di* 帝," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124:2 (2004): 226.

⁴³ Wang (2002): 50.

⁴⁴ Keightley (2000): 84.

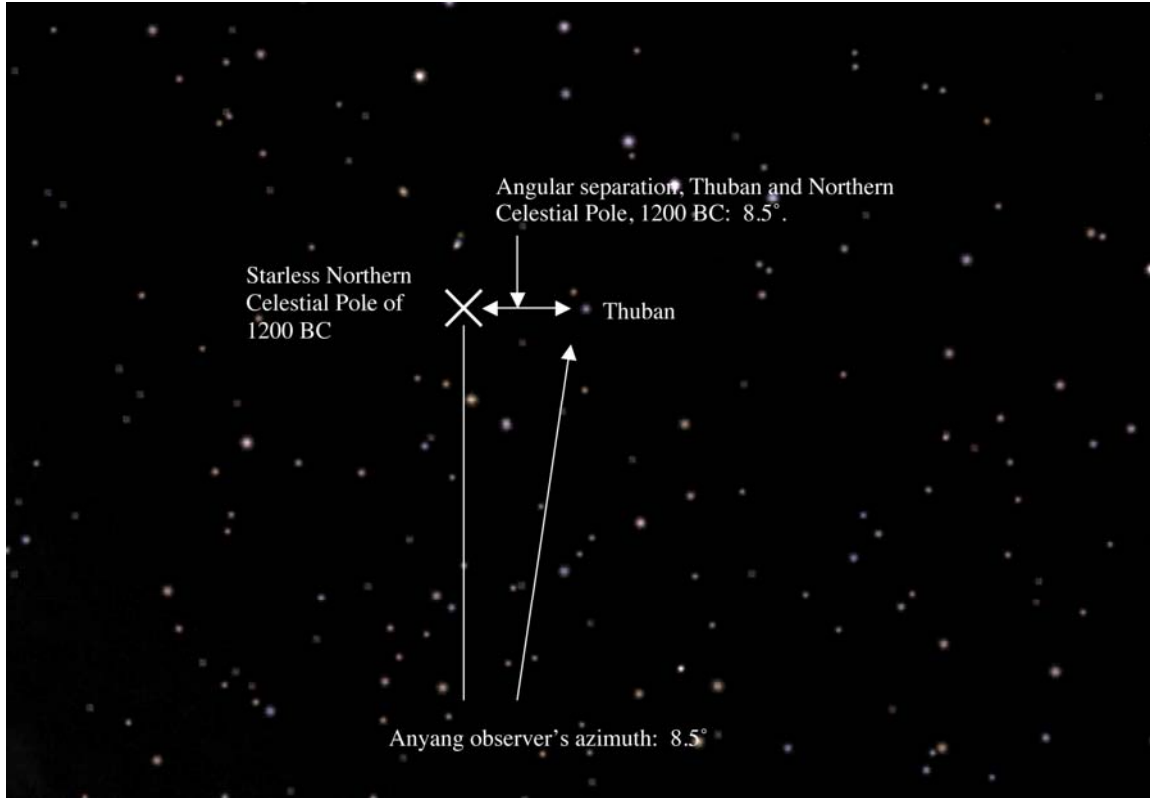


Figure 23. View of Thuban and the northern celestial pole from Anyang, China, 1200 BC, just after sunset on the evening of the spring equinox (3/21/100 BC). To the observer facing north and looking up at the pole, Thuban appeared east of the true pole by approximately 8.5° .

Indeed, though it was not a truly abstract, but only an immediately or physically intangible, plan, the observance of the pivotal stars Thuban and 10 Draconis of the rectangular center of the heavens could have provided the orientation for the tombs. Similar to how the Liangzhu people might have done with both their mobile *cong* and immobile temples and tombs and ancient Egyptians appear to have done with their pyramid tombs, the Shang might have employed the immobile agency of the orientation of the tomb to point their royal dead at the rectangle just aslant the pole in 1200 BC because this is where the center of the rectangle lay, and the rectangle may have been where they wished the spirits of their royal dead to reside. It seems that they hoped to employ correlative geometry to escort their dead sympathetically from an earth-bound quadrilateral to the heavenly quadrilateral at the old pole.

The fact that, as David Pankenier has noted, directional orientation of significant structures

among early Bronze Chinese civilizations (Erlitou to Shang) tended to adjust through the middle and late 2nd millennium BC from less than 10° west of due north to approximately 10° east of true north⁴⁵ supports the hypothetical argument that the Shang rulers pointed their royal graves toward the *old* northern celestial pole of the 4th-early-2nd millennia BC, the star Thuban.⁴⁶ Indeed the two palace foundations unearthed at the pre-Shang Erlitou site at Yanshi, Henan (c. 2300–1400 BC) reflect the earlier approximately 5–8° western (azimuth 355–352°) orientation of pre-Shang monumental architecture.⁴⁷ By contrast, not only do the Shang royal tombs at Anyang (late 13th–12th century BC) reflect the sudden shift from northwestern to northeastern orientation, but so

⁴⁵ When first the words above were written and the chapters of Volume II created, in 2002–2003, my only supportive source for this was an email communication sent from David Pankeiner to David Keightley, dated August 31, 1997 and reported in Keightley (2000): 83, n. 8. Since then Pankenier has published an article in which he reviews this data once more and from its basis makes an argument that is similar to what follows here. See Pankenier (2004): 226–228.

⁴⁶ Here David Pankenier's and my interpretations differ. Pankenier favors the idea that the shift in orientation occurred as a result of a change in recognition of the current pole star, from the old pole star Thuban to the new pole star Kochab (2004: 228). The consistent recognition of Thuban as the pole star is much more likely, and our interpretations differ, I believe, as a result of the extent to which we have considered Neolithic, Bronze, and later (Zhou-period) context. In brief, in offering a "hand-off" of pole stars as his favored explanation for the shift in orientation, Professor Pankenier did not consider the source of not only the quadrangular or cruciform shapes of the artifacts under review (cities, tombs, temples) but also the character for the godhead itself, the polar quadrangle that Thuban helped to form. On the shape/form and meaning of the graph for the godhead, see below, this volume, Chapters 3–5. Moreover, the azimuth degree of the orientations of all of these structures, from Yanshi through the Shang, consistently align more closely with Thuban than with Kochab or another star: approximately 5° to 8.5° separated Thuban from the actual pole in this period, which conforms with both the northwestern and northeastern orientations of the city, temple, and tomb structures at Yanshi, Zhengzhou, and Anyang.

In addition, Professor Pankenier's suggested shift in observed pole stars between the times of the construction of Yanshi and the Shang structures implies a recognition by contemporary folk of the precession of the equinoxes, an implication that I would not support.

⁴⁷ For descriptions and depictions of these palaces see Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo Erlitou dui 中国科学院考古研究所二里头队, eds., "Henan Yanshi Erlitou erhao gongdian yizhi" 河南偃师二里头二号宫殿遗址, in *Kaogu* 1973.3: 206–216 (palace drawing on p. 207); and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo Erlitou gongzuo dui 中国科学院考古研究所二里头工作队, eds., "Henan Yanshi Erlitou zao Shang gongdian yizhi fajue jianbao" 河南偃师二里头早商宫殿遗址发掘简报, *Kaogu* 1974.4: 234–248 (palace drawing on p. 235).

do the city walls at Zhengzhou (17th–16th centuries BC, usually considered to be early Shang and at the very least coterminous and culturally parallel with it), which, like the Shang royal tombs, point northeasterly toward approximately azimuth 8°. ⁴⁸

Why did this shift in orientation occur, and why does it support the thesis that the Shang aimed their tombs and Zhengzhou city walls toward Thuban? That the Erlitou culture appears also to have aimed its palaces at Thuban, the old pole star, manifests that this practice seems to have remained a constant from Neolithic into Bronze times. For recall that the Puyang M45 grave, the temple complexes of the Liangzhu culture, and the seemingly astronomical observatories and plaza of the Hongshan culture all were oriented toward cardinal north at a time when Thuban lay at cardinal north relative to the earth observer. Erlitou, and then Shang, appear to have inherited this tradition, and both cultures seem to have adjusted their sights to account for Thuban's drift from the pole by the mid- to late-2nd millennium BC. The Erlitou people thus appear to have most revered Thuban when its rotation placed it directly west of the pole. Taking 1700 BC as a median year of the Erlitou civilization, we may note that in that year, just after sunset on the evening of the autumnal equinox, to a viewer at Yanshi, Thuban indeed appeared to lie directly west of the northern celestial pole (**Figure 24**).

By contrast, allowing 1200 BC to represent the median year of the Shang, which is anyway about when the royal tombs at Xibeigang, Anyang were constructed, to a viewer at Anyang observing the heavens just after the sunset on the evening of the vernal equinox, Thuban lay directly east of the pole at an angular separation of 8.5° (**Figure 23**).

We cannot know for certain precisely why the Erlitou and Shang cultures apparently oriented their probably religiously potent architecture toward Thuban when that star reached opposite positions relative the pole, but the fact that these positions were achieved just after sunset on the vernal and autumnal equinoxes suggests that it could have been a matter of calendrically informed religious import. It might be that to the Erlitou the autumnal equinox was a more significant gnomon, while the Shang may have considered the vernal equinox to be the most important day of the year. Would either of these cultures have understood how to measure the

⁴⁸ See drawings of these walls in Chang (1986): 337, and now also Pankenier (2004): 212–216.

sun's ecliptic such that they could arrive at the equinoctial dates? This is unclear, but two factors suggest strongly that they could have done so, at least very roughly.

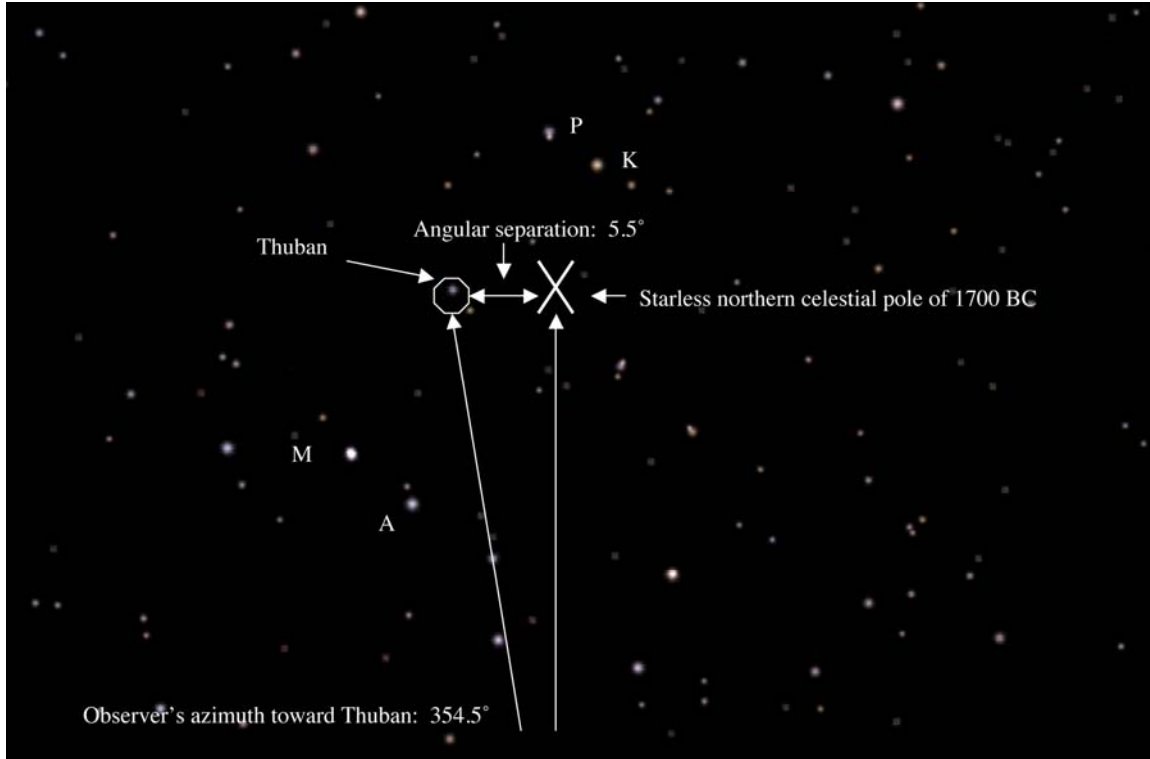


Figure 24. View of Thuban and the northern celestial pole from Zhengzhou, China, 1700 BC, after sunset on the evening of the autumnal equinox (9/21/1700 BC). To the observer facing north and looking up to the pole, Thuban appeared west of the starless true pole by approximately 5.5°.

First, pre-Shang proto-Chinese astronomical observation seems to date back to no later than the Hongshan culture of the 4th–3rd millennia BC, and if Feng Shi's projections are correct, the Hongshan people already were measuring the cycling of the sun's visible ecliptic some 500–1000 and 1200–1700 years before the rise of the Erlitou and Shang civilizations, respectively. We also cannot be sure that such knowledge did not arrive during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC from Central Asia and, ultimately, Mesopotamia or India / Pakistan. As we know from Volume I, Chapter 1, we can be certain that during this period various influences arrived rather continuously with migrating and trading folk from Southwest / South Asia and the Pontic-Caspian steppe. Second, we know from the existence of the Shang combined luni-solar calendar that this culture made complex

observations of the heavens and had developed a fairly sophisticated system of astral measurement. It should not surprise us if they were indeed tracking the annual cycling of the sun's ecliptic and correlating significant seasonal earth events (such as the falling of leaves, the ending of the cold or snows, the sprouting of plants, the coming of the rains, and the onslaught of heat) with its points of extreme and median declination, the solstices and equinoxes. After all, the Shang were sophisticated enough to employ intercalary months to adjust lunar to solar time.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the Shang's apparent reorientation toward Thuban in the east was a significant shift in tradition, and, if it really was a matter of recognizing the supreme importance of the vernal equinox, it could explain the origins of the Chinese marking of the new year with the beginning of spring. In this sense, then, as in many others, the Shang thus might be considered to have "modernized" elements of inherited Neolithic and early Bronze proto-Chinese civilization. Given the uniquely open and eclectic nature of Shang cultural absorption, that it would adjust inherited traditions is not surprising.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Indeed one may argue that due to both its eclectic nature and its political-military ability to organize a greater proto-empire, the Shang was the pivot in development from the proto-Chinese Neolithic civilizations to the Zhou and later Chinese civilization. The Shang unified and streamlined a diverse coterie of local cultures into a single ruling culture. That is, as Itô Michiharu proffered, the eclectic Shang was a watershed of Neolithic and early Bronze cultures (Itô Michiharu 伊藤道治, *Chûgoku kodai ôchô no keisei* 中國古代王朝の形成 [Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1975]: 58–64). Many early traditions of almost countless tribes and subcultures appear to have converged in the Shang unification. This is particularly evident in Allan's *The Shape of the Turtle*, in which we see her having to sift (valiantly) through multiple layers of apparently unrelated but overlapped (that is, later jumbled through a long and complex process of editing of oral and early textual transmittals) mythic traditions.

In addition, various competing traditions developed within the circle of the Shang elite ruling class, as we would expect. The most obvious example of this diversity at the top is the theorized ritual bifurcation of religious ritual preparation and performance, evidenced in what Dong Zuobin first identified to be competing old and new ritual "schools" (Dong Zuobin 董作賓, *Fifty Years of Studies in Oracle Inscriptions* [English tr. ed. by Kimpei Goto; Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1964]). Similarly, as Nanba Junko has discovered, the Shang royal house relied on competing schools of bronze ritual vessel production to supply their ritual needs for these products. Further, Nanba argues, these schools of production played important roles in the politics of power among the Shang royal elite (Nanba Junko 難波純子, "Inkyo gohanki-no seidô iki (ge)" 殷虛後半期の青銅彝器 (下), in *Sen-oku hakkokan kiyô* 泉屋博古館紀要 12 [1996]). Thus, the presence of such diverse inherited and developing traditions at the apex of the Shang ruling society explains why that society was likely to implement changes in the traditions inherited obviously from Neolithic times that the earlier, intervening, cultures such as Erlitou were likely to follow unreflexively. There is no

All of these consistent signs that point our eyes to the celestial rectangle at the pole to explain ancient, Neolithic-Bronze, proto-Chinese concepts of how high celestial spiritual power translated into physical, social, or political power on earth likely are not coincidental only. Recreations of the pole on earth as rectangles, squares, and constellationary beasts would have facilitated ritual communion with the gods or spirits of the pole, in both life and death. In this they indeed appear to have served as an *axis mundi*, but in no way does this support the claims for a shamanism in China at any time through the Shang, for it seems that it was the dead who made a spirit journey to the pole, not the living (shaman), and it would have been the living who communed with the spirit(s) of the pole when during rituals of propitiation the targeted high spiritual power(s) entered the pole-mimicking ritual space of the vessel on the altar. The polar square thus may have formed the absolute center of the religious activity of at least these Yangshao, Dawenkou, Qingliangang, Bei Yinyangying, Songze, Xuejiagang Jing'an, Daxi Tangjiagang, Liangzhu, Henan Longshan, Qijia, Erlitou, Erligang, and Shang civilizations, and this might have constituted a central shared pattern of inheritance among them.

The centrality of the polar square in religious belief would have translated into socio-political power in the human societies, which can be interpreted to have been manifested by the application of the polar motifs on expensive and controlled jade and bronze media of expression. As we shall see, it was the Shang that appears to have manipulated what seems to have been the widespread belief in the power of the pole to expand its political control over eclectic regions and peoples. And it was the Shang civilization that produced the first written records of ancient China, which records, the OBIs, strengthen immensely the postulation forwarded in this study for the central importance of the northern celestial pole for the people of Neolithic-Bronze proto- and early-Chinese civilizations. For the remainder of this volume, it is to these records that we turn for textual support of our erstwhile pictorially based and hypothetical understanding of the centrality of the polar square.

reason to doubt that the distending sponge that was the Shang would have developed its own diverging traditions from within an original, unifying convergence.

Chapter 3: Di 𠄎 and the Shapes of Things

In Volume I and the foregoing chapters of the present volume we have reviewed my postulation that in Neolithic and Bronze civilizations in China and across the world the rectangle, or square, 口, was a heavenly thing — a physical or graphic representation of a high power, or its seat of power, in the pivotal northern pole of the night sky. I have further proposed that 口 also constituted on earth the absolute religious, and thus also political, center, the conduit by which the local temporal power claimed access to and favor by the heavenly spiritual center above. That is, I proffer that the 口 design was that of the altar or ritual center whose sympathetic mimicry of its heavenly polar — or perhaps Platonic — counterpart provided its own power. In Chapters 1 and 2 of the present volume we also reviewed evidence suggesting that the tradition of the power of both the quadrilateral and the polar region of which it constituted the center developed and continued in China, from the 4th millennium BC down to and through the Shang, in the forms of designs on clay, jade, and bronze ritual and burial vessels, as well as in the shapes and orientations of Erlitou and early-Shang cities, temples, and royal tombs.

Inscriptional evidence supports these postulations for the Shang very strongly. In this and the following two chapters we will view inscribed characters and inscriptional texts found on mostly Shang period oracle bones, but also Shang and early Zhou bronzes. The evidence, consisting of both many individual Sinitic (that is, oracle-bone [*jiagu* 甲骨] and bronze [*jinwen* 金文, or *dazhuan* 大篆 “big-seal,” script]) characters and their uses in inscriptional syntactic context, evince that throughout the literate culture of the Shang period the square / rectangle shape represented the crucial pole-derived meanings of both center and supreme spiritual power.

Before we begin, it is important to establish that the Shang OBI script temporally and otherwise appears very much to precede the Shang bronze script.¹ This is significant in order to

¹ For the contrary opinion, which proposes, on the basis of reasoned opinion only, that the OBI script is a product of centuries of development of the script using perishable — and thus now unrecoverable — materials (such as bamboo strips) that led eventually to the prior development of the bronze script, see Robert Bagley, “Anyang writing and the origins of the Chinese writing system,” in Stephen D. Houston, ed., *The first writing: script invention*

establish the primacy of the square shape for the graph *ding* 口, which in bronze script often becomes more triangular or rounded and fluid: bronze forms of *ding* include not only the 口 form but also sometimes what some reviewers consider to be the brush-and-ink forms of 𠃉, 𠃊, and 𠃋. As we reviewed toward the close of Volume I, Chapter 1, in a recently completed Ph.D. dissertation Adam Smith has made a very strong case for the priority over other forms of the OBI script and for the OBI script having been created originally and artificially in Shang scribal schools by an industrious series of scribes who, under apparent orders from the Shang court and the immediate supervision of scribal masters, consciously and rapidly evolved a set of approximately 3,000 graphs by which the court could communicate, via graphs etched onto thaumaturgically potent cattle scapula and tortoise plastrons, with the spirits of the ancestors of the Shang king.² This bespeaks a sudden importation of both the *idea* for and *practice* of writing during this period of the Shang, at which time also the complete technology of the chariot arrived, momentarily, at

as history and process (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004): 190–249; and Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, *Wenxue gaiyao* 文學概要 (Beijing: Shangwu, 1990): 27. One can object to Bagley's and Qiu's suppositions by indicating that (1) the OBI script, which is rather mature in its use of the rebus principle but immature in its indecision yet about scriptal direction and graphic orientation (regarding the latter, that is, often, it is apparent, no one had decided yet during the Shang over the preferred left-right orientation relative to one another of discrete components of graphs), was developed on the basis of advanced intelligence derived from delivered information about the nature and uses of script in other cultures; that is, the developers of OBI script probably benefited from the experience of those who introduced the idea and practice of writing to the Shang such that the Shang scribes were able to develop a script without having to experience the same long-term developmental or evolutionary struggles as had the developers of the first standardized scripts in the ancient Near East from c. 3000 to, at this time, c. 1200 BC; and, (2) while the graph that later, in Chinese script, depicted string-tethered bamboo strips, or *ce* 冊, appears as well in Sinitic OBI inscriptions, which appearance has been forwarded as "proof" that other than on oracle bones the script was also written on bamboo strips, can we be certain that the graph as used in OBIs referred specifically to bamboo strips bearing script, or might the graph have referred to something else? And if the graph did indeed refer to bamboo strips, does the coterminous writing on such scripts necessarily mean that it preceded the scratching of graphs on bones? I think not. It is also significant that (3) nowhere on any ceramics in China predating c. 1200 BC does anything that we could call syntactic "writing" appear. If actual writing had developed in China prior to its sudden appearance on oracle bones c. 1200 BC, why, then, has none been recovered appearing on ceramics? On issues (1) and (3), see Adam Smith, *Writing at Anyang: The role of the divination record in the emergence of Chinese literacy* (UCLA Ph.D. dissertation, 2008): 138–139 (access at <http://www.cangjie.info/public/diss/diss.php>).

² Smith, (2008): *passim*.

the Shang court. What has been perceived to be the more fluid and pictorially expressive geometry of the full bronze script, which appears later than the OBI script, might then reflect an artistic and more freely interpreted flourish developed on the basis of the prior and seemingly more utilitarian, and, consequent of their stylistic origins in clan / ownership symbols similarly scratched onto Neolithic pots and other objects, efficient, OBI graphs.

But, really, it is debatable the point that has been forwarded that what have been argued to be the ultimately brush-stroked bronze graphs are more curvaceous and fluid than the OBI graphs, since even a cursory glance at the Sinitic OBI lexicon demonstrates that graphs of this script are as equally rounded and curvaceous as the later, derived, bronze graphs. There thus would be no justification to any claim that the more triangular and, in cases, rounded forms of *ding* in the bronze script represent, on the basis of the argued but unsupported — and thus thoroughly debatable — relatively rounded and fluid forms of bronze-script graphs in general, a temporal priority over the hard and sharp stylus-scratched square forms of *ding*. Those among the OBI graphs that are squared or cornered were very obviously consciously and carefully designed and scratched to be thusly formed. The bronze forms, occurring in fact later than the OBI graphs, cannot be assumed, on the basis of no hard evidence but only supposition regarding a greater curvaceousness of bronze graphs that in fact is not sustainable, to represent a prior but unattested form of enscripting the contemporary spoken language.

It is also highly pertinent that the early bronze graph for a character that includes the form of *ding* 𠄎 as a derivative semantic cognate, *zheng* 正 (OBI 𠄎), which on bronzes typically takes the form of 𠄎, retains the specific square form of *ding* despite the “feet” portion of the *zheng* graph having been cast on bronze in a form more fluid and realistic than the “feet” form found in OBI graphs. It thus becomes very apparent in the specific context of this thesis that the quadrilateral construction of the graph for *ding* was consciously maintained and applied, even in bronze.³

³ For more on *zheng* and its derivation, see below, the concluding section of Volume II, Chapter 5.

The Constituent Shapes of Di and Their Proposed Astronomical Correlations




We begin here in Chapter 3 with a careful analysis of the shapes and uses of the character  (Sinitic script), or *di* 帝 (Chinese *kaishu* script), which generally has been understood to have constituted the Shang high spiritual power. In Chapter 4 I propose and support with considerable textual evidence a new theory of this so-called high power Di that must now take into consideration the subject of Chapter 5, which is the significance of the character and form  in Sinitic characters and oracle-bone inscriptions. Through these chapters, and with reference to all of the preceding material and arguments, I am able to demonstrate that the highest power in Shang was not Di but our  of the heavenly polar center.



Table 1 shows the various archaic oracle-bone forms of the character that in Chinese came to be pronounced and written as *di* 帝. It is worth noting at the outset that the two most common forms among these archaic characters are  and .

Table 1. Variable Forms for the Sinitic Character for Di 帝⁴

a		b		c		d	
	standard form, oracle-bone script		standard form, oracle-bone script		common alternate form		common alternate form
e		f		g		h	
	common alternate form		common alternate form		unusual form		unusual form
i		j		k		l	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
m		n		o		p	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
q		r		s		t	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
u		v		w			
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		

⁴ Sources: Gao Ming (1980), Zhou Fagao (1974, 1982), and LZ.


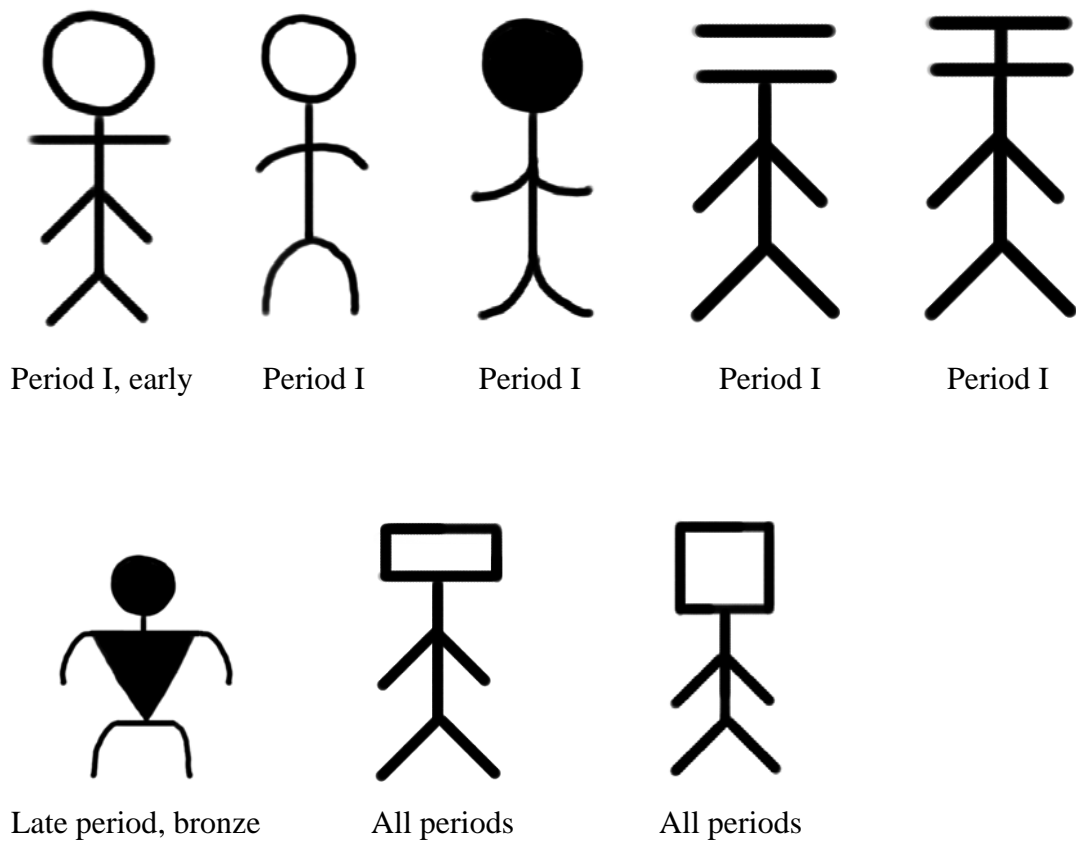
One of the Sinitic forms for Chinese *tian* 天, which for the Zhou denoted the high power "heaven," generally looked like this: . Given our foregoing discussions regarding the apparent religious significance and power that the quadrilateral represented in ancient Chinese civilizations, the presence in both characters for these Shang and Zhou high powers of a central square or rectangle is striking. **Table 2** shows the Sinitic forms for *tian*.

Table 2. Sinitic Forms of the Chinese Graph *Tian* 天 (approximations)⁵



⁵ Sources: Gao Ming (1980: 28); Zhou Fagao (1974: 24–27); idem, (1982: 93); and LZ: 84.

It is well known that when the Zhou took over from the Shang in and after c. 1045 BC they consciously equated the two high powers of the sky, their own Tian and their predecessors' Di.⁶ This is readily apparent in both bronze inscriptions⁷ and the received textual tradition of the *Book of Documents* (or *Book of History*, *Shang shu* 尚書) and *Book of Odes* (or *Book of Songs*, *Shi Jing* 詩經).⁸ We can estimate that the rough equation of these godheads was not intended cynically by the conquering Zhou to be a politically exigent policy, although in effect it was pragmatic propaganda. Very likely it resulted from sincere belief. The identification of Tian with Di in fact begins in the history of the graphs (or, roughly, etymology) and, prior to that, the sky itself. In fact, since the Han period Chinese scholars, viewing these characters in their Chinese, *xiaozhuan* ("Little Seal") and later, script versions, have observed the common origin of the characters *tian* and *di* in either or both of the Chinese characters for "one," which is 一 (*yi*), or "two," which is 二 (*er*). In some cases *di* has been said to originate in not only *yi* and *er*, but also *tian* itself.⁹ What

⁶ Hereafter the latinized *di* and *tian* (lower-case, italics) refer to these words' representations in Sinitic or Chinese characters themselves. Latinized Di and Tian (upper-case, roman) indicate the gods/spirits to which the words represented by the characters refer.

⁷ See *Shi Qiang Pan* 史牆盤, dated to just before 900 BC; the inscription is reproduced and translated in Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 1–4. See Chapter 4 below for further discussion of this important inscription.

⁸ In *Shang shu* of particular importance in this regard are the *Da gao* ("Great Declaration"), *Shao gao* ("Declaration to Shao"), *Kang gao* ("Declaration to Kang"), and *Jun shi* ("Prince Shi") documents. For text and translations of *Shang shu* see Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Documents* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Bulletin no. 22, 1950): 36–43, 47–51, 59–62. In *Shi jing* see especially the poems "King Wen" ("Wen Wang" 文王), "Great Illumination" ("Da ming" 大明), "Distant" ("Ban" 板), "Mighty" ("Dang" 蕩), and "River of Stars" ("Yun Han" 雲漢); text in Qu Wanli 屈萬里, ed., *Shi jing quan shi* 詩經註釋 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983): 451–455, 506–514, 517–530; translations of *Shi jing* poem titles follow Arthur Waley, *Book of Odes* (Revised ed., Joseph R. Allen, ed.; New York: Grove Press, 1996); for translations of these poems see Waley, p. 227–230, 258–262, 270–272. For a brief review of the identity of Di and Tian, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, "Western Cultural Innovations in China, 1200 BC," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 11 (July 1989): 1–8.

⁹ See below for a review of Han dynasty etymologist Xu Shen's theory of the origins of *di* in the forms 一 and 二, and Chapter 4 of the present volume and Volume III, Chapters 1–3 for fuller treatments of *tian*. It was Ye Yusen who proposed *di*'s origins in all of 一, 二, and *tian*. See Zhou Fagao 周法高, *Jinwen gulin bu* 金文詁林補 (Nangang:

these scholars did not recognize is that the two lines \equiv that they observed that help to comprise both Chinese characters *di* and *tian* in fact seem to be stylized representations of the square \square that formed the central element of both characters in their Sinitic forms.¹⁰ I postulate that they constitute the horizontal lengths of the square formed by drawing straight lines between the stars (a) Mizar, Thuban, and Pherkad, and (b) Alioth and Kochab (**Figure 1**).¹¹



Figure 1. Chinese characters one (yi) and two (er) as drawn across the northern celestial polar stars of Mizar, Thuban, and Pherkad (M&P) and Alioth and Kochab (A&K).

Zhongyang yanjiu yuan, Lishi-yuyan yanjiusuo, 1982): 31.

¹⁰ The most common form of *tian* employed during the Shang until the late period was drawn using the two superior horizontal lines or, in their place, a circle. Only in the late Shang was *tian* more commonly written using a \square in place of the horizontal lines or circle. For more on *tian*, see below, this chapter, as well as Chapters 4 and 5 of this volume and the entirety of Volume III.

¹¹ David Pankenier (2004) has, since these pages were first written, also projected the graph for the god Di onto the celestial polar region but in a way very distinct from my own projection. See Chapter 5, "Appendix: The Polar Projection of *Di*," for a thorough review of Pankenier's projection as compared against my own.

Indeed, we know already that the form \square probably can be found in the shape made by bright stars centering on the northern celestial pole of the ancient period. By returning to look again at the pole with reference to the oracle-bone forms of characters *tian* and *di* we see in the combination of straight and curved lines formed from polar stars that these characters also can be seen to describe the stellar patterns found in the ancient northern celestial pole (**Figures 2 & 3a-c**).

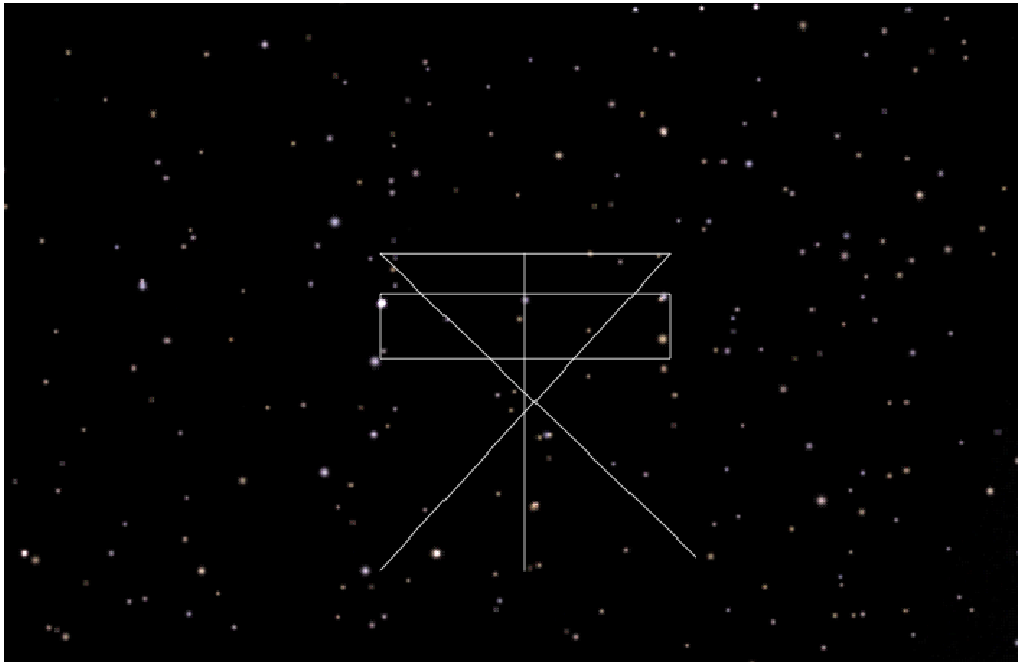


Figure 2. Drawing of Sinitic character Di in the stars of the northern celestial pole of 2800 BC.



Figure 3a. Drawing of the Sinitic character for Tian in the stars of the northern celestial pole of c. 2800 BC.

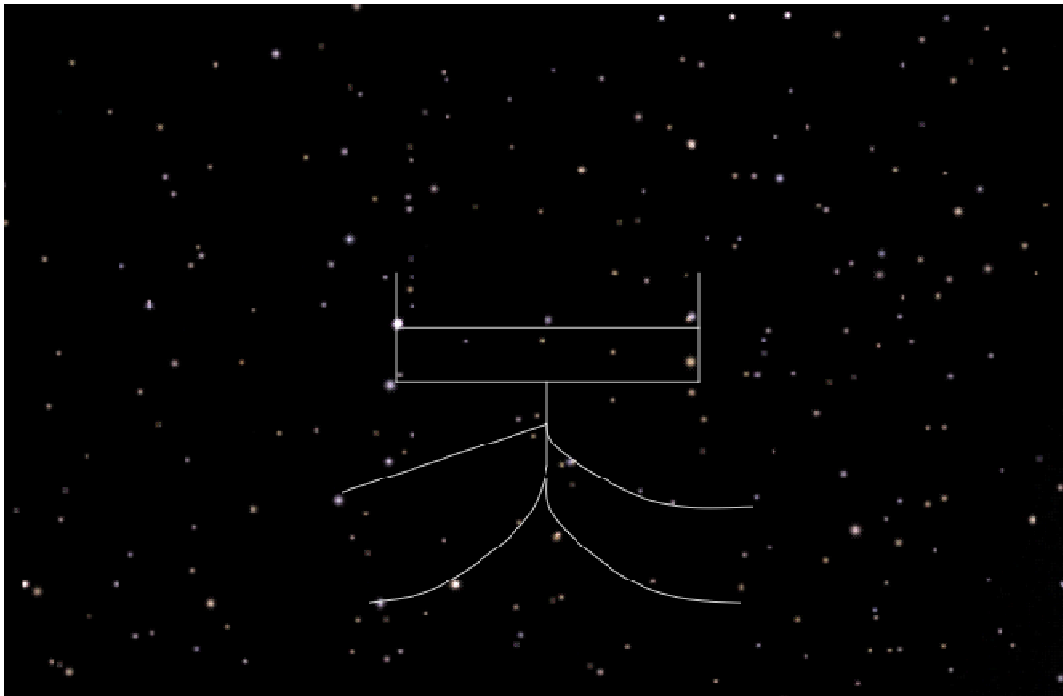


Figure 3b. Sinitic Tian in the stars of the northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

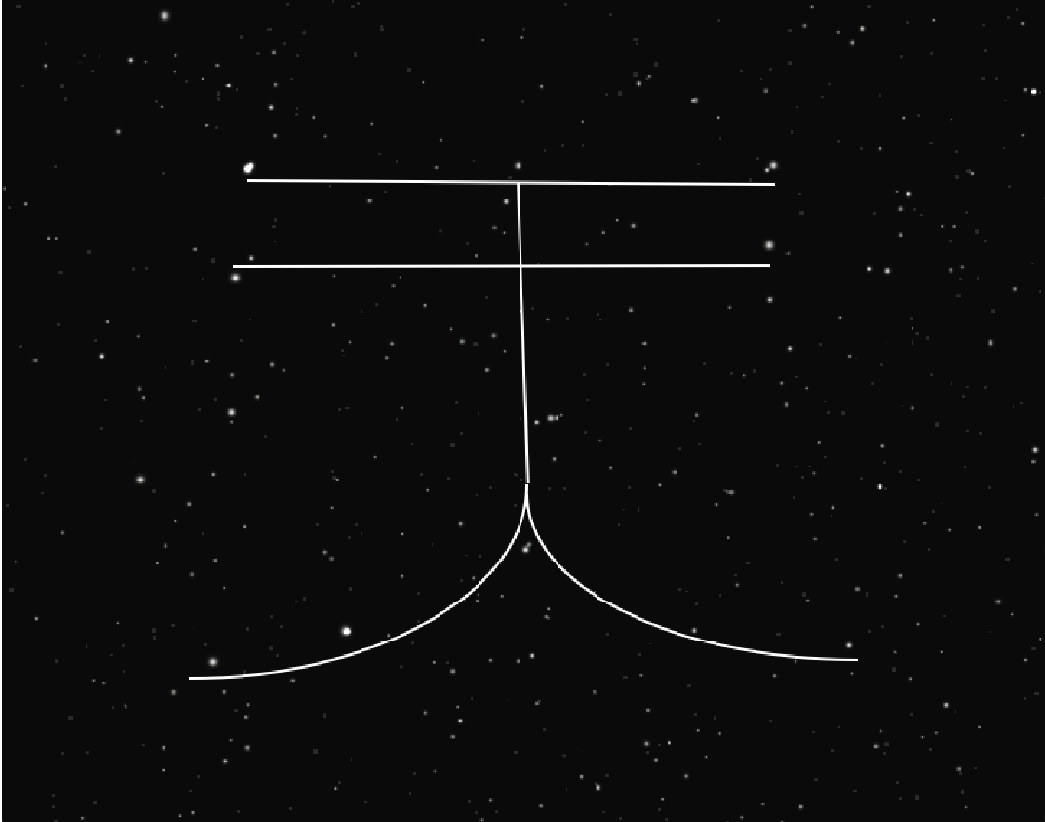


Figure 3c. Sinitic Tian in the stars of the northern celestial pole, 2800 BC

Therefore, all three court-centered high spiritual powers of the Shang and Zhou (Di, Tian, and 𠄎; see Chapter 5 for the high power 𠄎) appear to describe what to ancient peoples was the pivot of the observable universe and thus its high power, the northern celestial pole. In the remainder of the present volume we will discover precisely how these high powers operated and in what ways they were related.

Approaches to Understanding the Shapes of Di

In Western scholarship on archaic *di*, usually 𠄎 has been identified as the nominal form and 𠄎 the verbal form, but closer study reveals that each represented either a verb or a noun, and there occurs in OBIs no clear preference for a nominal form 𠄎 and a verbal form 𠄎. The verbal use of *di*, of whatever form, indicates the execution of the *di* sacrifice, offered as the highest sacrifice to the most revered spirits, including those of Yue the mountain, He the river, Tu the god of earth or soil, various ancestors, and cultural heroes.

For the sake of clarity, as a preliminary note to the discussion that follows, I wish to point out that 帝 is the modern standard (*kaishu*, developed c. 200–700 AD) form of *di*. Since the Qin-Han period this or its ancestral standardized *lishu* (clerical), or a later derived form, has been used in place of the archaic 𠄎 and 𠄎 (and other forms) to denote all of the archaic forms' meanings, including (1) the name of the Shang high god, (2) a title used in late Shang for some deceased kings, (3) skyborne spatial gods (from the middle-Zhou period and on, as we have seen in Volume I) and, (4) from the 3rd century BC and on, as the title of the "emperor" on earth, king of kings. The *kaishu* form 禘, also pronounced *di*, represents the *di* sacrifice of the Zhou period that was made to heaven. Although this sacrifice was not identical to the *di* sacrifice 𠄎 / 𠄎 of Shang, its existence in Zhou ritual can be attributed to the earlier existence of the Shang sacrifice 𠄎 / 𠄎, and scholars thus have taken up inquiry into the origins of the character 禘 as a part of the interest in the origins of 帝 and its various archaic forms that we will discuss below. But the

form 禘 is derivative even in the various standardized Chinese scripts (including *xiaozhuan*, *lishu*, and *kaishu*), and the Zhou ritual cannot be assumed to be equivalent to the Shang *di* 𠄎 / 𠄎 sacrifice. Thus, this form 禘 is not germane to our present study.

What one may notice particularly about the form 𠄎 is the fact that at its center lies a rectangle. As I shall demonstrate below, the central appearance of this rectangle, and its alternate forms employed in other representations of the *di* character (including 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎, and others), exhibits Shang religion's close association with its Neolithic predecessors.

Unfortunately, as far as we know, after the early Zhou there has never been any clear idea to what *di* referred specifically during the Shang, or why the character was shaped the way it was, because even the nature of Di the godly power has not been fully understood. Further, no one has been able to offer a clear and convincing explanation of the origins of the character's shape or component shapes (a pursuit that for the sake of convenience below I will discuss as "etymology" while remaining well aware that the study of graphic elements of writing does not in fact belong to the science of etymology.) Something was lost in transmission, likely due to changes occurring in the early centuries of Zhou rule within the religious institutions of that rule at the same time that cumulative changes having occurred in the celestial pole finally were recognized, if only indirectly and unconsciously. Otherwise a textual tradition either late in developing or broken during the early-Zhou centuries could be to blame.

Most explanations of *di* revolve on the shape of the graph, but some have involved speculations stemming from the pronunciation of the word it represents, as well. Thus, in the opinion of Xu Shen (許慎) of the Han, who offered the first known theory regarding the character's origin and meaning, the *xiaozhuan*, or later (e.g. *lishu*, *kaishu*), form of the character for *di* 帝 derived from both its shape and pronunciation. Xu proposed not altogether clearly that the *xiaozhuan* form was composed of essentially two elements:

- (1) the radical 二, which means "two" in *xiaozhuan* and later scripts but which meant "above" in archaic scripts (i.e., the Sinitic form 二, meaning "above," came

to refer to *er* 二 "two" in later scripts, while in later scripts the character *shang* 上 came to indicate the meaning "above").

Apparently Xu considered that this form provided the character with the meaning of "superior." To Xu, in this the character was similar to other *xiaozhuan* characters whose crowns exhibited the form 丄 (Xu could not have known that in archaic characters this form 丄 had no independent usage but indicated in some characters the male gender of the sacrificial animal being offered to a god[s]¹²). In Xu's opinion archaic forms of characters deriving from the meaning "above" (i.e., Sinitic 二) all originated in the character 一 (which has consistently meant "one" in both Sinitic and later scripts), while *xiaozhuan* and later characters deriving from "above" (i.e., *shang* 上) originated in the character 二, which, Xu particularly pointed out, was, again, the archaic form used to indicate the meaning of "above." The archaic form of the character *di* to which Xu referred looked something like this: 𠄎; it was a form found on bronzes available to him in his day.

Xu otherwise attempted to identify the phonetic origins of *di*:

(2) the phonetic element of the character *di* was 束, which in Mandarin is pronounced *ci* (or *tss*) and which in *xiaozhuan* and later scripts refers to a thorn or twig.¹³

Xu considered *di* 帝 to mean "*Di* 諦, the title of one who acts as king over the world." In Chinese the fundamental meaning of this character *di* 諦 is to examine or judge, from which, we presume, Xu derived a base meaning for the archaic *di* 帝 of supreme judge or examiner of human affairs. Although Xu did not mention it specifically, likely he considered that the origin of either the

¹² See Zhu Qixiang 朱岐祥, *Yinxu jiaguwenzi tongshigao* 殷墟甲骨文字通释稿 (Taipei: Wen-shi-zhe chubanshe, 1989): 187 (#651), 190 (#664).

¹³ See Xu's comments in Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin* 金文诂林 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974): 51–2. See also Luo Zhenyu's comments regarding the instability of the form of archaic *di* with respect to Xu's theory, in Li Xiaoding 李孝定, *Jiagu wenzi jishi* 甲骨文字集释 (Nangang: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi-yuyan yanjiusuo, 1965): 25.

xiaozhuan or the archaic character in the forms 一 or 二, meaning "one" / "first" (and, derivatively, "top") and "above," respectively, contributed to the meaning of leader, whether leading in heaven or on earth. Others have attempted to associate Xu's indication of the phonetic *ci* with his definition of *di* 諦 by explaining that a *ci* (a thorn or twig, i.e., a small pointed instrument) can be employed to sift through and examine things,¹⁴ but this is purely speculative, and it distorts Xu's intention with fanciful interpretation.

We have no way of ascertaining with certainty whether or not Xu's own speculations about the phonetic, graphic, and semantic derivations of the forms of the character for *di* 帝 were accurate, although we can suggest that his proposed phonetic / semantic derivation through *ci* 束 and his related postulation that the Chinese compound graph *di* 諦 expresses root meanings of *di* 帝 of "adjudge through examination" and thus also "leader" are doubtful.¹⁵ While the principle of reading the meanings of a series of later-developed cognate compound graphs (such as *di* 諦) to reveal the meaning of the simple base semantic element of such graphs (such as *di* 帝) is valid, in practice the principle has often been misapplied to construe for early graphs fanciful meanings. In this case, Xu's argument combining phonetic and semantic derivations from *ci* 束 and *di* 諦 are unconvincing, particularly since in fact in OBIs *di* 帝 does not denote an examining judge or leader. Furthermore, the forms that Xu was comparing, the *xiaozhuan* *ci* 束 and *di* 諦, on the one hand, and the archaic bronze form *di* 𠩺, on the other, do not compare well graphically.¹⁶

However, Xu's suggestion that the character's component *yi* 一 or *er* 二, connoting "top" and "above" respectively, informed the graphic construction and semantic import of *di* 帝 seems to

¹⁴ Zhou Fagao (1982): 117–118.










¹⁵ Compare the two words' reconstructed Old Chinese pronunciations, which are highly disparate, in Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007): 199, 210.




¹⁶ We may object that for Xu to have considered a character *di* 諦, which is derivative in *Chinese* of the *later*, or *xiaozhuan*, form of *di* 帝, to offer the source for understanding the basic character *di* in its *archaic* (here bronze) form 𠩺 is a stretch. On such troubled approaches to the etymologies of archaic (i.e., bronze and oracle-bone Sinitic) and later Chinese characters Victor Mair has warned that, "the origin of Sinitic languages (and scripts) antedates the rise of the Chinese script by many centuries. Hence the latter must be regarded as secondary and the former as primary, an observation so painfully obvious that it is often forgotten." (Mair [1990]: 40, n. 31; parenthetical phrase added.)

be at least partially on target, even if his specific derivation from *yi* or *er* is probably incorrect. As we shall see below in Chapter 5, most likely the meaning of "top" or "above" derives from a different component, our now-familiar quadrilateral.

Another, and the most influential even if utterly unconvincing, theory of the etymology of *di* has circulated since the Song period. At that time Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1102–1160), on the basis of bronze representations of what he took to be a character indicating *di* 帝, suggested that the original form of the character for *di* closely defines pictorially the calyx of a flower. Much of his inspiration lay in the fact that in *xiaozhuan* and later scripts a character combining a "vegetation" radical, i.e., *cao* 艸, and the common form for *di*, i.e., 帝, was the character for calyx, which was and is *di* 蒂. Essentially, then, Zheng sought to identify the conceptual foundation of the archaic form of *di* of which he was aware, i.e., 𠩺, through (1) the derivative, graphically unconnected *xiaozhuan* form of *di*, i.e., 帝, and (2) the graphically even less connected, phonetically derived, and evolved loan character *di* 蒂, which derived character was created obviously because the spoken syllable indicating a "calyx" was similar or identical to the syllable *di*, for which there existed a character already, which of course was *di* 帝. To differentiate in writing the two identical sounds, a *cao* (vegetation) radical was added to the character when it indicated not the god (or leader) but the calyx. Such evolutions are common in the development of written Chinese and need not be discussed further, except to indicate that Zheng, like Xu before him, erred in employing a purely derivative form and meaning of a *xiaozhuan* Chinese character to argue for its etymologically and formally unrelated original archaic, Sinitic, form and meaning.

At the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries Wu Dacheng 吳大澂, Wang Guowei 王國維, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, and others developed this theory and sought to particularize elements of the archaic OBI and bronze (Sinitic) forms of *di* as identifiable with various parts of a flowering plant's budding/flowering apparatus. Wu viewed in inscriptions on certain Shang bronzes a form of address employed in communicating with royal ancestors and took it to be equivalent to the archaic form of *di*. He and others, such as Wang and Guo, considered it to be the oldest, simplest form of the character, and he understood it to represent the calyx of a flower, or that part responsible for the growth of a fruit from a plant. Wu, Wang, and Guo considered this to represent the core of the meaning of the concept of *di* and the center of Shang worship. Guo

expatiated most elaborately, claiming that *di* represented, as did the calyx and ovary of a flower, the original creative essence of life and thus also life's master: as the plant was the center of human life and livelihood, so was the god representing the crux of the reproductive functions of the plant the center of human worship.¹⁷ This character, written in one of several ways, including , , and , Wu identified with the superior  visible in the archaic bronze forms of the character for *di*. Wang saw rather the archaic form of the character, shown above as , as the entire reproductive structure of a typical flowering plant. Guo then took Wang's idea a step further and identified specific parts of a flowering plant with sections of the archaic form of *di* in not just the simpler bronze script forms but in the more complex OBI forms, as well. Thus, viewing a fairly common nominal form of the OBI character, , Guo identified the superior  with the ovary of a flowering bud, the inferior  with the stamens or pistils, and the horizontal element  with the sepals or calyx.¹⁸

Most scholars interested in the subject have raised objections to this theory. Many have taken issue with the identification of the forms , , and  with the archaic forms of the character for *di*. Thus, Zhang Risheng 張日昇 has asked two questions that identify two essential and unproven assumptions that lie at the core of Wu's theory and Wang's and Guo's elaborations of it: first, are these forms really the simplest forms of the archaic character *di*? Second, is the archaic form of *di* really representative of the shape of the reproductive organs of a flowering plant?¹⁹

Chen Rentao 陳仁濤 believed that while these forms indeed were simple forms for *di*, they indicated the femininity at the core of the concept of *di*. Chen was perhaps influenced in his conception by the earlier cuneiform sign for "woman," which is virtually identical with the

¹⁷ See their arguments collected in Shima Kunio 島邦男, *Inkyo bokuji kenkyû 殷墟卜辭研究* (Tokyo: Chûgokugaku Kenkyûkai, 1958): 189–192.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*: 190; Zhou Fagao (1974): 55–57; and Li Xiaoding (1965): 25–27.

¹⁹ Zhou (1974): 55.

superior triangular portion of the archaic character for *di*.²⁰ But while it is likely that Mesopotamian language and culture influenced at a protracted distance over time and space the civilizations of China, no known convincing evidence exists to support the identification of a part of the archaic form of *di* with either this particular cuneiform sign or femininity.

Ye Yusen 葉玉森, Ming Yishi 明義士, and He Changji 何昌濟 answered "no" to each of Zhang Risheng's questions. They argued that these forms on bronzes reflect the use of a fat brush to write the archaic form of *shi* 示, which was 𠄎 (the character was used commonly to indicate that an offering or ritual was being made to gods/spirits), and that as a prefix to the names of hallowed ancestors it indicated the ancestors' numenic or spiritual status or powers.²¹ In addition, Guo Moruo otherwise made a strong case for reading the character as the bronze archaic form of *ding* 丁, which was our familiar 口.²² Guo's identification of this bronze character with *ding* appears most appropriate and supported by evidence.²³

Another objection to the various forms of the Wu calyx theory was raised later by Guo Moruo himself: some calyxes of plants (*di* 蒂) do not produce fruits, Guo objected. Thus, he mused, the use of *di* 蒂/帝 to represent the high god makes less sense than employing for this purpose either the characters for a fruit/nut (*guoshi* 果實) or a "type-1" character, by which he meant a character that was employed as a basic building block in the loan formation of other characters.²⁴

Other objections have been made, as well, including Li Xiaoding's 李孝定 observation that to twist the animal-oriented Shang religion of ritual and sacrifice into one vegetation-oriented

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 56.






²¹ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 191.

²² *Ibid.*: 190–191.

²³ Etymological dictionaries tend to follow Guo, as well. See Zhu (1989): 279 (#1051); and Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒, ed., *Jiaguwen zidian* 甲骨文字典 (Chengdu: Sichuan cishu chubanshe, 1998): 1548.

²⁴ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 190.

arbitrarily distorts its nature.²⁵ Robert Eno and Sarah Allan have in part echoed Li's concerns.²⁶ But while it is true that the most salient element of the Shang religion centered on animal sacrifice, the offering of vegetative sacrifice was important, too, in the form of burnt sticks and grasses, not to mention the fermented drinks that were offered to objects of sacrifice.

But one also may take issue with the picture of a plant bud/flower drawn in the minds of the Wu theorists. If the archaic OBI character  (or , ) were drawn inverted, such as  () , as was only rarely done in OBIs, then the Wu theorists' associations of the bud/flower with that picture might appear more commendable. But in fact the archaic *di* character oriented right-side-up does not resemble a calyx or other parts of the bud/flower. In reality the flower's ovary resembles if anything a pyramid or inverted tear drop, while the stamens and pistils emerge from the top of the point of the ovary and push upward, not downward as the Wu theorists imagined.

Perhaps the most significantly dooming element of the calyx theory is its very foundation, which we reviewed above. That is, since it is based on a mistaken understanding of the etymology of the character that sources in secondary and even tertiary loan formulations based on *later* scripts and phonetic associations unrelated to the origins of the archaic forms of the character, then the theory is hardly viable from its very inception. Part of the trouble is that the theory originated long prior to anyone's having understood that OBIs existed, and sources that offered any indication of what an archaic script consisted, that is, bronzes bearing bronze script forms, were few and difficult to access. With newer, more complete archaeologically recovered information at our disposal we can improve the accuracy of our understanding of the archaic *di*, even if we cannot conclude with certainty that our newer views are perfectly accurate.

Two other theories concerning *di*'s archaic formulation and meaning are worthy of review. They appear to make better sense in the context of Shang religion and the OBI lexicon than either Xu's or Wu's theories. The first originates with Ye Yusen, Ming Yishi, Tôdô Akiyasu, Zhu Fangguo 朱芳國, and others, and it attempts to evince the ritualistic meaning of the archaic forms

²⁵ Zhou, *Jinwen gulin*: 57.

²⁶ See Allan (1988): 78; and Eno (1990): 19.

of *di*. Ye and Ming showed that the three central vertically oriented lines of the character, or 𠄎, represent directly the archaic character for *mu* 木, "wood," and together compose a picture of bundled sticks. They further linked this 𠄎 pictorially with the *xiaozhuan* form of the character meaning "to tie together" or "a bundle of sticks," that character being *shu* 束. The visual and structural similarity between this *shu* and the archaic form of *di* 𠄎 is remarkable indeed, although once again speciously attractive graphic derivations across scripts should be handled gingerly.

Ye and Ming further linked *di*'s archaic forms with the archaic character that indicated a ritual burning of sticks, or sacrifice, which character consisted simply of the bundled sticks shown above, 𠄎, with the addition of a fire radical, producing 𠄎. This character has been identified as the shorthand version of the character 𠄎 (fire, below sun, below wood; otherwise now usually transliterated into Chinese as *liao* 燎), which was an important ritual burning sacrifice made to high gods of the Shang and which in fact often was used as a central portion of the greater sacrifice 𠄎, or 𠄎 (referring to the verbal form of the archaic *di*). Thus a certain association can be identified as having occurred in Shang religion and archaic script both structurally (or visually) and functionally between the concepts / characters of 𠄎, 𠄎, and 𠄎.²⁷

The remaining elements of Ye's and Ming's structural explanations are less convincing. They saw the central horizontal bar (一) or rectangle (口), or even the less common bow-tie design (∞), as representing either the sticks bundled (i.e., 𠄎) for burning in ritual or a rack on which the sticks or grasses were hung in preparation for the ritual. Ye and Ming also considered the superior horizontal line — of *di* 𠄎 to indicate *shang* 上, "above" (from Xu Shen), and, in this, viewed it to represent "what is above," or *tian* 天, "heaven." Thus, Ming's particular theory goes, the *di* sacrifice 禘, which was in Zhou times (and, Ming apparently assumed, in Shang, as well) a ritual directed at Tian, "heaven," derived from the fact that Di was what was above and received the *di* sacrifice:

²⁷ Shirakawa Shizuku 白川靜 concurred with these portions of Ye's essential argument. See Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin bu*: 122.

To *di* 帝 is to burn upward (𤇑) bundled sticks (束柴, that is, 𦵏) [to Di 帝].
Therefore, *di* 帝 was extended to mean *di* 禘.²⁸

Thus, to Ming Yishi, what was above in the heavens (*tian* 天), that is, *di* 𦵏, received ritual propitiation by means of the ritual burning *liao* 𦵏 (𤇑, i.e., 寮 or 燎) that traveled upward.

Whether one accedes to the basic ideas promulgated herein is mostly a matter of opinion, for there is no evidence to either support or particularly disprove them. The only glaring weakness is Ye's and Ming's blind assumption that the horizontal superior line (what they and others describe as "—") depicted *shang*, "above," and that the Shang scribes, priests, or kings who devised the script thought consciously of "above" in an abstract, metaphorical way to refer to what is in "the above," that is, the high god. Another of their assumptions difficult to accept blindly is that the verbal *di* 禘 of the Zhou period is equivalent to the verbal *di* 𦵏 / 𦵏 of the Shang period. I find both assumptions doubtful, but they offer possibilities for interpreting these difficult characters.

Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜 offered perhaps a better explanation for the appearance of the central rectangle in one of the two most common forms of the archaic character *di*, or 𦵏, which is the form found in recovered OBIs that slightly more commonly is used to denote the *di* sacrifice. Shirakawa considered the rectangle to represent directly the shape of the altar or platform on which the sacrifice was performed.²⁹

If we combine Shirakawa's and Ye's/Ming's theories, then a consistently ritually oriented theme develops that is rather attractive in its cohesiveness: stalks bundled 𦵏 and placed on the sacrificial altar 𠄎 are burned 𦵏 to beseech a god's (or the gods') awareness and assistance. The centerpiece is, of course, the hallowed rectangular altar or ritual space, where the "transformation" or communication between spirit and human host occurs. Here again we see the apparent centrality of the rectangular shape in the belief system of a pre-Zhou proto-Chinese civilization, which supports strongly the evidence offered in the previous chapters that indicates that the celestial

²⁸ Shima, *Kenkyū*: 191; Zhou Fagao (1974): 52–54.

²⁹ Zhou Fagao (1982): 123–124.

polar rectangle seems to have served as the center of Chinese Neolithic, earlier Bronze, and Shang religions.

Another theory worthy of review is that of Katô Jôken 加藤常賢, who saw in the archaic forms of *di* these elements: (1) *shi* 示 (示) at its core, depicting a large altar or sacrificial platform (几) placed in the suburban altar; (2) the cross members 乂 that formed the legs of the platform; and (3) a barbell-shaped cross member 一 that represents the cross-beam beneath the platform that held its legs from splaying and falling. Katô linked the altar described by *di* with the verbal character *di* 禘 of the Zhou period, which as we know denoted a ritual performed to heaven (*tian*); thus *di* was an altar that was used to communicate with heaven (what is above), and, thus, also the high god Di (what is also above, in heaven).³⁰ Like parts of the Ye/Ming theory, most of Katô's thesis lends itself to mere speculation, which is acceptable when considering the paucity of clear evidence in this matter. And Katô's recognition of the importance of the ritual space of the altar is particularly sensible. But the trouble with Kato's theory lies in his assumption that the Zhou *di* 禘 sacrifice to heaven can be equated with the archaic Shang *di* sacrifice and Di godhead. In fact, the Shang *di* sacrifice was not performed to a vague "heaven" (*tian*) but to the various ancestral and nature spirits, although indeed these recipients appear to have been a skyborne host.




On the other hand, it seems reasonable to interpret, along with Ye, Ming, Zhu, Shirakawa, and Katô, the archaic forms of the character *di* as representing a ritual apparatus or space that evinced the hallowed and thaumaturgical powers with which it could communicate on behalf of the human supplicants. Again, we find the rectangle 口 at the center.


We find 口 at the center again as the central element of the two Sinitic characters meaning "center," *zhong* 中 and *yang* 央 (xiao³zhuān 央). Furthermore, two common forms of Sinitic *shi* 示 (示), meaning "altar" or "ritual," and thus connoting a religio-political central place, contain a square: 𠄎 and 𠄏.³¹ In addition, in Sinitic script the rectangle's substitute or simplified form,

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 126.

³¹ Zhu Qixiang (1989): 387–388 (#1479–1481).

the barbell or I-beam, when oriented vertically (\perp), can represent this character *shi*.³² All of this evidence supports the thesis that all of these forms that appear in the center of the archaic character *di* constitute a center of some sort and which appears to have been the center of religious and political power, the altar.




Finally, Sarah Allan has proposed tentatively a workingman's solution to understanding the central form in the Sinitic character *di*. On the basis of the appearance of a diminutive vertically oriented \perp in the earliest but rather late, *Western Zhou*, form of the character for "carpenter's square," which was , Allan has then interpreted the Shang form \perp to depict a carpenter's square. She intended to show that the Sinitic form for *fang* 方, which was written variably in these ways, , and thus in one form included the central element \perp , meant "square" and specifically indicated pictorially four quadrate squares, of primarily the heavens, out from the center.³³ To reach this meaning of the heavens as the primary locus for these *fang*, Allan noted that, again in a late, *Western Zhou*, form of the archaic character for "center," which was written  (*yang* 央, noted above), the \perp element appears again. But the remainder of the character consists of a Shang form for the character *tian* 天, or the Zhou's "heaven" or "sky." From this Allan interpreted the character to mean "center of the sky" and that, therefore, the *fang* must be squares out from the center.



















In passing Allan mentioned that this form \perp also appears in a common form of Sinitic *di*, , and that it might there represent a center as well. Allan also indicated that when *di* is a verb the rectangle \square often displaces the form \perp , which oft-reported differentiation, however, does not actually occur, as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Allan then noted that the square at times is drawn as an ellipse (\bigcirc). She explained this as representing either a shortened version of the rectangle or perhaps "heaven" from which Di ruled over the world.

In her assessments of most of these forms that appear in the character *di* Allan is essentially correct, but problems occur in her understanding of etymologies of these forms and the characters in which they appear. First, the ellipse \bigcirc (what Allan calls a circle) that a few times appears in

³² Xu Zhongshu (1998): 10.

³³ Allan (1988): 75–84.

di in place of the central rectangle cannot be interpreted to denote "heaven," since the ellipse is, as Allan suspected it might, along with similar rare substitution forms (, ) , simply a shortened form of the full rectangle. Second, the Sinitic character for *tian*, which Allan singles out for notice as it appears in the Zhou character for *yang* and from which she derives her meaning for *yang* of "center of the heavens," did not for the Shang refer to the sky or heavens. During the Shang *tian* was a personal name. Also as a loan for *da* 大, it could, in addition, mean "big." Its employment in a religious sense began only with the Zhou (see below, Chapter 5). Moreover, we must be cautious about employing later (Zhou) forms of characters (here, a Western Zhou form of *yang*) to explain earlier (Shang) etymologies, particularly in this case, in which Allan interpreted two distinct graphic components, both in concert with one another and separately, as they appeared in Zhou characters to explain what she purports they meant individually in Shang characters, at the same time that she did not investigate what these graphic components actually meant in their uses in the Shang OBI script. In fact, in the case of *yang*, such investigation reveals that one of the Shang forms of the character, , in which one notices again the central / superior position of the square, offers much more powerful evidence to evince the Shang center's having been associated with the sky, since, as we have come to expect, the center of the sky was recognized to have been square (or rectangular).

Allan's affording etymological primacy to the meaning of "carpenter's square" for the forms  and  (and, derivatively, ) is particularly problematic. In fact, the Western Zhou form  surely derived its meaning of carpenter's square from the form , but only as a distant tertiary and late derivative of the primary meaning of  or  as ritual center, from which the meaning of square could derive, since this ritual center was, as we have come to argue, square or rectangular. For recall that the vertical I-beam character , which could in Shang times denote *shi*, "altar" or "propitiate," indicated a center of access to the high powers, and that its alternate forms  and , bearing as they do the  form common to all of the characters for Shang and Zhou high powers, i.e.,  (*di*),  (*tian*), and  (*ding*; see below, Chapter 5), particularly support this reading. Therefore, the primary meaning of , , and  is not "square" but "center," and because the primary form among them, , is a square, then the short

forms \perp and \dashv derivatively also denote "center" and thus also "square," since the center was square.

To recapitulate, the most reasonable theories on the origins of the shapes found in the archaic character *di* focus on the character's apparent representation of the ritual apparatus and process of communicating with spirits. Considering the evidence presented regarding the appearance of the rectangular center in religious representations belonging to many Neolithic civilizations reviewed previously in this study, as well as its occurrence in other powerful ritual / belief-oriented objects and patterns of expression in the Shang civilization, it seems apparent that to the ancient people of the land that became China this rectangular form possessed thaumaturgical meaning, and that one's communicating with or via the rectangle brought him/her socio-political and economic power here on earth.

We have also seen how this rectangle occurs in the pattern of stars appearing nightly in the northern unwavering center, or pole, of the ancient night sky. It is thus natural to suggest that this celestial rectangle also found its expression in the form of the Shang character for its apparent highest deistic entity, Di, particularly since Di traditionally has been located at the pole. Indeed, viewing the various archaic forms of *di* in **Table 1** it is apparent that all of their essential elements are reflected in the patterns formed by the stars of the ancient celestial pole: our familiar rectangular altar \square (as well as its shortened forms of the "barbell" \dashv , "bow-tie" \bowtie , and ellipses \circ and fish), the bundled vertically oriented sticks \ast , the ritual burning \ast , and Katô's central axis \perp depicting an altar or spirit tablet, *shi* 示. Their occurrences in the stars of the celestial pole are demonstrated individually in **Figures 4a-h** (below).

Strengthening considerably the argument that *di* represents the stellar patterns of the pole are at least two occurrences of the character appearing inverted in oracle-bone inscriptions (\ast) — the character was quite purposefully inscribed upside-down in the context of otherwise uninverted and grammatical text.³⁴ It is very possible that the scribes etched the character in the bones when the pattern of *di* at the northern celestial pole was itself truly inverted, i.e., having spun

³⁴ See the inscriptions in Hu Houxuan and Guo Moruo, eds., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979–82; 13 volumes; hereafter *HJ*): 21087, 21175.

180°, relative to the Shang observer at Anyang. The perceived inversion could have been due to either the nightly or annual spinning of the nocturnal stellar canopy — the latter making a full circle in a year and thus causing northern stellar *di* to point at a consistent hour of the night throughout the year to every locus on the 360° horizon.

But would this celestial identification of *di* not conflict with the apparently reasonable interpretation of the character's central rectangle (or its alternate shapes) to depict the ritual space on and by which one communicated with this entity? I do not believe so. For one thing, while, as we have said, the ritualistic interpretation of *di* is reasonable, I do not take it to be complete. We must ask, why would a people wish to represent their highest power only with the shape of the apparatus built by supplicants to communicate with it? Would not, in a still largely graphic written language, a direct representation of so important a god in its own name (or nature, as represented in the graph) be more likely? I believe so. If we accept this, then we also ought to accept that the character *di* might indicate both (1) the high power that resided at the celestial pole, and (2) the ritual space and process through which one accessed that distant and unmoving center of the universe — and its power to influence people and events on earth.

Moving inward a step further, we may also ask, if this dual meaning of *di* is acceptable in theory, then, in this light, how might we understand the nature of the high power Di as it is expressed in the oracle and bronze epigraphical record? And what does this celestial polar rectangle mean in the name of the high power?

Figure 4a. Rectangle of Sinitic Di, northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

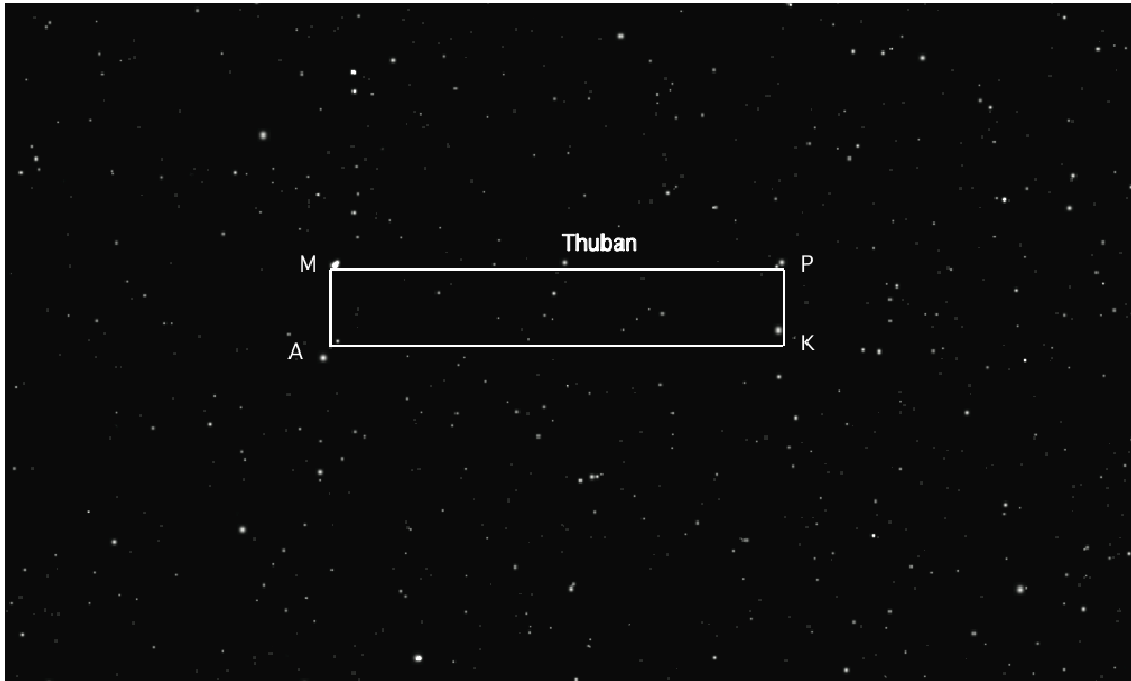


Figure 4b. Cross beam of Sinitic Di, northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

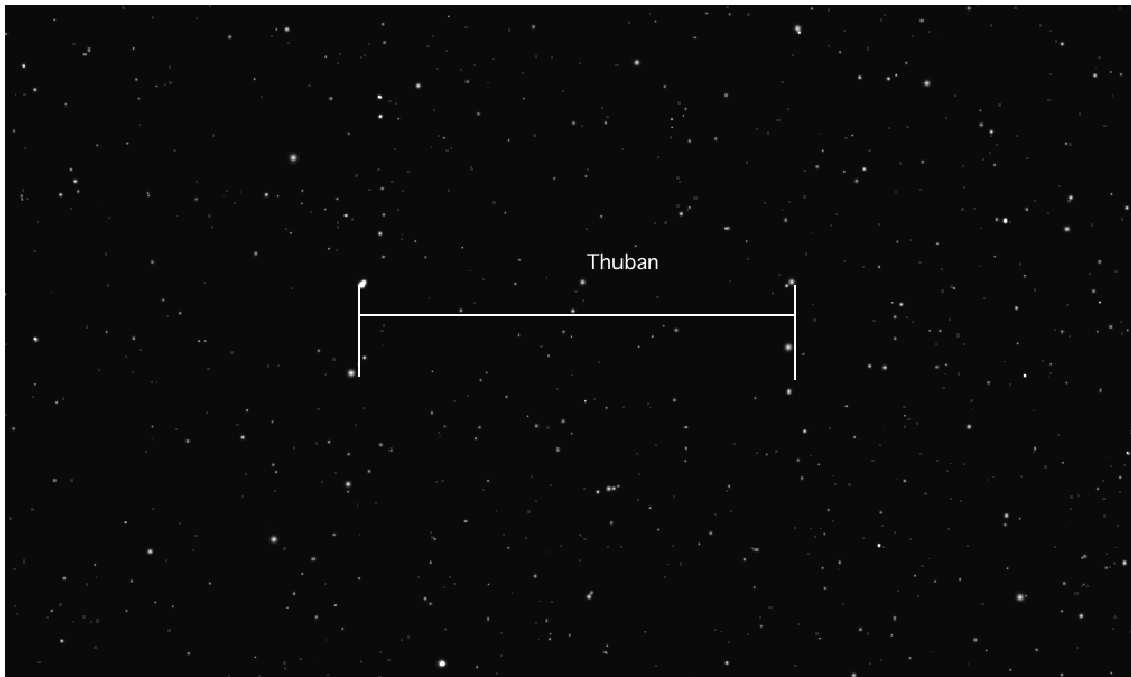


Figure 4c. "Bowtie" of Sinitic Di, northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

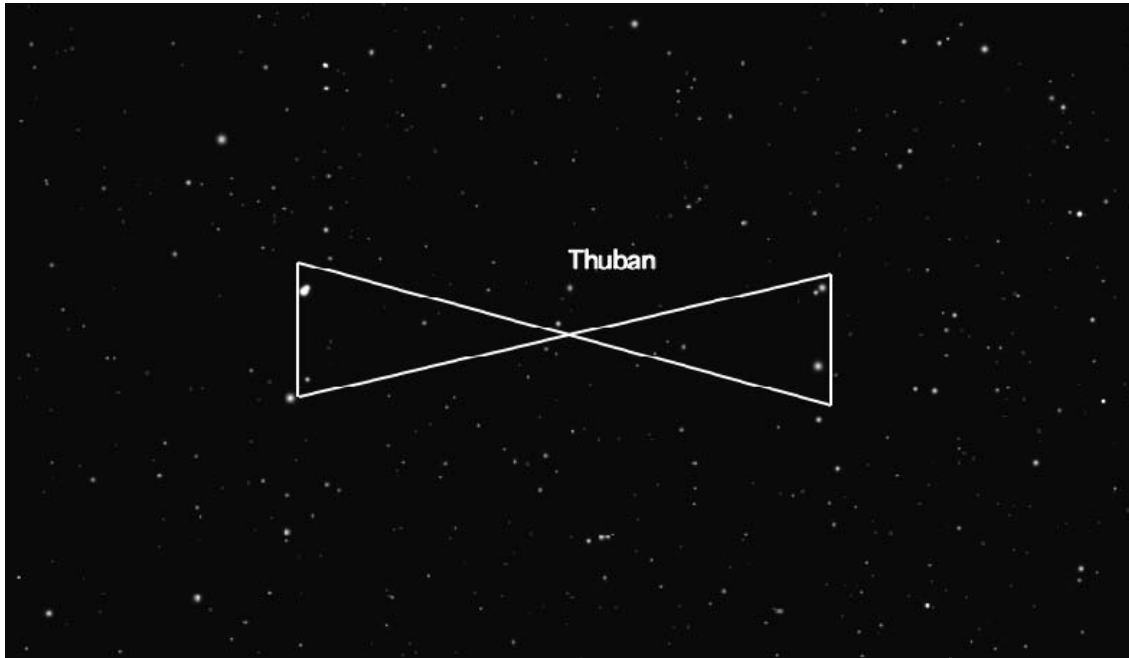


Figure 4d. Stem and legs of Sinitic Di, northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

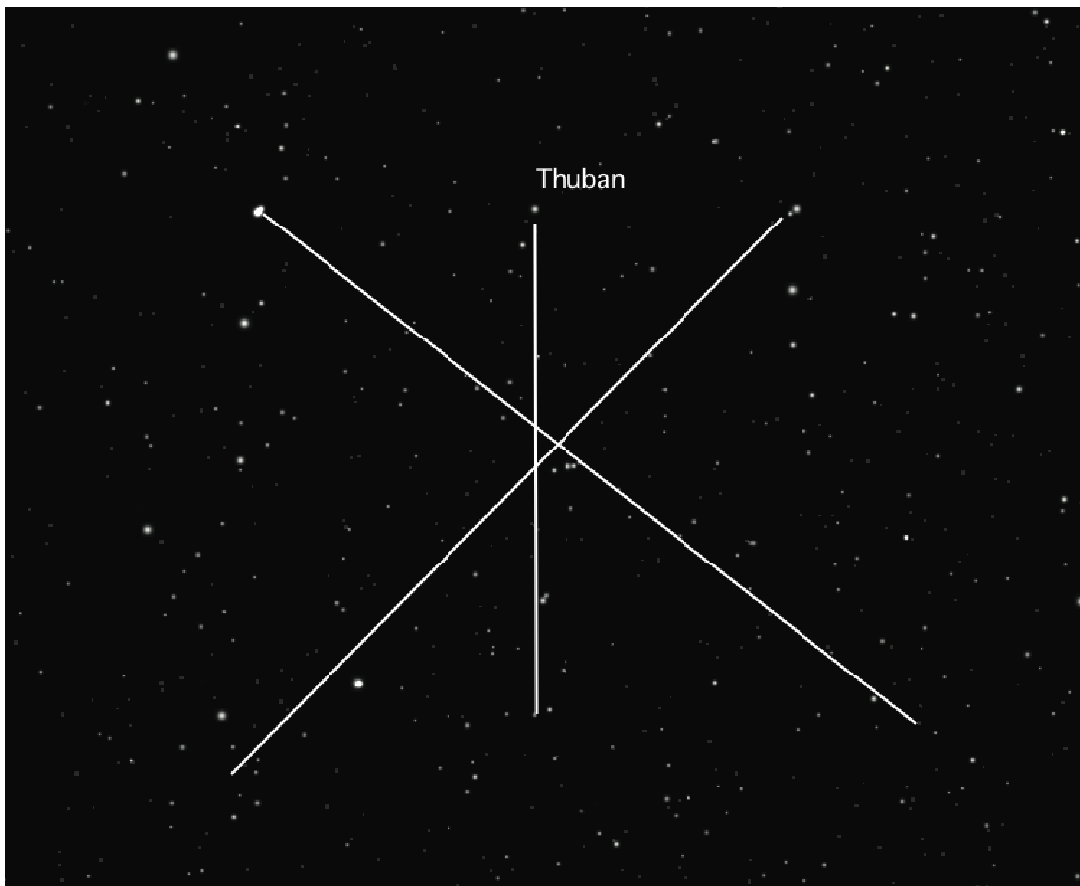


Figure 4e. Sinitic "liao" in the stars of the northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

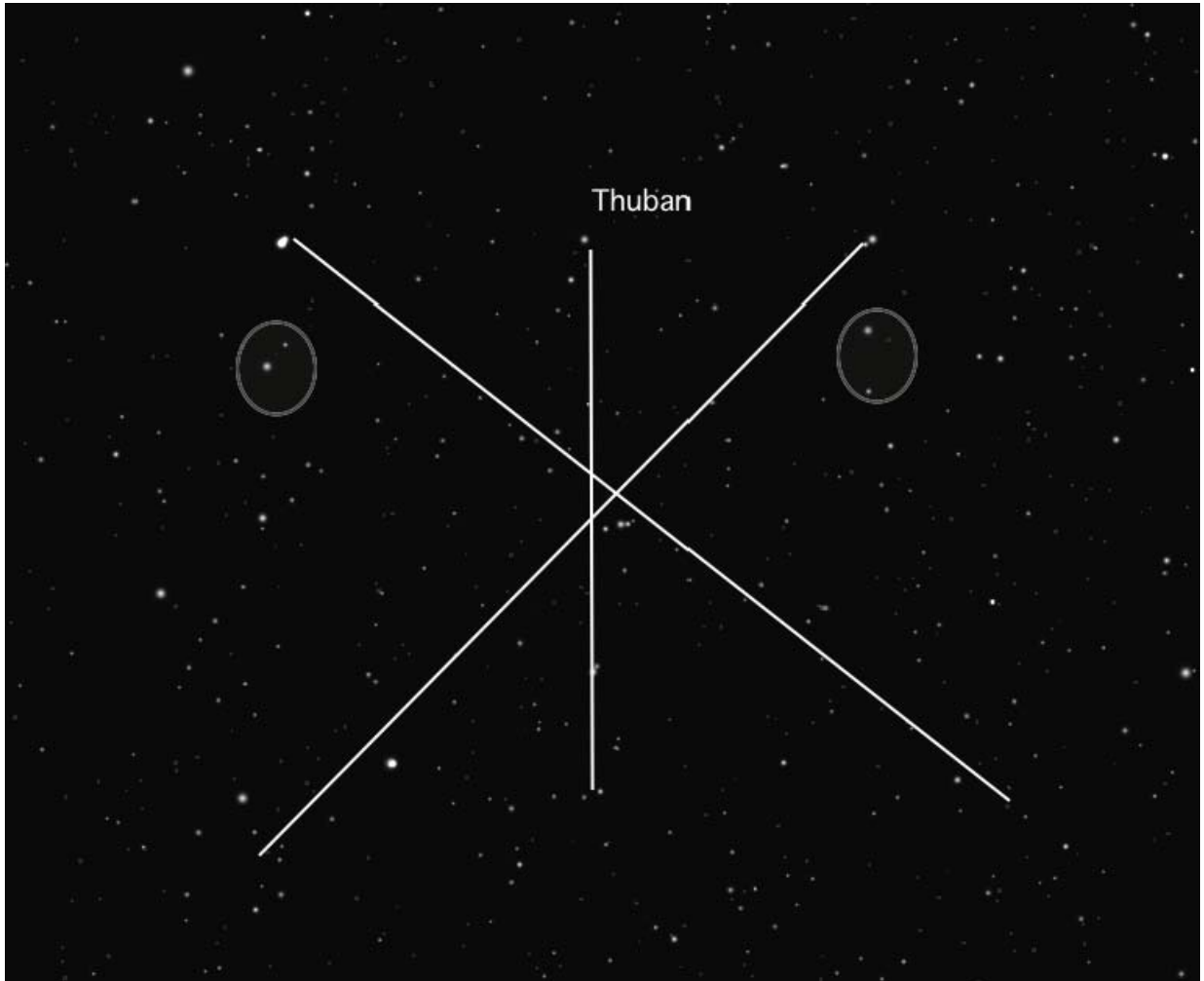


Figure 4f. Stem and short legs of Sinitic Di, northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

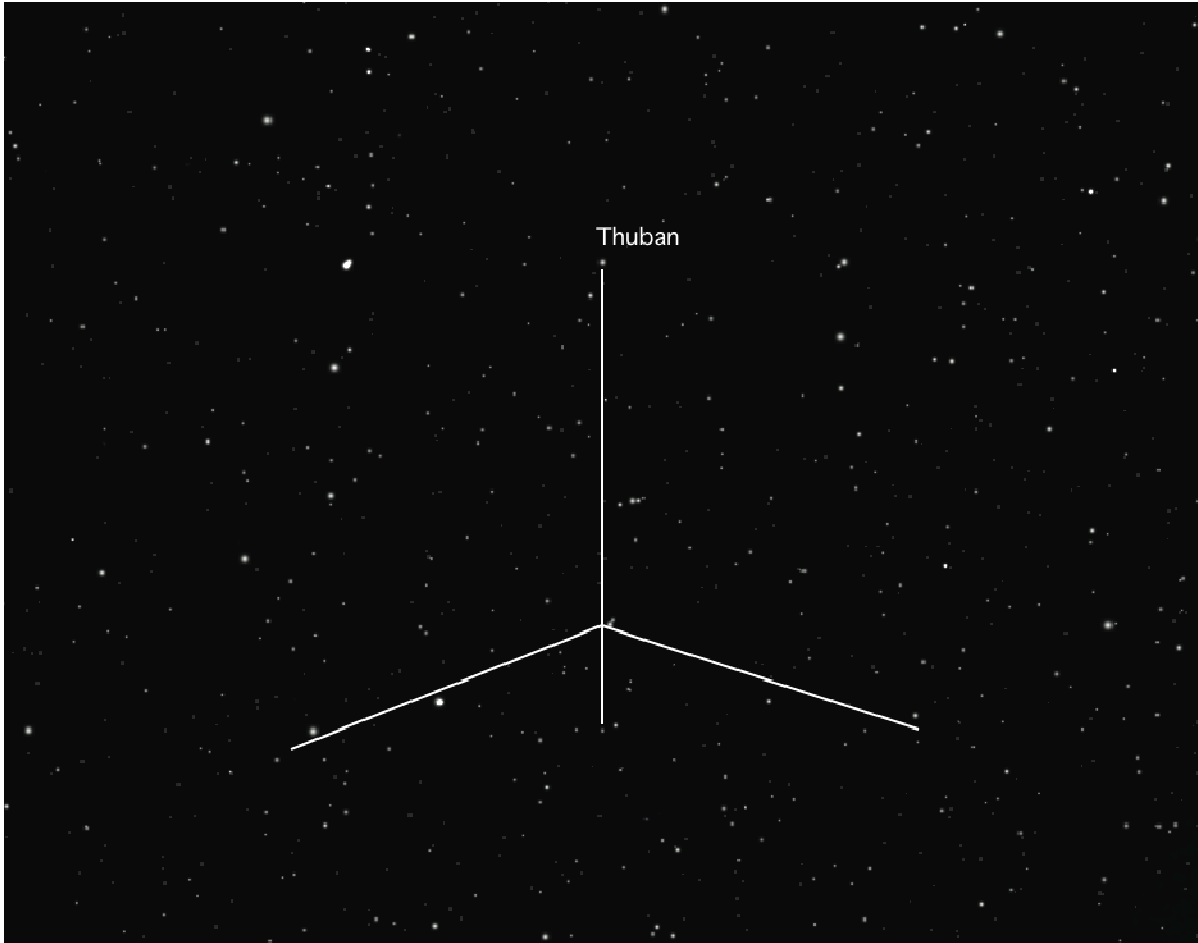


Figure 4g. Sinitic "shi" (altar), northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.

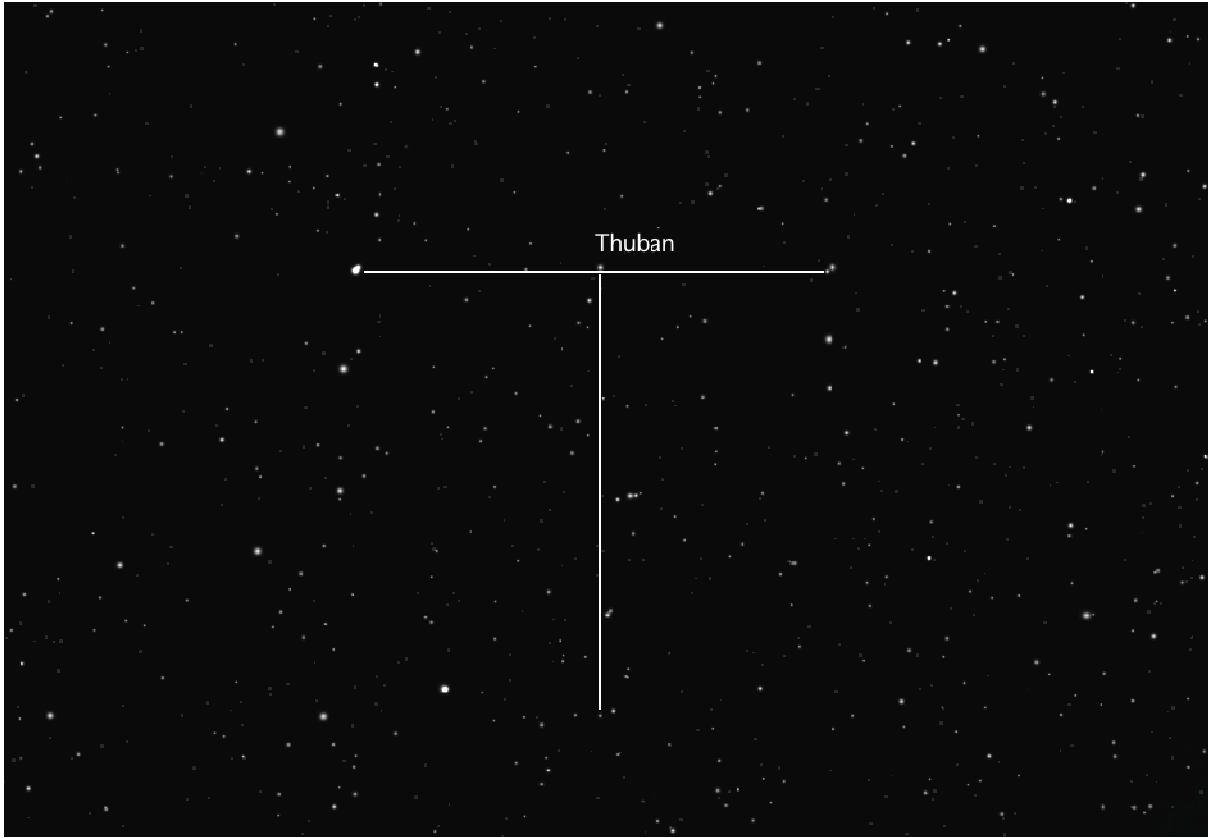
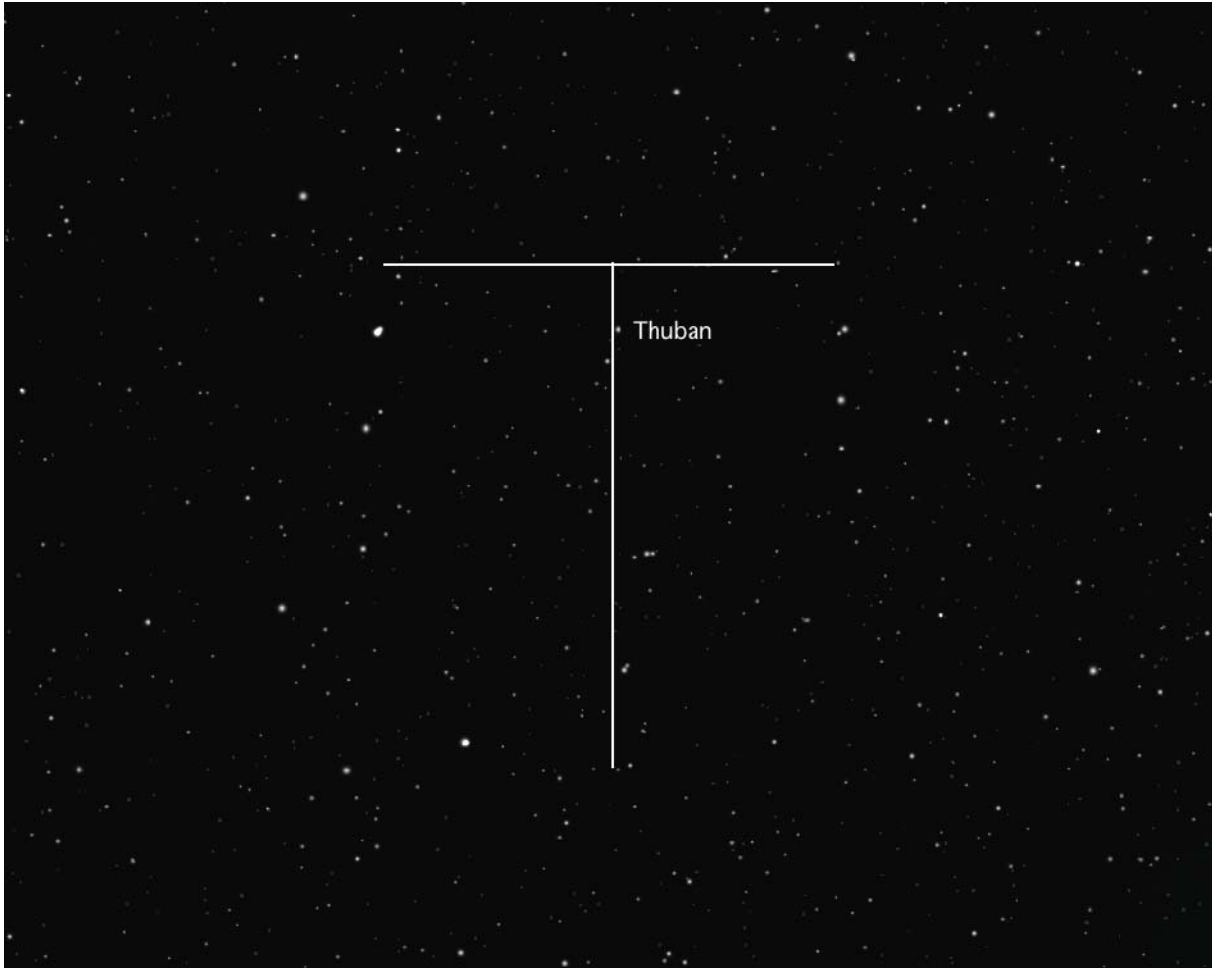


Figure 4h. Sinitic "shi" (altar), northern celestial pole, 2800 BC.



Chapter 4: A Theory of Di

Approaches to Understanding Di

Western scholarship or writing on early Chinese belief traditionally has explained the theistic use of *di* to indicate a singular high deity that presides over a host of lesser spirits. This reflects, I believe, two influential factors. The first is that, indeed, there exists in Chinese intellectual history of the Warring States and later periods (i.e., circa the 4th century BC and on) a long and powerful tradition whereby the hierarchy of deities or metaphysical powers exhibits a pyramidal structure, with a singular high power (such as the Jade Emperor, or the One in philosophical traditions, etc.) originating all creative energy that then diffuses through a numenic host or abstract agency (on this tradition see below, Volume III).

The second influential factor creating in the West this sense of a singular pinnacle of deistic power in the Chinese belief structure is the Christian missionary expectation of finding — and thus projecting — Yahweh in and into the Chinese religious context. From Jesuits to Presbyterians, from c. 1600 to the present, many Western monotheists have either consciously or unconsciously forced a link between historical Chinese and Christian beliefs, usually in the hope of authenticating Christian claims of Judaeo-Christianity's being both the original and final, as well as universal, teaching.¹ And given the continuous presence indigenously of the first factor described above, then Christian and Chinese pyramidal pantheons do in fact share a certain similarity in structure. However, the problem with reading a singular high center into Di is that this later Chinese singularity of the center began approximately 600–700 years after the Shang's demise (see below, Volume III).

In the meantime, modern Asian — Chinese and Japanese — approaches to the theistic Di have been less inclined toward a monotheistic interpretation, and the best of recent Western

¹ A very accessible work providing a clear example of this approach is Jonathan Spence's *The Question of Hu* (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1988). See esp. p. 75–77 for a description of the Jesuit Father Jean-Francois Foucquet's mission in the early 1700s to prove that the ancient Chinese worshipped Yahweh in the form of Di.

scholarship on Di in fact acquiesces to this and thus challenges the monotheistic assumption.² When so upsetting the balance some years ago Robert Eno felt compelled to introduce the argument for the corporate nature of the theistic Di with caution and as a certain minority view. But in fact the evidence for Eno's corporate interpretation of Di far outweighs whatever support might be mustered to argue for a monotheistic arrangement. Without repeating the work of others, below we will review the evidence to determine of what this corporeity consisted and how it operated in the context of the Shang world.

I propose that Di/*di* has five parts: (a) Di was a consular entity consisting of the most powerful gods/spirits known; (b) Di included spirits of both former humans of Shang royal and non-royal ancestry (the latter often called "Former Lords" of the dynasty or culture), spirits of non-Shang former humans, and otherwise naturally occurring (i.e., "nature") spirits; (c) the rectangular center element of the character *di* (and the forms that derived from it) represents the central core of the power of Di; this square / rectangular central core of Di was composed of main-lineage (*dazong*) royal ancestors and some other ancestors intimately related to them;³ (d) a spirit or god of Di took its position in Di, perhaps as a star or an asterism, helping to form the pattern of the character *di* and the power Di as seen in the celestial northern pole of c. 1545–1045 BC; and (e) the act of *di*, as well as other sacrifices made to former humans and naturally occurring spirits, served to request of these powers comprising Di that they prevail upon the total corporation of Di to assist and benefit the supplicants below on earth. This understanding of the ritual *di*

² Those Asian authors seeing in Di a multiple membership of individual spirits include Ikeda Suetoshi 池田末利 (*Chûgoku kodai shûkyôshi kenkyû: Seido to shisô 中國古代宗教史研究：制度と思想* [Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1981]: p. 25–38). Western scholars who have suggested or argued for a corporate Di include Robert Eno (1990, *passim*). In his chapter for *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* (1999b), David Keightley has suggested the possibility of a corporate identity for Di (p. 251–268), though his elastic views often counter what Eno suggests, that it was the Shang ancestors who constituted Di. Specifically, early on Keightley (1975, p. 44–45) argued that since Di could work against the Shang, then it could not be constituted of the Shang ancestors, a position that he has more recently confirmed (1999b: 253). For contrast, where Keightley seems more open to ancestral inclusion in that high power, see his purely hypothetical description of Di in "Akatsuka Kiyoshi and the Culture of Early China: A Study in Historical Method," *HJAS* 42.1 (June 1982): 297–299.

³ In Shang the *dazong*, or Great Lineage, of royal ancestors included kings whose father and son also were kings. This is usually referred to as the main lineage, while collateral-lineage kings were fraternally appointed.

accords with the views of Hu Houxuan, Ming Yishi, Shima Kunio and others, who have argued that the *di* sacrifice was to Di.⁴

On the multiplicity of Di, besides the arguments made and evidence presented below, one may also conveniently consult Robert Eno's helpful, informative, and prescient article (1990), cited previously, which significantly advanced our understanding of Di. I do not repeat his arguments or evidence here, and my approach to Di differs from his, but I cite his work as strong support for my own contention that Di was not singular but rather comprised of multiple entities. While Eno has argued very gingerly for an exclusively ancestral copreity to Di, I offer that Di is both deeper and broader than this. First, Professor Eno wrote that the root meaning of *di* approximates "father." I see the word's import to stem not from this, its later human socio-political meaning, i.e., something like "great leader" (as in *diwang* 帝王) or, as Professor Eno suggests, "father,"⁵ but rather, similar to the views of Hayashi Minao and Itô Michiharu,⁶ from the earlier and more elemental usage of the character pertaining to the realm of spirits and gods. As I will demonstrate, it is 𠩺 that means something akin to "father" or "progenitor" of specifically the Shang royal Zi lineage, though not expressly so. While obviously the godly and human realms were not truly distinct in the Shang, on the other hand when we speak of root meanings of a word or concept, then the difference between the meaning available from a root source in one or the other of these realms is enormous: just the fact that greater power derived *immediately* from spirits

⁴ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 198–212; for Ming Yishi, see his opinion on Di (帝 and 禘) as quoted previously in Chapter 3. On Hu's reading, see further below in the text of this chapter, where he is cited.

⁵ Eno was working from the fact that in *later* periods the alternate temple names of deceased kings sometimes employed the honorific *di* 帝.

⁶ See Itô Michiharu 伊藤道治, *Chûgoku kodai ôchô no keisei* 中國古代王朝の形成 (Tokyo: Sôbunsha, 1975): 45–79; and Hayashi Minao, "In-chûki ni yurai suru kishin" 殷中期に由來する鬼神, in *Tôhô gakuhô* 東方學報 41 (1970): 1–70. Generally Itô and Hayashi defined Di as an abstract high power that over the course of the Shang absorbed the gods of conquered and/or absorbed peoples. While I largely agree with their views of Di, still, my definition differs considerably in that I believe that Di was neither *the* high power nor, as is universally believed, "abstract," as I explain below.

rather than humans tells us this much. Thus, for a power such as Di could wield, I choose to look for meaning in the source of its power and the earlier scope of its reference, the spiritual realm.

Neither do I agree with Professor Eno and most others that *di*, or Di, cannot be identified with a natural object or phenomenon and therefore also must be abstract. In the sense that Di was intangible, yes, it was abstract, but such is elementally so of any spiritual entity. But further, I offer that Di did source in a referential "object" that was present in the natural world, and this was, again, the pattern of stars at or near the northern celestial pole of the night sky of c. 3500–1000 BC.

Wang Aihe reviewed some of the literature arguing for a corporate or multiple Di, and she seemed at one point to agree with this structure, but for her own uses she quickly reverted, without explanation, to defining Di once again as a "singular deity," which is "the high god" that is quite distinct from "numerous natural forces and alien spirits" that, though "connected," remained for the Shang separate from Di.⁷ This conclusion led her to follow Allan (1991) to argue for an exaggerated understanding of the clout enjoyed in the Shang pantheon by some particular non-Shang spiritual powers, i.e., the *fang*, when it is much truer to the evidence, and thus easier, to follow the inscriptional context and thus consider the *fang* to have helped to constitute Di. These issues we will review below in this chapter, but first it is enough just to establish objectively that Di consisted of multiple elements.

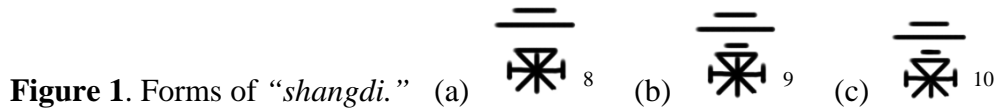
The Multiplicity of Di

First, that Di was multiple, not singular, is suggested strongly by the appearance of the phrase *shangdi* 上帝 three times in the oracle-bone record. *Shang* (上, distinct from the *shang* 商 that represents the dynastic name) indicates "high" or "exalted," or just "what is above," in contrast to its semantic mate in the binome *shangxia* 上下, "above and below," which is *xia* 下, "below." For one thing, indicating "what is above" connotes also that "what is below" exists. Thus,


⁷ Wang (2000): 31.

from the existence of a Shangdi we can deduce that there also existed for the Shang a Xiadi, i.e., “Lower Di,” “the Di below,” or “the rest of Di.” As we shall see shortly, indeed a Xiadi existed.

But beyond such deductions, graphic evidence involving the binome *shangdi* supports the argument for Di’s multiplicity. First, we note that each occurrence of the binome *shangdi* is individual in its graphic composition, which strengthens the sense that the term itself, despite graphic inconsistency, was considered to be stable. The three forms appear as in **Figure 1**, below:



Though these are usually counted as the only occurrences of “*shangdi*” in the oracle-bone record, evidence indicates that we really cannot determine just how many times this *meaning* occurs. To demonstrate this, we focus on the dot or line etched immediately above the uppermost horizontal line in the latter two representations of the lower graph of *di* (**Figures 1b and 1c**). It is noteworthy that in the first instance of these three (**Figure 1a**) no dot or line appears in this position. This suggests that the graphs for *di* with or without this dot were equivalent.




Employing parallel evidence derived from analyzing another character whose consistent meaning is known will help us to define better the differential meanings between the character *shang* 上, whose meaning is clear, and this seemingly ambiguous dot/line appearing inconsistently above the *di* graph. This character for comparative use is , which is the name of the earliest verifiable pre-dynastic Shang ancestor who received cult in the 10-day ritual cycle offered to ancestors,¹¹ Shangjia 上甲. This ancestor’s place in the pantheon and its spiritual functions will be








⁸ Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, *Jiagu xucun* 甲骨續存 (Shanghai: Qunlian, 1955): 1.68.

⁹ Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, *Yinxu shuqi houbian* 殷墟書契 (n.p. [China], 1916): A28.14.

¹⁰ Dong Zuobin 董作賓, *Xiaotun, Yinxu wenzi jibian* 小屯。殷墟文字甲編 (Nanjing: Academia Sinica, 1948): 1164. For all three usages, see also their rough reproductions in Shima Kunio, *Inkyô bokuji sôru* 殷墟卜辭綜類 (Tokyo: Daian, 1967): 149.

¹¹ On the 10-day ritual cycle of five sacrifices, see LZ 1474, as well as a short description in Keightley (1998):

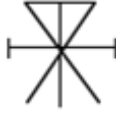
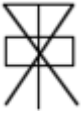

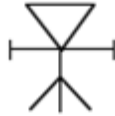







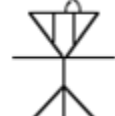




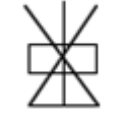






described more fully below. Presently we need note that, consistently referring in its various forms to "Shangjia,"  was also written thus:  and .¹² Therefore, we know that a graph involving the meaning of *shang*, "above," but showing no external superior dot/line, can be equivalent in meaning to one that possesses the single superior dot/line.

Both circumstances occur in many inscriptions of the character *di*. That is, *di* appears both with and without the dot connoting *shang*. We know further that in either case, with or without the dot, such a character can be equivalent in meaning with one in which the full form of *shang*, i.e.,  (or ), appears above it. Thus, whatever individual form of *di* we consider, whether it is , , , , , or another (see **Table 1**), we cannot be sure that it does or does not refer specifically to either Di or Shangdi. In that case, then any number of occurrences of the individual character *di* could refer to Shangdi, or "the High Di." Therefore, to argue on this basis for Di's multiplicity in the oracle-bone record is not inconsistent with the evidence.

260–261.

¹² See Zhu Qixiang (1989): 131 (#434); Xu Zhongshu (1998): 1535–1536.

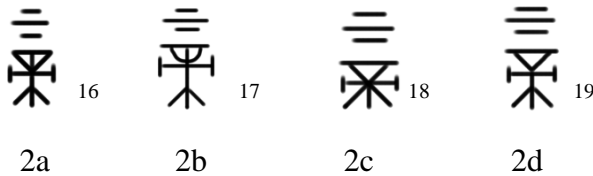
Table 1. Variable forms of the Sinitic character for Di 帝¹³

a		b		c		d	
	standard form, oracle-bone script		standard form, oracle-bone script		common alternate form		common alternate form
e		f		g		h	
	common alternate form		common alternate form		unusual form		unusual form
i		j		k		l	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
m		n		o		p	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
q		r		s		t	
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		unusual form
u		v		w			
	unusual form		unusual form		unusual form		

¹³ Sources: *Leizuan*, Gaoming (1980), Zhou Fagao (1974, 1982).

Additional evidence dating to both the Shang and Zhou periods strongly favors such an interpretation. This is the occurrence of the polynome *shangxiadi* 上下帝, i.e., “higher and lower Di,” or “Di above and below,” in several bronze inscriptions. These include inscriptions found on the following vessels: (1) Biqu you 卣 其卣 (Yin/Anyang period of Shang, or c. 1200–1045 BC);¹⁴ (2) Xinghou gui 井侯簋 (c. 1000 BC); (3) Shiqiang pan 史牆盤 (c. 900 BC); and (4) Hu zhong 胡 鐘 (a.k.a. Zongzhou zhong 宗周鐘, c. 857–828 BC).¹⁵

The inscribed forms of *shangxiadi* appearing on these vessels are approximated as follows in **Figures 2a-d**:



Comparison of these usages of *shangxiadi* with the three full forms for *shangdi* found on

¹⁴ Yu Xingwu 于省吳, *Shangzhou jinwen luyi 商周金文錄遺* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957): 24. On the basis of the now 60-year-old arguments of Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺 Robert Eno expresses doubts about the authenticity of the inscriptions found on the Biqu you. See Eno (1990): 8; n. 26. For Zhang’s work see Robert W. Bagley, ed., *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections* (Washington DC and Cambridge, MA: The Arthur M. Sackler Foundation and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 1987): 528.



¹⁵ On the dating of the Hu zhong, see Edward Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 111 (T. 4); 169–170, n. 20.



¹⁶ Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, ed., *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng 殷周金文集成* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1984): v. 1, p. 329.

¹⁷ Guo Moruo, *Liangzhou jinwenci daxi kaoshi 兩周金文辭大系考釋* (Beijing: Kexue, 1958): III.39b. While Chen Mengjia read *shangxia* and Di as belonging to separate utterances, Guo Moruo read them as one graph. For a discussion of the syntax of the inscription see Eno (1990): 16–17 (esp. n. 49). Considering the existence of at least these three other uses of “*shangxia di*,” then Guo’s reading certainly is the more reliable.

¹⁸ Shaughnessy (1991): 2 (Figure 1).

¹⁹ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*: v. 10, p. 285.







oracle bones and reviewed previously (**Figures 1a-c**) suggests that the latter two graphic compounds, that is, those “*shangdi*” forms possessing the triple hashes or lines above the graph for *di* itself (**Figures 1b and 1c**, i.e.,  and ), might also be understood to refer not to *shangdi* but to *shangxiadi*. That is, we might read the three superior lines as *shangxia*, not *shang*. In that case, then in both the bronze and oracle-bone media dating from the Shang and Zhou there exist powerful semantic and graphemic indications that Di was multiple, i.e., possessing superior and lesser ranks.



The sheer number of distinct graphic forms of the character *di* itself further supports this statement (see **Table 1**). While Sarah Allan, commenting on just one type of variation of *di* (similar to graphs l, m, t, and u in **Table 1**), considered a small circle drawn to intersect the upper horizontal of the graph *di* to be merely an imperfection on the bone or a smudge introduced perhaps during the rubbing process,²⁰ to this we may raise three objections. First, such a design occurs in many instances on numerous bones. Second, the circular design is carefully, consciously etched. Its completion in the characters manifests too involved a process to have occurred on multiple occasions as merely a smudge, an accidental cut into the bone, or an imperfection introduced during the making of a rubbing of the bone. Third, the fact that the small circle moves about through the graph of *di* in various expressions of this form indicates that these were meaningful variations. For instance, in the case of the similar forms, **Table (T) 1’s T11**  and **T1t** , which were employed on separate bones as a noun or verb (**T11**) and a verb (**T1t**), **T11** likely invokes or refers to an aspect of Di ordering wind (*feng*), while **T1t** indicates a *di* sacrifice to *dongfang*, or “eastern direction (or side).”²¹ Since the *fang*, or “direction,” could originate or control wind, and we know that the *fang* were intimately associated with the will of Di (see below, this chapter), then one might conjecture that the circular form resting on or about the upper horizontal of each graph represents an aspect of Di responsible for wind that arises in the east. Could the extra and occasional circle appearing in *di* represent a momentary astral event occurring

²⁰ Allan (1991): 78.

²¹ See Shima. *Sôruï*: 159.

apparently at or near the pole at the time of divination, such as (1) the death, birth, or other brightening of a star, (2) a comet's passing, or (3) a meteor shower, that was suspected of adumbrating a change in weather patterns? There seems to be no secure way of testing or verifying such speculation.

While many other graphic variants of *di* have been discussed throughout the preceding pages, very unusual forms whose meanings have never been identified deserve our notice, as well. These include the following graphs: ,²² ,²³ ,²⁴ and .²⁵ Although the minimal contexts provided by the few oracle-bone inscriptions in which they occur prevent one from confirming that these characters served as verbal *di*, they appear to act as verbs and indeed Shima Kunio listed them as such in his index.²⁶ Of course, one assumes that such verbal *di* have to do with the *di* sacrifice, and the particular external forms included in these characters that portray human action, i.e., the hands of ritual receipt or delivery () and the arrow (), might reveal that these graphs of *di* depicted ceremonies by which a spirit was either incorporated into or divested from *di*. These readings of these undefined forms do not prove that *di* was multiple or evolutionary, but they are consistent with the evidence that does demonstrate Di's consular nature.

That Di the spiritual entity consisted of various identifiable elements becomes certain when we recognize that in several instances two distinct forms of the graph occur on one inscribed vessel (bone or bronze). In two cases we find on one oracle bone two distinct variants of the character. In the first example, these forms of *di* are  and .²⁷ What is particularly striking is that the approaches to the graphs' designs are markedly distinct. Compare especially the

²² *HJ* 30593.



²³ Shima, *Sôruï*: 159 (citing *Jiagu liulu* 甲骨六錄 [1945]).



²⁴ *HJ* 14221 (A,B), 15937 (A, B).


²⁵ *HJ* 17309; *HJ* 18476.

²⁶ Shima. *Sôruï*: 159.

²⁷ Guo Moruo, *Yinqi cuibian* 殷契粹編 (Beijing: Xinhua shudian [Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo], 1965 [rpt. of 1937 ed.]): 13.

diagonal legs: on the former, , the legs originate on the vertical central axis of the character, beneath the central horizontal barbell. On the latter, , the legs originate at the outer corners of the upper horizontal line of the character such that the upper diagonal lines and the diagonal legs are formed from two intersecting lines, not four individual diagonal lines as in the former case. The graphs' distinct designs etched in such close proximity in two phrases can only mean that the intentions of disparate elements, aspects, levels, spirit types, or loci of the powers of Di were being tested in the oracular procedure represented on this bone fragment. Indeed, while both graphs are employed as nouns, the first phrase inquires after Di, while the second concerns *di wu chen* 帝五臣, or "the five adjutants of Di." Now, since bones were used and reused on multiple occasions, one might argue that two inscribers etched the two distinct *di* characters during two separate divination processes. However, in this case the two graphs belong to the same phrasal group and are separated physically on the fragment by only two vertical character spaces (a blank and the prepositional *yu* 于, "at," "in," "to," or "from"). They were inscribed by one diviner in preparation for one divination only. Therefore, we know that the differences between the graphs were consciously, purposefully maintained.

In a second instance the forms  and  appear on one oracle bone.²⁸ We will revisit this latter example in Chapter 5, but for now it is sufficient to note how this evidence contributes to our understanding of the obvious graphic multivalence of *di* and, thus, the multiplicity of the power Di that the character represents.

The third example of two forms of the character *di* occurring on one vessel is found on the bronze named *Biqi you*. As described above, on this *you* vessel we find one of the instances of the polynome *shangxiadi*. We also find on this same bronze the form , which we know could denote either *di* or *shangdi*.²⁹ The consciously engineered disparity of the two graphs inscribed on the same vessel can only mean that two aspects or elements of this broader category of Di were being addressed. Again, the evidence supportive of Di's multiplicity is unmistakable and strong.

²⁸ *HJ* 21174.

²⁹ *Yinzhou jinwen jicheng*: v. 1, pp. 329 & 331.

Indications of specifically what Di consisted also support that power’s multiplicity, as we will see below.

The Composition and Powers of Di

In most scholarly literature explaining or otherwise commenting on the character *di* it is stated as a matter of course that Di presided over all other spirits and gods, including former humans and nature spirits.³⁰ To demonstrate this supposed verity it is often written further that only Di could cause or order that certain natural phenomena (such as the falling of rain or the receipt of good harvests, good fortune in the building of a new city, etc.) occur. While this is *almost* true of the use in oracle bones of the specific verb “to order [something to be done],” which is 𠄎, or *ling* 令, in fact many former human and natural spirits were besought to bring about rain and other beneficences. In the case of seeking rain, the nature spirits include Yue 岳, He 河, and Tu 土; the spirits of former humans, including ancestors and “former lords,” are Si 兕, Wang Hai 王亥, Huang [Yin] Yin 黃[寅]尹, Yi Yin 伊尹, Xiayi 下乙 (K20),³¹ and Shangjia 上甲 (A1), as well as several other royal ancestors. In addition, at least He, Huang[Yin] Yin, and Yi Yin could specifically *ling* (“order”) rain and assure good harvests.³²

It happens that this large number of the very same spirits also received the highest of all sacrifices, the *di* sacrifice, a rite that was intended to bring or stop natural phenomena such as rain,

³⁰ See, for instance, most recently Wang Aihe (2000): 30–31.


³¹ Aside from their temple names, in this study dynastic kings are also identified according to their order in the kingly succession; for example, Wuding will be otherwise identified as K21. For a complete list of Shang pre-dynastic high ancestors and kings, and their succession order, see **Table 1**, Chapter 5 below.

³² Shima, *Kenkyû*: 203–207. See Shima’s cogent review of the descriptions of the scope of the powers of Di by formidable early scholars of archaic script, including Hu Houxuan, Chen Mengjia, Dong Zuobin, Guo Moruo, and others, in *Kenkyû*: 189–192.

good harvest, wind, destruction of cities, and so on.³³ While Shima Kunio made a rather forced argument that in these cases of the performance of the *di* sacrifice these spirits acted as proxies to engage the high god Di in order to determine that high god’s intention or to cause it to act (or order an act done),³⁴ it is simpler and more direct to read the inscriptions exactly as they were inscribed, that is, as representing that direct presentations of the *di* sacrifice to these spirits could be or were made. In that most certain case, then these spirits possessed both the power to manipulate rain and other natural phenomena and the exalted status to receive the *di* sacrifice. It seems, then, that not only did these spirits possess the powers usually identified as being those that set Di apart from other spirits, but they also received the highest and most exclusive honors, i.e., the *di* sacrifice, offered to any spirits.

These spirit powers seem, then, to have helped to constitute the Di that we already know to have been plural in constitution. If Shima and others were correct that only Di could receive the *di* sacrifice, then this supports further that they must in fact have been Di.³⁵ Chen Mengjia came close to declaring them to be Di when he suggested that they were “gods of Heaven” (or of the sky; *tianshen* 天神),³⁶ by which he might have been close to agreeing with Hu Houxuan’s idea that, “In that [these spirits] sat to the left and right of Di, then their power (*de* 德) was such that they could act as proxy to (*pei* 配) Heaven (i.e., Di).”³⁷ We note that when we remove the unsupported claim that these spirits acted as proxies for Di, then it is clear that these spirits themselves received *di*.

³³ See Shima, *Sôruî*: 159, and also particularly 203–212.

³⁴ *Ibid.*: 200–203. In these cases the verb that supposedly signifies when a proxy is sought, i.e.,  (賓) *bin*, does not occur. The grammar of these instances follows one of these V-O patterns: “*di* *yu* X (spirit)” or “*di* X (spirit).” In such instances the meaning is “Perform *di* sacrifice to X (spirit).” For *bin*, whose meaning in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions I do not believe to be “proxy-host X spirit,” see the text further below.

³⁵ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 200. Ye Yusen and Ming Yishi, in theorizing about the graphemic components of the Sinitic character *di* and their origins in the meaning of burning goods to offer to the heavens, seem to have implied the same thing, since both verb and noun shared the same essential form — and, in fact, their theory that *di* is a matter of “*liao* burning sticks to what is above” relies on what is usually considered to be the nominal graph for *di* rather than the verbal form. Thus to them the nominal and verbal *di* are intimately associated. See the previous discussion, Chapter 2.

³⁶ See Shima, *Kenkyû*: 200.

³⁷ Hu Houxuan, “Yindai de tianshen chongbai” 殷代的天神崇拜, in *Jiaguxue Shangshi luncong chujì* 甲骨

But Hu Houxuan and Chen Mengjia both pointed out that *direct* sacrifice to Di does not occur in the oracle bone inscriptions. Hu mused that Di was too exalted to receive offerings from humans, while Chen, reflecting the evidence as a mirror, merely stated that in the inscriptions "Di" did not receive animal or human sacrifice.³⁸ While Shima has wished to prove otherwise, i.e., that Di did in fact receive cult directly, his evidence is extremely limited and tenuous, and his thesis relies on circular argumentation.³⁹

However, that Di did not receive cult can be explained very simply by acknowledging that Di was a consular structure of the heavens, not a singular consciousness-possessing god. Thus Di can and, I argue, should be understood to have been a single and impersonal council of godliness comprised of multiple consular spirits. Supportive of this view of Di is the fact that, contrary to Hu's and Chen's assertions, in the inscriptions the particulate consular spirits of Di, who sometimes were identified as Di, at times did receive cult.

Additional evidence supports rather clearly the interpretation that those receiving the *di* sacrifice were constituents of Di. For one thing, in the Shang ritual hosting of spirits known as *bin* (𠄎 賓, "host/to host," "guest") one finds many instances in which (1) ancestral spirits *bin*-hosted Di, such as did Dayi 大乙 (K1, a.k.a. Cheng 成/咸, Tang 唐, Tang 湯), Dajia 大甲 (K3), and Xiayi 下乙 (K20, a.k.a. Fuyi 父乙); and (2) some of the same ancestral spirits (such as Dajia and Xiayi), as well as the "former lord" Yiyin, *bin*-hosted yet other ancestral spirits, including those that occur in these two preceding lists (i.e., Dayi and Xiayi/Fuyi) and the earliest of all ancestors receiving cult, Shangjia (one of those whose help in bringing rain was sought; see above).⁴⁰ In short, the ancestors and other spirits *bin*-hosted one another and also *bin*-hosted Di. In

學商史論叢初集, V. 1 (Chengdu: Qilu daxue, 1944): 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 6; Chen Mengjia, *Buci zongshu* 卜辭總述 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1956): 580.

³⁹ Shima's arguments regarding *di* (including both nominal and verbal functions of the character), never clearly stated in a summary way, are made via several separate presentations regarding nominal and verbal uses of "𠄎" (*ding*) and *di*, and they sprawl across some forty-five pages of highly dense material whose logic is often difficult or even impossible to follow. On the other hand, we must recognize that via this text Shima advanced the field tremendously by collecting and reinterpreting in novel ways a vast corpus of very difficult material. See Shima, *Kenkyū*: 177–219. Robert Eno (1990) devotes an article to refuting Shima's thesis.

⁴⁰ For inscriptions see LZ 766–660; for Shangjia's receipt of *bin*, see Shima, *Sōrui*: 276–277. Usually the *bin* has been explained as the hosting of proxy spirits to reach other spirits, but this is to read a later, Zhou, *bin* ritual tradition, whereby a male royal family member impersonated the hosted spirit, into the earlier Shang inscriptions. *Bin*

combination with the evidence presented above that demonstrates that these same ancestors shared high powers with Di, then this weighs very strongly in favor of their all having been Di. For whatever reasons, which, with so few inscriptions to guide us we cannot determine at present, at some times certain Di spirits *bin*-ed while others were *bin*-ed, and at other times the relative positions between those giving and receiving via *bin* reversed or altered (for more on *bin* see below, Chapter 5). This shifting of roles indicates the occurrence of both a continuous change in individual spirits' specific abilities or powers, and, thus, also a revolving constitution either within or through (or both) Di.

Further strengthening the case for these spirits' participation in the consular corporeity of Di is the fact that many of these same spirits, such as Tu, He, Yue, and Shangjia (and, in the case of *wu* / *fang*, below, also Di itself) also received ritual attention or cult in additional rituals that, offered at the same time as the *di* sacrifice, were at least associated intimately with that ritual but very possibly also constituted a part of that proceeding. These rites, apparently similar to the use of *bin* in the *di* sacrifice or in other entreaties to ancestral/natural spirits, include the *liao* 寮 (or 燎) described above, *yuwu* 羽舞, *shenli* 沈狸, *shasheng* 殺牲, *yan* 禋, *cegao* 冊告, *wu* 舞, and the *wu* 巫 and *fang* 方 to Di (on the latter two, to Di, see further below).⁴¹

Many additional uses of *di* found in the oracle-bone inscriptions demonstrate further that various powers or spirits formed part of Di. In one case reference is made to *beidi* 北帝, or "Northern Di," in some unclear association with ancestor Zuyi (K12).⁴² In one very clear instance, a *liao* sacrifice is offered to *diyun* 帝雲, or "Cloud Di":

in Shang inscriptions more likely describes simply a ritual hosting of a spirit, whether by the king (usually) or by other ancestral spirits (as described above). There is no reason to believe that only the king, and not spirits, could host spirits, and that an inscription in which is divined, for instance, Dajia's *bin*-hosting of Dayi or Di, necessarily implies the king as the implied subject of the verb *bin* and thus the host at the ritual. Rather, we may read this simply as it is written, that Dajia was divined to host Dayi (for this specific inscription see *HJ* 1401). After all, to the Shang these were, like the king, living beings who, it should be expected, maintained familial obligations and courtesies. In the case of the *bin* ceremony in which the king divines that one ancestor *bin* another, it seems that the king was simply facilitating the exercise of these familial relationships. See below (Chapter 5) on *bin* with respect to the power 𠄎 for further confirmation of this understanding of these relationships that occurred between ancestors.

⁴¹ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 207–211.

⁴² This inscription (*HJ* 34156) is fragmentary. It could be that *bei* and *di* should be read separately, i.e., as "the North" and "Di." Here a combined "*beidi*" also could refer to a northern *fang* or *wu* element of Di (see text, below).

It is divined: Perform a *liao* to *diyun*. 貞寮于帝雲. *Zhen liao yu diyun*.⁴³

Following as it does the preposition *yu*, this *di* could not be a verb; it certainly helps to form the utterance *diyun*. Therefore, we can understand that a nature spirit responsible for clouds and rain helped to constitute Di.⁴⁴

In many more instances we read in the oracle-bone record of a *difeng* 帝風, *feng* meaning "wind." In some cases *difeng*, like *diyun*, should be read as a polysyllabic noun meaning "Wind Di."⁴⁵ In other usages we may read this as a V-O expression to mean "perform the *di* sacrifice to the wind spirit," in which case the *feng* spirit still may be considered a part of Di if we accept that the *di* sacrifice was performed only to Di. As Hu Houxuan commented of one such instance, evidently contradicting his otherwise stated opinion that Di did not receive cult, "The wind spirit constitutes part of Di. Therefore, the *di* sacrifice was employed to offer ritual sacrifice to it."⁴⁶

The *Fang* 方, the Wind (*Feng* 風), and the Rain (*Yu* 雨)

Wang Aihe has argued for a supremely important position for the *fang* in the Shang pantheon. Apparently influenced by Sarah Allan's elevation of the *fang* to inordinately supreme

⁴³ HJ 14227.

⁴⁴ Hu Houxuan read this phrase as "Di's clouds," since, as he wrote, "Clouds and wind sitting to the left and right of Di, Di animates them; therefore they are called 'Di's clouds.' Yin people believed that there being clouds in the sky was a matter of Di's having stirred them up" ("Yin buci zhong de shangdi he wangdi, shang" 殷卜辭中的上帝和王帝(上). *Lishi yanjiu* 1959.9: 25). However, like these, his justifications, Hu's reading also remains merely a matter of opinion. And in the similar case (see text, immediately below) of the commonly occurring phrase *Difeng*, Hu read the *di* to be, like the *di* in my reading of *Diyun*, an adjective, thus producing "Wind Di" or "Di of the Wind." From this we can know that Hu was uncertain of the grammar and meaning of this structure "*di-X*," where X is a phenomenon of the sky.

⁴⁵ For examples see Zhu Qixiang: 134 (#444).

⁴⁶ Hu (1944): 21. Shima Kunio wished to read all such instances of *difeng* as if the verb *ling*, "order," appeared between *di* and *feng*. However, while this could be so in several cases, it is unreasonable to assume the presence of *ling* in all such many instances where it does not occur.

status in Shang religion, Wang proffered that the *sifang*, or four *fang*, "became the conception through which the Shang perceived the will of Di, and the forces and spirits that Di sent through *sifang* became the mediators between Di and the Shang people."⁴⁷ Evidence regarding the *fang* and *sifang*, presented below, simply does not support such a thesis that exaggerates the axial role of the *fang* in Shang religion. Stating my objection most simply, the *fang* certainly were not the exclusive agents of the extension of the beneficence that the Shang desired. While I agree with Allan and Wang that the *fang* were important to Shang rule, it is nonetheless true that it is much simpler and more sensible given the inscriptional evidence to understand the *fang* to be, along with other non-Shang spirits, part of Di itself. Moreover, as we have seen, by no means was it only the *fang* spirits that controlled the weather, including winds and rain. Thus Wang overstated precipitously the role that the *fang* played in Shang religious matters.

In some cases *di* was offered individually to the four *fang*, that is, the four directions of north, south, east, and west, in the hope of controlling the *feng* (wind) — and, with it, rain — that came from those directions. Other rites could be performed to the *fang*, as well, and apparently also with the purpose of manipulating the wind.⁴⁸ Many scholars have reviewed, analyzed, and/or translated inscriptions on two particular bones in which names of the four winds being *di*-ed are identified with the directions from which they occur — again N, S, E, and W.⁴⁹ The names of the *fang* and their associated winds are somewhat inconsistent and do not concern us here. What we may note is that, first, the fact that the Shang people *di*-ed (1) both *feng* and *yun* individually, as indicated previously, as well as (2) the *fang* and their *feng*, all to bring about rain, suggests strongly that, like *feng* and *yun* themselves, *fang* and their *feng* can be identified with — and thus as — part of Di. Therefore, in Di the *fang* seem to have shared a sort of identity with the spirits of Yin/Shang ancestors, other deceased humans, and nature spirits. Second, and very telling, on one of the two bones describing *di* sacrifices to the *fang* and their named winds appears a bipolar charge inquiring

⁴⁷ Wang (2000): 31.

⁴⁸ These include the 禦 *yu*, 𠄎 *hui*, and 燎 *liao*, and sometimes these rituals were divined to *fang* specifically to control rain (LZ 1206). Otherwise the "four *fang*" were divined to attempt to stop an illness (LZ 1204).

⁴⁹ Allan (1988): 79–83; Keightley (2000): 69–71. Or see the inscriptions at HJ 14294, 14295.

whether or not "Di will order rain." On this bone it is then recorded that indeed rain fell some four days later.⁵⁰ In this we can see, then, one diviner's (Nei 內) combined concern on one day (辛亥 *xinhai*, or day 48 in the 60-day Shang cycle) with (1) Di's intention to bring or not bring rain, and (2) *di*-ing the winds of the *fang* with the intent of bringing rain so that the Shang might receive good harvests. It is clear that *di*-ing the *fang* to stir up their *feng* winds was intended to stimulate Di to drum up rain. The connection is unmistakable: the *fang* and their *feng* wind powers participated in Di.

Other uses of *fang* with *di* are telling, as well. These include the phrases *fangdi* 𠄎 𠄎 (方帝), 𠄎 𠄎 *difang* (帝方), and *di yu fang* 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎 (帝于方).⁵¹ First, the phrase *fangdi* might be read in several different ways, producing distinct meanings. For example, it could be understood to be two verbs: "perform the *fang* and *di* sacrifices." However, that this syntax thus provides no object of the *fang* and *di* rituals offered (for examples, see below) renders it unlikely when considered across the entire body of many such *fangdi* inscriptions.

Fangdi also might be read as two nouns, to mean "fang and Di." Thus the following inscription could be translated in this way:

It is divined: [Offer to] *fang* and Di one *qiang* and two dogs, and *liu*-slaughter one ox. 貞方帝一羌二犬卯一牛. *Zhen fang di yi qiang er quan liu yi niu*.⁵²

⁵⁰ *HJ* 14295 (1), (2). The second bone on which the *feng* are named (*HJ* 14294) offers no opportunity to confirm this association of the *fang*, winds, *di* sacrifice, and Di, for it is not a charge but a simple listing of the *fang* and the names of their *feng*. Thus, neither was a *di* (nor any other) sacrifice employed; nor was the power Di queried.

⁵¹ Cf. Sarah Allan's discussion of this syntax (1991: 77), and also, for an alternative reading of these types of phrases, Robert Eno ("Masters of the Dance: The Role of T'ien in the Teachings of the Early Juist (Confucian) Community," Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1984: 64–5). I read the phrases in ways closer to those offered by Eno.

⁵² *HJ* 418(g). A *qiang* could have been either a type of sheep or a captured human of the Qiang people. Both, like the boar and ox, were used as sacrificial offerings. In this instance the *qiang* likely was a sheep. In oracle-bone inscriptions the character *mao* 卯 was often, as here, loaned to express the meaning of *liu* 剝, which was a method of slaughter. Otherwise *mao* was a numerator employed to identify ritual days (see below, Chapter 5).

However, this syntax allows for no delineation of a ritual(s) performed to *fang* and Di, thus rendering it also an unlikely reading across so many inscriptions sharing this syntax.

The phrase "*fangdi*" also could be read to be a nominal phrase meaning "Di of *fang*," where *fang* modifies *di*. In this case the above inscription (*HJ* 418[g]) would read, "It is divined: [Offer to] Di of *fang* one *qiang*, two boar, and *liu*-slaughtering one ox." This would accord with Zhu Qixiang's reading of the phrase. For instance, Zhu considers the inscribed phrase 寮于土方帝 *liao yu tu fang di*⁵³ to mean that this Di receiving the *liao* sacrifice was the Di of *tufang*.⁵⁴ He considers it proof that the Di of the *fang* were actual and received cult. While this would support my argument about Di very strongly, and I concur that there were *tu* and *fang* elements of Di, still I must disagree with Zhu's reading of the phrase *liao yu tu fang di*. He was drawing on the fact that "Tufang" (土方) was the name of a *guo* (國) or region, i.e., a geographically identifiable tribe or nation, and thus he is justified speciously, but here certainly *tu* should be understood to refer to the spirit Tu and not the people or *fang* geographic region of Tufang. This we can surmise because elsewhere in the oracle-bone record *liao* is offered numerous times to Tu alone ("*liaotu*" and "*liao yu tu*").⁵⁵ Further, in other instances the phrase *fangdi* occurs both (1) prior to *liao yu tu*,⁵⁶ and (2) following both the phrase *liao yu tu* and the enumeration of the sacrificial offering (in this case a *lao* offering) made during the ritual, therefore obviating that *tu* and *fangdi* are separate

⁵³ When recording this phrase Zhu Qixiang (1989: 134) cites Hu Houxuan, *Jiagu Xucun* 甲骨續存 (Shanghai: Qunlian chubanshe, 1955; i.e., *Cun* 存), inscription number 1.595, as does Shima (*Sôru* 172), but the inscription does not appear to have been included in *HJ* (see Hu Houxuan et al., eds., *Jiaguwen Heji cailiao lai yuan biao* 甲骨文合集材料來原表 [Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1999]: 126). A similar phrase, *zhen liao tu fang di* 貞燎土方帝, i.e., lacking only the prepositional *yu* 于, can be found at *HJ* 14305 (also *LZ* 463), as well as *HJ* 14393–14402.

⁵⁴ Zhu Qixiang (1989): 134.

⁵⁵ *HJ* 14393–14402; *LZ* 463–4. In addition, in one instance (*HJ*: 14399A), following the query about offering *liao yu tu*, the diviner also queried whether to offer a coterminous but distinct sacrifice to the mountain power Yue. Likely both sacrifices were intended to bring rain or good harvests.

⁵⁶ *HJ* 1140A. *LZ* records no *tu* in this phrase, while Shima, citing the phrase from its earlier recording in *Yi* 乙 5272, does. The actual inscription photographically reproduced in *HJ* shows clearly that a *tu* follows *yu*.

lexicographical elements.⁵⁷ Finally, since *fangdi* otherwise occurs independently numerous times,⁵⁸ then attempting a reading of *tufangdi* in any case is too far a stretch. Therefore, it is quite certain that *liao yu tu* and *fangdi* (or, really, *tu* and *fangdi*) must be read as separate lexicographical units. On the other hand, as I argue below, despite these results of this necessary hair-splitting syntactic analysis, in fact the *meaning* that Zhu reads into the phrase, i.e., that there was a Di of Tufang, is in fact present. Below we continue our analysis of *fangdi*.

In fact in most cases one likely should read *fangdi* as either (1) a V-O expression meaning "to offer the *fang* sacrifice to Di," or (2) an adverbial-verbal structure meaning "to perform the *fang* type of *di*," or both. In the end, both readings seem to provide the same meaning.⁵⁹ First, where the phrase is a V-O expression, one could translate the above-cited inscription (*HJ* 418[g]) thusly: "It is divined: Perform the *fang* to Di, offering one *qiang*, two dogs, and *liu*-slaughtering one ox." Another inscription, one that divines the wisdom of whether the Shang should "*fangdi* in order to pacify the *feng* (wind)" (方帝寧風 *fangdi ningfeng*), supports the thesis that the *fang* of *fangdi* is verbal, is directed at Di, and is intended to access for the Shang a degree of control over the wind.⁶⁰ Of note here is, as we witnessed before, the connection that is apparent between *fang* (whether verbal or nominal), *di/Di* (whether verbal or nominal) and *feng*, wind.

Otherwise, where *fangdi* might be read as a complex verb, then we would translate it as "perform the *fang* type of *di*." It might be that both readings, the V-O and compound verbal, are possible simultaneously. In this case *fang* would indicate a type of *di* ritual performed only to the

⁵⁷ *HJ* 1108A. A *lao* 牢 was an offering usually performed to seek rain or good harvest. It varied in numbers of animals sacrificed. In this instance it seems to have involved offering one sheep.

⁵⁸ See *LZ* 1205.

⁵⁹ Chen Mengjia seems to have been the first to suggest that this common *fangdi* phrase be read as a V-O expression: to *fang* (verb) was to report via performing a *fang* ritual to the *fang* (gods) of north, south, east, and west; thus the Di of each *fang* (region, i.e., the *fang* god of that region) received offering according to its *fang* (direction). Chen argued his grammar from the occurrence of the negative imperative helping verb *wu* 勿, and thus the negation of *fang*, in the phrase "*wu fang di* 勿方帝," or "do not/will not *fang di*." (*Buci zongshu*: 78). It is difficult to ignore the validity of his evidence and argument.

⁶⁰ *HJ* 19817.

four *fang*, or [spirits of] the four directions, and *di* would refer to the *fang* element of Di, here receiving the *fangdi* sacrifice, whose presence in the inscriptions we have developed above. We can reason the validity of this reading on the following basis. For one thing, we already have established that *fang* apparently were elements of Di. Therefore, to read *fang* as an ellipted form of nominal *fangdi* (and thus "Fangdi") is not a barrier. We have seen also that *di* rituals were performed to *fang* to control their winds, and that the ultimate purpose of such exercises was to manipulate Di's control of rain. There is apparent support, therefore, for reading *di* as nominal *fangdi*, or Fangdi. Then in so reading these cases of the use of the phrase *fangdi*, the phrase would have been ellipted from "*fangdi fangdi*" (i.e., *fangdi* Fangdi) to just "*fangdi*." Considering the significant effort expended (not to mention expense) in inscribing bone in c. 1200 BC, then, in cases of redundancy where the clear meaning of an ellipted phrase was certain to the participants, that ellipsis likely would have occurred is not difficult to conceive.

Several inscriptions describing or proposing a combined *liao* sacrifice to the Tu spirit and a *fang* to Di, as we have seen above (i.e., *liao yu tu fang di*), support the argument that *fang* is a ritual to Di. The parallelism that we know occurs in this syntax, of *liao* to *tu* and *fang* to *di*, demonstrates this. Furthermore, *liao* sacrifices, as we have seen, also were offered to the spirits that constitute Di, so that *liao* and *fang* should be seen to form parallel and constituent parts of the *di* sacrifice.⁶¹ In fact, Ye Yusen, Ming Yishi, Shirakawa Shizuka, and Shima Kunio all argued that *liao* was a central part of the *di* sacrifice to Di. Aside from Shima's arguments, the others have been analyzed above in Chapter 3. Shima argued specifically that the *liao* to Tu formed a part of the *fangdi* aspect of the *di* sacrifice to Di.⁶² He very well could be correct. Considering further that (1) the Shang's offering of cult to Tu to control the wind suggests that the spirit(s) Tu formed part of Di,⁶³ and thus logically the Tu spirit would have received cult via the *di* sacrifice (specifically in the *liao* portion of that sacrifice), and (2) the *liao* character 𠄎 seems, as reviewed in Chapter 3, to have been among the constituent graphic forms that compose the character *di* / Di, 𠄎, then it is reasonable

⁶¹ See also the series of such sacrifices recorded in LZ 555–558.

⁶² Shima, *Kenkyû*: 198–199.

⁶³ See Keightley (2000): 64–5.

and consistent with the inscriptional evidence to conclude that *liao* formed, as did *fang*, a part of the *di* sacrifice, and that these ritual sacrifices were directed at elements of Di.

Thus, overall, considering the evidence presented previously on *di*-ing the *fang* to control wind/rain and *liao*-ing Tu and *fang*-ing Di, as well as the *fangdi* uses reviewed presently, then it is likely that "*fangdi*" is to be read to mean "*fangdi fangdi*," with the meaning that the verbal *fang* was an aspect of the ritual *di* performed to the nominal *fang* aspect of Di.

The related phrases that interest us, *di yu fang* and *difang*, clearly follow a V-O construction. Normally the enumeration of the ritual offerings follows the direct object, as in the following example:

Perform the *di* to *fang* employing one bovine. 帝于方用一牛. *Di yu fang yong yi niu*.⁶⁴

The problem for interpretation is that *yu* could mean either "to" or "at/in." Considering that Wuding, the king responsible for these charges being made, travelled and campaigned often into the outlying areas of Shang control, then the *fang* could have been either or *both* the spiritual recipient of *di* or/and the locus of the ritual's performance: that is, *di yu fang* might have been a *fangdi* to Fangdi performed in a *fang*.

Similar to the cognate V-O phrases *liao yu tu* and *liao tu* (see above), the phrase *difang* likely can be read to be cognate with *di yu fang*, if we supply the ellipted prepositional *yu*, as in this inscription, which can be translated in this way:

Crack-making on *jiayin* day (day 51): Perhaps perform the *di* to/at *fang* [offering] one *qiang*, one ox, and ten dogs. 甲寅卜其帝方一羌一牛旬犬. *Jiayin bu qi di fang yi qiang yi niu jiu quan*.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Bali suojian jiagu lu* 巴黎所見甲骨錄 (Hong Kong: n.p., 1956): 9.

⁶⁵ *HJ* 32112.

Without the preposition, however, the direct-object nature of *fang* is enhanced such that the phrase seems to describe more a *di to fang* than a *di at/in the fang*. In this case, then it likely is equivalent to *fangdi*; that is, it is to be read *fangdi fangdi* (i.e., perform a *fangdi* to Fangdi), though here (*difang*) the ellipses are reversed from our previous example (*fangdi*).

Wu-ing Di 𠄎 𠄎 (巫帝) and Di-ing Wu 𠄎 𠄎 (帝巫)

A similar mix of syntax and vocabulary is found in many OBI contexts in which the character 𠄎 is employed. This character has been identified consistently with the Zhou and later Chinese character *wu* 巫, but this can be and has been misleading, for despite their graphic similarity across two distinct but related scripts, the uses of the two characters are mostly disparate. As we shall see, however, it is probably through Professor Mair's identification of 𠄎 as **m^yag*, i.e., Indo-Iranian *magi* courtiers, that the semantic link between that character's referents and those of Chinese *wu* can be made.

Many of the uses of 𠄎 in oracle-bone inscriptions so resemble those for *fang* that some scholars have argued that *wu* was a briefly employed (by certain, the Shi 𠄎 and Li 𠄎, diviner groups) alternative/cognate character for *fang*.⁶⁶ Their graphic similarity, both characters employing the "barbell" design that likely depicts a center, obviously strengthens this identification. However, while we understand clearly that a shared graphemic element suggests either a phonetically or etymologically common origin, if use of this component were solid justification for identifying Sinitic characters absolutely, then any number of characters employing this element, including *di*, could be equated with *fang* or, for that matter, any other character employing the element, and our interpretations of OBIs would founder from lack of specificity and differentiation in meaning. Obviously, then, lacking other significant evidence, the mere graphic similarity of one element of two characters is insufficient grounds for the thorough identification of those characters.

⁶⁶ See Allan (1991): 77.

In fact, there is no consistent and solid evidence to support the absolute identification of *wu* with *fang*. Reviewing the nominal uses of *wu*, David Keightley found that, while in the inscriptions they act in a way consistent with *fang* spiritual powers,⁶⁷ and the *wu* surely were, as he puts it, like the *fang*, "directional powers," the degree of power that the *wu* and *fang* wielded differed: the *wu* were less powerful than the *fang*, and they became a concern only in the late Shang. In addition, only the northern and eastern *wu* were named in the inscriptions.⁶⁸

Still, the northern and eastern *wu* obviously controlled to some degree the same forces as did all of the elements of Di that we have reviewed herein, and particularly the wind. We read, for instance, of an offering of one dog to "northern *wu* to pacify the wind."⁶⁹ We also note that, again like other elements of Di, including *fang*, *wu* received a form of *di* sacrifice, though in some cases it was the "lesser *di*" (*xiaodi* 小帝), which apparently was, as its name suggests, a less replete form of the *di* sacrifice than that which other Di elements received.⁷⁰

However, this account of *wu* remains incomplete. First, in his review of *wu* Keightley did not cover the majority of the inscriptions that include the character.⁷¹ In these cases *wu* appears in the phrase *wu-di* and acts as not a noun but clearly a verb: a *wu* is divined to Di, as in the inscription

⁶⁷ A particularly clear example of the parallel functioning of the *fang* and *wu* can be seen in the following inscription (*HJ* 21075): "On *renwu* (day 19), crackmaking: [Perform] the *liao* to Tu and advance the *wu* to Di." 壬午卜燎土延巫帝. *Renwu bu liaotu yan wudi*.

⁶⁸ Keightley (2000): 72–4.

⁶⁹ *HJ* 34140.

⁷⁰ *HJ* 34155, 34157. For examples of *wu* receiving a regular *di* sacrifice (that is, unmodified as far as the inscription tells us) see *HJ* 5662, 32012; in the case of "northern *wu*," see Guo Ruoyu 郭若愚, *Yinqi shiduo erbian* 殷契拾掇二編 (Shanghai: Shanghai chuban gongsi, 1953): 91.

⁷¹ But see his note that several scholars, including Rao Zongyi, Li Xueqin, and himself read some instances of *wu* to denote *shi* 筮 "divining stalks" (Keightley [2000]: 73, n. 49). These usages do not bear on the majority of occurrences of *wu* that are presently under review.

Crack-making [on XX day]: Perform a *wu* to Di, offering one sheep and one dog.
卜巫帝一羊一犬. *Bu wudi yi yang yi quan*.⁷²

Thus, once again we encounter powers endemic to regions outside of the Shang central territories that (1) received the *di* sacrifice and (2) controlled winds, each from its own region. In addition, the corporate appellation by which the Shang identified these powers, *wu*, like *fang*, also denoted an apparently related ritual element of the *di* sacrifice offered to Di and whose purpose likely was to communicate with, make offerings to, and thereby influence the *wu* elements of Di. Considering that the *wu* character’s usage closely resembles that of *fang*, then we may extrapolate from the more replete record of the *fang* noun and verb. Thus we can surmise that the *wu* were part of Di and thus received cult in the *di* ritual in the expectation that they would control winds — and rain — on behalf of the human supplicants. The ritual *wu* was an aspect of the *di* ritual directed at Di, whose consular composition, as we have seen, *wu* helped to constitute.

That only the northern and eastern *wu* were, in known inscriptions, recorded as having received cult from the Shang might be merely a matter of inscriptions to the *wu* of the west and south not having been recovered yet from the earth. On the other hand, this phenomenon might indicate that the *wu* spirits sourced in people inhabiting *wu* regions that lay in buffer areas of the north and east, situated between the central Shang and the *fang* of those regions. Perhaps their northern/eastern buffer presence can account for the relative ferocity of the *fang* of different directions or outlying regions: we know that the most troublesome *fang* were in the west, southwest, and northwest; their *fang* spirits enjoyed a commensurate power such that they could cause significant trouble for the Shang and required their more careful attention. Perhaps the *wu*, less troublesome peoples inhabiting the less dangerous northern and eastern territories closest to areas under Shang control, also were outlying peoples whose *wu* spirits, forming part of Di, still had to be won over or sustained in their support of the Shang will.

There is yet another use and apparent meaning of 𠄎 in OBIs, and it is through this use

⁷² *HJ* 33291 (7). Alternately, we may understand this phrase to mean, much as in the case of *fangdi*, that “a *wu* type of *di* ritual is performed [to Di],” where the character *di* is verbal and the nominal Di is ellipted.

and meaning that likely the semantic connection with its later Chinese cognate character, *wu* 巫, came about. In Chinese script, *wu* came to refer by about the 6th-4th centuries BC to a sorceress or female magician, or perhaps something akin to a witch. Virtually every scholar who has expressed an opinion on the matter has opined that *wu* is the Chinese cognate for 𠄎. However, the semantic link between the two characters has never been justified adequately, and the process of attempting to do so has led to the misunderstanding of Shang religion to have been shamanic when in fact there is no evidence that a true shamanism was practiced at the Shang court. Tsung-tung Chang came very close to providing a comprehensive and accurate understanding of Sinitic 𠄎 when he recognized that all of the meanings of the character to denote (1) geographical areas, (2) the people inhabiting those areas, and (3) an individual at court hailing from these areas and their inhabitant peoples, likely derived singularly from the activities and thus renown of a very prominent person originating among these people of these regions. Unfortunately, influenced by tales of famous medicine men/magicians or shamans that date to the Warring States and Han periods (e.g. Wu Peng 巫彭; and Wu Xian 巫賢 and Wu Xian 巫咸, father and son), Chang unreflexively chose to imagine that the original singular person 𠄎 had been a famous shaman active at the Shang court.⁷³ In turn, the imposition of this cultural and linguistic interpretation from Chinese civilization of 1,000 years later than the OBIs were inscribed caused Chang to misread many OBIs involving the offering of a *wudi* sacrifice, as well as several other OBIs, to identify this person Wu 𠄎 who, Chang believed, in Periods Ib and IIa commonly consulted the oracle on behalf of the king.⁷⁴

There are two problems with Chang's reading of Sinitic 𠄎 in OBIs. First, he imposed on 𠄎 a much later Chinese understanding of the Chinese character 巫, which Chinese character

⁷³ On the perils of misplacing the tales of specifically the two Wu Xian, father and son, from their textual origins in the middle Zhou to the Shang periods, as well as the ambiguity of the meaning of the character *wu* in their names (it could represent a cognomen, an official title, a territorial name, or originally a distinct character at some point confused by a copyist with the character *wu*), see Gilles Boileau, "Wu and shaman," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 65:2 (2002): 357–8.

⁷⁴ Tsung-tung Chang, *Der Kult der Shang-Dynastie im Spiegel der Orakelinschriften: Eine paläographische Studie zur Religion im archaischen China* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970): 225f.

most commonly has been rendered into English as "shaman." We must bear in mind that enormous political, social, economic, cultural, and linguistic/graphic changes occurred between c. 1200 and 200 BC (as we shall see in Volume III of this work), and thus interpolating later Chinese cultural and linguistic traditions, such as those attached by c. 300–200 BC to the character *wu* 巫, into Shang practices constitutes a gravely mistaken approach that we must take every precaution to avoid. Without evidence specifically supporting a connection, we must remain wary of any attempt to assert explicit and direct linkages.

Second, in his consequent wish to see a shamanism in Shang religion, Chang imposed one, going so far as to misread common OBI syntax to support his interpolation of Zhou practices into Shang court ritual. Consequently, Chang's readings of OBIs involving the character 禘 are very unlikely, for Chang's imposed syntax is inconsistent with the syntax that we understand we should follow in reading most inquiries or charges found in the Shang inscriptions. Specifically, without any apparent precedent or peripheral support in similar charges, in inscriptions involving what we must understand to be a verbal 禘, which in accordance with virtually universal OBI syntax do not name an actor or subject of the 禘 action, Chang nonetheless imposed a subject of the divination/sacrifice, which was none other than 禘 itself, in the process leaving the charges very improbably verbless. An example is the inscription, transcribed into Chinese, "巫帝一犬" (*Wudi yi quan*). Chang changes the syntax to force *wu* to serve as not a verb but the subject of the sentence, translating the phrase into German, "Soll Wu dem Ti einen Hund opfern?" Translated into English, the German means, "Should Wu offer one dog to Di?"⁷⁵ The problem with Chang's reading is that the syntax that we know prevails in OBIs causes us to allow the verb *wu* to remain a verb and supply the ellipted subject, the king, whose certain role as subject most often remains implied in the inscriptions (only occasionally does the king appear explicitly as subject; otherwise a high-ranking spirit's name can appear as subject, but then it does so explicitly, of course, and in such cases a verb is always present). Moreover, as a result of Chang's forced nominal reading of *wu*, in his interpretation the charge becomes verbless, which is utterly unlikely. We thus read the phrase more accurately to mean, "Perform a *wu* to Di, [offering] one dog." In OBI syntax the only

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 225.

other subjects that appear with any frequency are the diviners themselves, who appear, moreover, as subjects of not the charges but the prefatory contextualizing statements to the charges, such as "On *gengxu* day, Bin divining...." Thus, in the cases of Chang's selected, interpreted, and translated inscriptions, the character *wu* should be read as either a type of sacrifice to be offered Di or the object of a *di* sacrifice, but certainly not the actor who performed the sacrifice. There is thus no evidence in OBIs to support a shamanic interpretation of 卩. ⁷⁶ Due to his insistence on a shamanic interpretation of the graph and its usage in OBIs, Chang did not recognize or account for the apparently most critical meaning of 卩, its identity as a spiritual entity that helped to form the godhead Di.

On the other hand, despite needing to reject both Chang's imposition of a late Zhou-period shamanic interpolation into the Shang state cult and his consequent misreading of OBI syntax, we can recognize that his idea that the name, 卩, of the regions and peoples of the Shang period

⁷⁶ In James C. H. Hsu's *The Written Word in Ancient China* (Xu Jinxiong and Jeannie Parker, eds. [HK: Tan Hock Seng, 1996, Vol. II, p. 892) or, equivalently, the earlier version of this book, *Ancient Chinese Society: An Epigraphic and Archaeological Investigation* (Xu Jinxiong and Alfred H. C. Ward, eds. [San Francisco: Yee Wen, 1984, p. 408–09]), we find, similar to Chang's approach, a tendentious imposition of shamanism into the 卩 graph. On pages 408–9 of *Ancient Chinese Society* (p. 892 of *The Written Word in Ancient China*) Hsu begins his section on "The Shaman," already tendentious in its title, by declaring that the Sinitic graph *wu* 卩 shows what "must have been part of the shaman's apparatus." Hsu's apparent support is in his interpretation of the two crossing "I" forms that constitute the *wu* graph to denote diviners' stalks. But there is no concrete evidence to support this interpretation, and apparently Hsu founds his interpretation simply on the fact that the two intersecting lines share an apparent similarity of shape with stalks. But this is insufficient evidence from which to suggest that the two intersecting "I" shapes of the character *wu* were diviners' stalks. Rather, the graphic evidence that I presented in Chapter 3 above regarding the vertical and horizontal "I" shapes suggests rather more strongly that those components connote the meaning of "center" and represent simplified forms of the square. Reading Hsu, one cannot help but gather that his thesis developed from an unarticulated major premise, which is that *wu* necessarily denoted a shaman. Thereafter he apparently interpreted evidence to support this.

Otherwise, Hsu and also Hayashi Minao each independently made the case that the "Northern Wu" and "Eastern Wu," as well as the "Nine Wu," referenced in OBIs represent the spirits of deceased shamans who, having earned spiritual *mana* through their lifelong communication with spirits, themselves have become spirits after death. This is purely conjectural and is not even suggested by any evidence. See Hayashi Minao, "Chûgoku kodai no shinfu," *Tôho gakuhô* 38 (March 1967): 210–219; Hsu (1984): 408–09; Hsu (1996): v. 2, 892.

derived from a famed native son active at the Shang court is a sound one. But it surely was not the shamanic individual that Chang imposed, nor, for that matter, any individual. Rather, the namesake of the regions / peoples known as 𠄎 seems to have been a type of individual that, from the perspective of the Shang court, was representative of the 𠄎 people and regions.

As we have seen in Volume I, Chapter 4 and we mentioned again briefly above, Victor Mair posited that 𠄎, for which he reconstructed the pronunciation **m^yag* by tracing it through Iranian and Indo-European phonetic developments, indicated Iranian magicians, *magi*, who, embodying the *magi* tradition that derived ultimately from Southwest and Central Asia, arrived at the Shang court to work as ritual specialists. Rao Zongyi's research on the similar swastika 卐 also supports the idea that the *design* of 𠄎 arrived from ultimate origins many thousands of years earlier in Asia Minor / the Near East. A careful review of all evidence that Professor Mair cited to support his hypothesis that 𠄎 referred to Iranian *magi* reveals that his thesis has merit. Furthermore, to understand 𠄎 to refer to *magi* in some OBI contexts does not undermine the other meanings of the character, reviewed above, to indicate all of a buffer people to the north and east of the Shang, an element of Di, and, intimately related to these meanings, a ritual performed as part of the *di* sacrifice to the 𠄎 element of Di. In fact, combined with my interpretation of 𠄎 as expressed above, Professor Mair's thesis enables us to postulate a more comprehensive understanding of the character that explains both all of its variable meanings and its development centuries later into the use and meaning of Chinese *wu*.

First, given the very active migratory movement west to east across Eurasia from the 4th millennium BC and on and the fact that various critical technologies from Western-Southwest and Central Asia entered the Yellow River valley during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC, there is ample and firm cause to allow the possibility that Indo-Iranian *magi* were present at the Shang court. More specific to this particular issue, to prove his point Professor Mair invoked the discovery at the later Shang capital Anyang of a bust carved in bone that depicts a human whose facial features appear clearly to be Caucasoid and that betrays an artistic technique that reappears in the Near East and Anatolia in the early 1st millennium BC. Furthermore, on the crown of the head of this figure can be observed the Sinitic graph of **m^yag*, or 𠄎. At face value, then, the bust appears to be a representation of an Indo-Iranian *magi*. One matter that might complicate this direct interpretation,

however, is the fact that, when turned 45°, the 𠄎 character reads as the Sinitic character for *gui*, the tenth Heavenly Stem. Still, the suggestive quality of a bust featuring an Indo-Iranian-appearing face and a Southwest Asian artistic technique (the latter apparent particularly in the rendering of the hair and beard of the figure) causes us to maintain the strong probability that the figure depicted on the bust represents an Indo-Iranian *magi*, and that thus the recovery of this bust in the late-Shang capital of Anyang points to the presence of *magi* at the court of the Shang.

Most persuasively supporting Professor Mair's case is the evidence that he cited from Hayashi Minao, who documented two OBIs in which 𠄎 acts undeniably as the subject of the verb meaning "to say," or *yue* 曰, resulting in "𠄎 *yue*..." or "The 𠄎 says..."⁷⁷ These OBIs tell us that the 𠄎 were in these two cases individual actors who, like the Shang king, commanded the consultation of or interpreted the oracle. Reviewing the two instances of this usage that Hayashi discovered confirms that they do unmistakably install 𠄎 as the subject of the verb *yue*.⁷⁸ In one case the script indeed is written to say specifically "𠄎 *yue*," or "𠄎 says."⁷⁹ In the second case the character 𠄎 occurs at the edge of a bone fragment and thus is missing its upper portion, but indeed the graph is 𠄎.⁸⁰ While otherwise, in hundreds of other "x *yue*" phrases, it is only the king who serves as the subject of *yue*, the appearance of these two OBIs in which 𠄎 serves as the singular actor in the process of consulting or interpreting the oracle substantiates that someone known as 𠄎 acted oracularly or ritually at the Shang court.⁸¹

Then, considering this meaning of 𠄎 in concert with the meanings of the character that prevail in the vast majority of OBIs in which the character appears, can a both comprehensive and reasonable explanation of the character's use in OBIs be offered? We may postulate the following: the 𠄎 were groups to the north and east of the Shang who were of Indo-Iranian Caucasoid or

⁷⁷ Mair (1990): 35–6, note 17.

⁷⁸ Hayashi (1967): 211.

⁷⁹ *HJ* 5648.

⁸⁰ *HJ* 5649.

⁸¹ See *LZ* 243–45.

mixed Indo-Iranian and indigenous Siberian/Manchurian Mongoloid descent. Being locally relatively powerful groups, the elite ancestors of the 𠄎 helped to comprise Di, and, with this status, these Di ancestors received *di* sacrifice that was known as the 𠄎 form of *di*. But not as powerful as other regional tribes, the *di* that the 𠄎 ancestors of Di received was less elaborate or extensive than the *di* sacrifices that the ancestors of the more powerful tribes of the *fang* received. Such sacrifices to the 𠄎 ancestors of Di thus were identified as "lesser *di*." Given their at least partial genetic, linguistic, and cultural origins in the Indo-Iranian complex, present in the population of the 𠄎 tribes or groups were ritual experts whose religio-political ritual usefulness as **m^yag* 𠄎 came to identify the tribes or groups from which they emerged. The usefulness of the **m^yag* 𠄎 resulted in their being employed at the Shang court as ritual/oracular experts, and from this contact their tribes/groups of origins derived their moniker **m^yag* 𠄎. This is, of course, only a theory, but all of (1) the known linguistic evidence from the OBIs, as well as (2) known west-to-east migrations across Eurasia from no later than the 4th millennium BC, (3) the appearance of the Caucasoid bust uncovered from the late-Shang capital on which the character 𠄎 appears, and (4) the fact that the north/northeast served during the Shang as the most significant directional conduit through which external influence entered the Shang world, support this interpretation strongly. It may even be that it was such Iranian or Iranian-derived *wu* peoples who first brought the idea for and practice of writing to the Shang court.

As best as we can reconstruct at present, then 𠄎 represented during the Shang all of ritual experts serving at least occasionally at the Shang court, tribes or kin-based socio-political groups to the north and east, those tribes'/groups' high ancestors present in Di, and a sacrifice performed to propitiate the **m^yag* 𠄎 portion of Di. There is no evidence that at court the **m^yag* 𠄎 served as shamans, which requires certain evidence of spiritual journeys or personal embodiment of spiritual beings, but rather simply as oracular or ritual experts. The difference is significant. However, likely it was the intellectual or social descendents of such **m^yag* 𠄎, the *wu* 巫 of the middle- and late-Zhou periods, who perhaps took on what appear to be at least partially shamanic practices that they absorbed through centuries of exposure to sundry non-court religious beliefs and practices. Probably it was the generally common religious ritual orientation of the **m^yag* 𠄎 and *wu* 巫 that, despite their enormous differences in specialization and locus of activity (i.e., court

versus non-court), caused the term and graph *wu* 巫 to be applied to latter-day magician-shamans / shamanesses.

My synthesizing thesis regarding the seemingly disparate meanings of Sinitic 巫 finds support in the earlier work of both Xu Zhongshu and, especially, Chen Mengjia. In fact, Xu's and Chen's readings of 巫 are entirely commensurate with my own hypothesis regarding the character's meaning, although I am willing to go further than they were to accommodate Victor Mair's thesis that the 巫, or **m'ag*, were *magi* serving at the Shang court. I also endeavor to explain *why* all of the meanings of 巫 coexisted and *how* they interrelated and originated in a single referent.

For Sinitic *wu* Xu listed eight inscriptions under his simple descriptive, "The name of a spirit" (or spirits), and he offered no narrative to explain this understanding.⁸² Chen offered a more careful review, one in which he proffered that *wu* could mean any of the following: (1) as a direct object it denotes a spirit, and as an indirect object it identifies a place name or the name of a "kingdom" (*guo*); (2) as a verb in the phrase *wudi* it is akin to the meaning of *fang* in *fangdi*; (3) otherwise *wu* could refer to "a type of human."⁸³ Chen's readings thus support strongly and specifically every one of my own readings of *wu*, even though I am willing to interpret beyond where Chen stopped to tie in all of the meanings of the graph with parallel syntax and lexicon that occur in inscriptions involving *fang* and *tu*. In this way I attempt to explain etymologically *why* and *how* the graph was applied to many apparently, but not truly, disparate referents in contexts ranging across the spiritual, physical, ritualistic, geographical, demographic, and human realms.

⁸² Xu Zhongshu (1998): 496. As we saw above, Hayashi and James Hsu also recognized that *wu* at times denoted a spiritual being, but unfortunately they both tied this meaning to the presence of shamanism and shamans.

⁸³ Chen (1956): 577–79.

Tufang 𠩺 𠩺 and Tu 𠩺

The Tu spirits, like the *fang* and *wu*, appear also to have helped to constitute Di. As we have seen, the Tu spirits could affect weather and other influences on the Shang, powers thought to be reserved by or restricted to Di. Furthermore, we have witnessed how *liao*-ing to Tu paralleled as a part of the *di* sacrifice the *fang*-ing to Di. In this way, too, then, Tu was associated with Di.⁸⁴ Further like the *fang* and, partially, the *wu*, the Shang also divined to the Tu of the specific directions of north, south, east, and west.⁸⁵ And again like the *fang* and *wu*, the Tu also were geographic regions (Tufang) and the peoples inhabiting them,⁸⁶ evident in the fact that the Shang divined both regarding the harvests of the Tufang and their own execution of punitive campaigns against them.⁸⁷ The Tufang thus were a closer concern than the *fang*, the latter of whose harvests the Shang did not divine.⁸⁸ Though the Tufang were not in fact part of the Shang, at least, we may reason, the Shang's interest both in pacifying them and the quality / quantity of their harvests indicates that the Tu traded with the Shang. Still, the Tu spirits were not easily bribed: in some instances the Shang had to offer significant animal sacrifices to the Tu in their attempt to assure that the Tu assisted the Shang.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ It should be noted, however, that *fang*-ing to Di did not always accompany *liao*-ing to Tu. Thus it seems that *liao* was a ritual of sacrificial burning, as the character's graphemic qualities suggest, that in some cases accompanied the *di* sacrifice, just as other ritual elements could otherwise accompany the *di* sacrifice without having necessarily been a permanent part of that larger undertaking. See the many examples of *liao*-ing to Tu in LZ 463–4.

⁸⁵ LZ 462.

⁸⁶ For the tens of inscriptions regarding the Tufang, see LZ 460–462.

⁸⁷ LZ 461.

⁸⁸ Keightley (2000): 61–2.

⁸⁹ For instance, see HJ 779A, 780. See also LZ 463–4.

Fang, Wu, Tu, and the Other Elements of Di

Fang 方, indicating to modern readers of Chinese most accessibly a "side" or "direction," as we have seen possessed several related meanings during the Yin period of Shang. The character's graphic form appears to describe a direction or side splitting off from a center. *Fang* might have represented a confluence of two rivers: perhaps it is a map of the Luo River (Yi-Luo 伊洛) approaching what is thought to have been the early dynastic center of the Shang, the city of Zhengzhou, from the southwest, joining the east-flowing Yellow (Huang 黃) just west of the city.

Before Wang Aihe, Sarah Allan like her treated *fang* as though it were most elementally a spiritual concept.⁹⁰ This is difficult to sustain, and we must seek a better understanding of *fang*'s root meaning. While from the foregoing discussion we know that, obviously, on one level *fang* denoted the four abstract cardinal directions and the spirits that, originating in those directions, controlled the winds to blow from those realms, however, most fundamentally the character denoted earthly geographic regions out from the center on each side, or *fang*, of the Shang polity. These four (or eight) *fang*, or directions (north, south, east, and west), were inhabited by relatively unpredictable peoples who often battled the Shang. Within or beyond these regional *fang* were individual *fang* of specific names, such as Tufang 土方, Gongfang 工方, Guifang 鬼方, Renfang 人方, and so on. The *fang* normally were beyond the limits of Shang influence and thus usually were hostile to the Shang.⁹¹ Zhu Qixiang counts forty-two such *fang* during the period of Wuding's reign alone (to ca. 1189 BC), the majority having been in the west, from southwest to northwest.⁹² That most were in the west offers support for my riverine geographical reading of the

⁹⁰ Allan (1991: 75–86) suggested that whereas the Tu were physical geographic regions, the *fang* (with which she equated *wu*) were primarily abstract spiritual realms of the sky. As we have seen, evidence clearly demonstrates that both *tu* and *fang* (and, independently, *wu*) were treated as both physical and spiritual realms and that they were thus parallelistically existing and functioning elements of the greater Shang world.

⁹¹ See, for instance, a string of divinatory charges querying the wisdom of "chastising the *fang*," at *HJ* 6729–6739. That the *fang* were real physical threats that required the Shang's constant embattled attention is far beyond doubt.

⁹² Zhu Qixiang (1989): 422–423 (#1597). But note also Wang Aihe's collection of enumerations of the total

Sinitic character, which purports that the character was a map showing the general location of the *fang* areas out (perhaps originally and most importantly west) from the center. Here we may note that a similar understanding of the Sinitic character *wu* 卍 is possible. The use in the character of two 卍 forms meaning "center" — specifically, the religious center that was the altar — placed perpendicularly might have been employed as a means of indicating what was out from that center, i.e., *wu*, as suggested by the four-square short lines at the perimeter of the character.

But returning to the problems in the *fang*, the Tu/Tufang presented a similar, though less precarious, threat, while at the same time, like the *fang*, they represented a potential boon — that is, if only they and their resources could be contained or controlled, then the Shang would benefit. The Yin interest in Di/*di* and the trouble in the *fang* and *tu* (and, perhaps, the *wu*, though no record exists of the Shang having divined regarding carrying out campaigns of chastisement against the *wu*) surely were related. The combined use of *fang/wu/tu* and *di*, employed to mean several things, derived from the existence of these people of the various *fang/wu/tu*, that is, competitive outsiders.

The most immediate concern of an earthly polity is, of course, maintaining that polity, and in the case of the Shang the most serious threat to that polity came from the hostile *fang*. This earthly meaning of *fang* cannot be treated as a secondary meaning of the term. These *fang* were real and imposing, and the fear of the *fang* would have caused the Shang to hope, by any means possible, to defeat them and their will to resist or trouble the Shang. One means would have been military, another political, and yet another spiritual. I propose that, just as much of the Shang central ancestral deities derived originally from deceased humans having passed from the earthly, physical realm, so did the spiritual *fang* derive from the earthly *fang*. More specifically, the *fang* spirits that controlled wind from the *fang* were ancestors or other spirits of the largely hostile and dangerous *fang* peoples of the *fang* regions. These *fang* helped to constitute the overarching authority of the known world, Di, and therefore had to be propitiated to enlist their assistance of the Shang. It is due to this inclusion of outside ancestors in the ranks of Di that this high spiritual power could and did often work against and even bring disaster to Shang royal interests. The ancestors of the *tu* and *wu* likewise participated in the structure of Di, were a part of that

number of *fang* named in the Shang inscriptions, from forty-seven proposed by Chen Mengjia to eighty-six counted by Zhong Bosheng. See Wang (2000): 26.

decision-making jury, and thus also had to be propitiated to ensure that they adjudged matters in favor of the Shang.

But how specifically did this inclusion of the most significant and threatening element of these "outside powers", i.e., *fang* et al., in Di function? And how did *fang* then come to mean also "square"? After all, as one sees immediately when viewing the character, *fang* does not resemble a square. Di we have already identified pictorially with the patterns of stars lying in the northern celestial pole of c. 1200 BC. The centerpiece of this identification is, we have seen, how the square or rectangle occurs in both the Sinitic character *di* and the celestial pole. Now we can begin to see why: it seems that the four *fang* regions in which the *fang* peoples lived were defined by the four sides of the rectangle / square that forms the central axis of Di. Each side of the central square of Di defines and portrays the participation of the powers of the four directions by graphically depicting their exclusion from the central square. *Fang* then came to be defined by what they were not and what identified what they were not, i.e., the square. *Wu*, similarly defining graphemically a square and accentuating its borders, also depicts what is outside the square.

Then by observing Di we can witness all three essential meanings of *fang* (and, by parallel, the other directional powers, *tu* and *wu*), deriving ultimately from (1) earthly *fang*, *wu*, and *tu*, or regions outlying the center; this meaning is even portrayed in the graph for *fang* (and *wu* and *tu*), as I have suggested above; (2) ancestral spirits of *fang* (and *wu* and *tu*), also called *fang* (*wu*, *tu*), who oversaw the operation of winds that blew into the center from the *fang* (and *wu* and *tu*), where the *fang* (*wu*, *tu*) people resided; and, finally, (3) the square in the polar center of the heavens whose four sides or *fang* (and *wu*, and also seemingly *tu*) defined what lay outside the center, i.e., the four regional *fang* (*wu*, *tu*) spiritual bailiwicks that corresponded to the four *fang* (*wu*, *tu*) here on earth; the center of course was what lay within the four *fang* (*wu*, *tu*), the square. Thus can be explained how an un-square character, *fang*, came to mean "square" — by defining the exclusion of the four *fang* from the central square that they bordered on each side.

While we cannot be certain of the *specific* way in which the *wu* and *tu* fit into this pattern, as my parenthetical additions in the paragraph above make clear, like the *fang* the spiritual representatives of the *wu* (and likely *tu* as well) people/regions participated in Di and thus, again like the *fang*, required consultation and ritual softening to cause Di as a whole to acquiesce to

Shang intents and needs. Both characters *fang* and *wu* (and *tu*) therefore appear to describe graphically the regions that they geographically both did and did not represent.

It seems that only the most revered and powerful of Shang ancestral spirits occurred within the absolute center of Di, its locus of greatest power, the quadrilateral. All others, including spirits of lesser ancestors, most other former human heroes, representatives of the four *fang* (and *tu* and *wu*), and most nature spirits appear to have occurred outside the square. That is, they helped define the other forms and powers that constituted the character and force of Di, from the diagonal cross-lines to the superior horizontal line to the central vertical axial line. Di was, therefore, a consular and universal constitution that included and represented the higher powers in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, in short, the heavenly host paralleled the earthly environs. Like a mirror reflecting the concerns of the earth's inhabitants, the heavens merely represented a higher-level, more-final court of judgment over the issues that carried on below between the scions of the earthly realms of the Shang center (including "Former Lords") and the *fang* (and *tu* and *wu*) outlying peoples / regions and most other natural spirits (many of the latter in fact were often treated as Shang ancestors). Only in this way was Di a power that could represent not only the Shang but also other peoples on earth who could oppose the Shang and on whose own behalf Di could and did work against the Shang: it is well known that Di could benefit other peoples at the expense of the Shang, and it is this that caused David Keightley years ago to object to the notion that Di consisted only of Shang ancestors. He reasoned very sensibly (even though it turns out that inscriptional evidence contradicts him) that Shang ancestors were unlikely to cause disasters to visit their own descendants.⁹³ In fact, the Shang king *did* divine to learn whether or not a specific kingly ancestor was "cursing" him and thus causing trouble and/or harm for him and the Shang.⁹⁴

⁹³ Keightley (1975) 44–45. See also Keightley (1998) 252–3. In his most recent book (2000) Keightley does not offer a dedicated discussion of Di.

⁹⁴ Sometimes high main-lineage ancestors were thought to be cursing the king. See Itô Michiharu and Takashima Ken-ichi, with Gary F. Arbuckle, *Studies in Early Chinese Civilization: Religion, Society, Language, and Palaeography* (Osaka: Kansai Gaidai University/Satsuki Printing Co. 1996), V. 1: 25–26.

But if we accept that other spirits or powers beyond the Shang ancestral corpus participated in the generic high power Di, then Keightley's objection no longer remains valid, since we can understand most workings against the Shang by Di to have originated in non-Shang ancestral or other elements within that greater heavenly host. Furthermore, the *di* sacrifice to the various spiritual sub-elements of Di, in all of its sub-ritual elements (see above), can be understood as having been a means to influence certain elements of Di whose power waxed in certain moments, or whose assistance was needed at some certain time, all as part of a larger endeavor to employ resources most efficiently for the most benefit to the Shang by bringing the superstructure of the universal Di power in line with its wishes. As a result, of course we do not find large sacrifices to "Di" in its totality, since that would have been a waste of precious resources at the same time that it would have done no more — and probably far less — good than a carefully aimed shot of valuables at the momentarily ascendant or targeted power within that immense structure.

Chapter 5: In and Outside the Square: The Greater Power of the Center

The Form 口 and the Ten Heavenly Stems

Oracle-bone scribes employed the square / rectangle form to represent several meanings. The usage that the modern reader of the script most commonly encounters is the square in its use as the fourth symbol in the first of two sets of “numbers,” or the later-named “Heavenly Stems” (*tiangan* 天干) set, that comprise the Shang’s dual-set sexagenary ritual-calendrical numbering system.¹ As the fourth member of this set of Heavenly Stems, 口, or very often its equivalent form 𠄎,² was employed, along with the other nine of the stems, in posthumous temple (and later ritual) names of dynastic kings, predynastic clan leaders, and other high-ranking ancestors (see **Table 1** below for a list of Shang kings that shows their succession order and temple names). For instance, in the case of 口, the posthumous temple / ritual name of the twenty-first Shang king is Wu-口, i.e., “Wuding.” In these usages the form of specifically 口 has been identified securely with what later, in Chinese, became the fourth Heavenly Stem, *ding* 丁. We do not know specifically why the archaic stems were thus employed in temple names, but they seem to have been chosen to represent and align political power structures within the Shang royal Zi clan (see below, this chapter). Only late in the dynasty, from Period II (1188–1158 BC) and on, were rituals increasingly organized around the stem names of ancestors such that by Periods IV and V (c. 1131–1045 BC) an ancestor normally received cult on his or her stem day. Originally, then, non-ritual reasons seem to have determined the stem elements of what came to be ancestral temple

¹ The ten *tiangan*, or “heavenly stems,” include, in order, *jia* 甲, *yi* 乙, *bing* 丙, *ding* 丁, *wu* 戊, *ji* 己, *geng* 庚, *xin* 辛, *ren* 壬, and *gui* 癸. The second set, the twelve “earthly branches,” or *dizhi* 地支, include, again in order, *zi* 子, *chou* 丑, *yin* 寅, *mao* 卯, *chen* 辰, *si* 巳, *wu* 午, *wei* 未, *shen* 申, *you* 酉, *xu* 戌, and *hai* 亥. Combined, in order, in binomial form, drawing one item from each set, these two sets produce the temple-calendrical names for the sixty days in a Shang ritual cycle, which is the cycle by which the Shang court counted its six sets of ten days. The sexagenary system is still in use today for calendrical and formal numbering purposes, though the *xiaozhuan* and later Chinese standard forms of the characters and their pronunciations date only from the early imperial period.

² See Gao Ming 高明, *Gu wenzi leibian* 古文字類編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980): 1.

names, and the highlighting of the meaning of "ritual day" of each stem was a late development (although as calendrical symbols the stems obviously very early denoted each a day in the ten-day week, and on these days rituals of course were performed). Consequently, from the calendrical and ancestral ritual usages alone, whereby 𠄎 is understood as Chinese *ding* 丁, we cannot know what the form of 𠄎 originally might have meant.

Xu Zhongshu has suggested that, in its calendrical usage as *ding*, and, thus, derivatively, also in its use in ancestors' temple names, the character 𠄎 and, by extension, likely all of the characters for the twenty-two stems and branches, were borrowed each for its phonetic similarity to the oral and unwritten word already employed to denote the given stem or branch.³ In this the stems resemble to some degree what have become the purely symbolic alphanumeric characters (phonetic alphabets and numbering systems) in Semitic and Indo-European languages that, while having lost for almost all literate people their original, ancient meanings, indeed in those earliest forms and meanings were, like early Sinitic and Chinese characters, pregnant with first pictographic, then ideographic, and finally zodiographic meaning. That is, in their earliest forms, ancient written characters across the world mimicked meaningful and immediate phenomena occurring physically in the external environment. When such a graph began to be borrowed to express in written form homophones of the original oral and then graphically expressed word, then that graph was abstracted from its original, physical, source referent and thus became purely a symbol in its new role as a written expression of only a sound.

Some scholars have in fact proposed precisely such phonetic and graphic correspondences between Southwest Asian uniliteral consonantaries and the Chinese stems and branches, suggesting that the stems and branches derived from the originally phenomenally representative Southwest Asian graphs that, as they evolved into consonantal symbols in the middle to late 2nd millennium BC, had become purely phonetic symbols. In 1975 Edwin Pulleyblank wrote but did not publish a paper that attempted to establish a correlation between the Phoenician consonantary and the Sinitic stems and branches, or what he considered to be something akin to consonantary

³ Xu Zhongshu (1998): 1549.

letters.⁴ Though in 1979 he retracted his argument in consideration of difficulties of chronology and transmission across Eurasia, in several papers delivered at diverse conferences during the 1980s and then in a paper published in 1991 Professor Pulleyblank revisited the matter of the stems and branches, now postulating that these served as initial consonantal markers of Sinitic and that the stems derived their calendrical usage from their consonantal similarity with, and thus served as an alternative numeric set for, the standard Sinitic numeric symbols denoting one through ten. As Professor Pulleyblank explained, the stems and branches "originated as phonograms naming acrophonically the consonants of the Chinese language at the time of their invention." He also postulated that, "the [ten stem] signs were chosen, as far as possible, from signs with the same initial consonants as the numerals from one to ten, while the remaining twelve [branch] signs were treated as a supplementary series of twelve."⁵

In a paper delivered in 1990 and published in 1992, Victor Mair postulated a direct correspondence both graphically and phonetically between the twenty-two stems and branches and the twenty-two symbols of the uniliteral Phoenician phonetic consonantary, offering that the Phoenician system that was plausibly transmitted to Shang China thus stimulated writing in a consonantary form, a form that either preceded, developed along with, or followed the larger system of zodiographic characters.⁶

⁴ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese Cyclical Signs and the Origins of the Alphabet," presented to the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society on 23 March 1975; a revised version of this paper was subsequently published as "The Chinese Cyclical Signs as Phonograms," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99 (Jan.-Mar., 1979): 24–38. The main points of Professor Pulleyblank's 1975 paper were described by Victor Mair in the latter's "West Eurasian and North African Influences on the Origins of Chinese Writing," in B. H. K. Luk et al., eds., *Contacts between Cultures. Eastern Asia: Literature and Humanities*, vol. 3 of *Selected Papers from the 33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies, Toronto 1990* (Lewiston, Queenston & Lampeter: Edwin Mellin Press, 1992): 335–6.

⁵ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The ganzhi as phonograms and their application to the calendar," *Early China* 16 (1991): 76. For the titles, dates, and brief descriptions of Professor Pulleyblank's various papers written and delivered between 1975 and 1991 see *ibid.*: 39, n. *.

⁶ Mair (1992): 335–338. Professor Mair delivered his paper publicly in Toronto in 1990; the paper was published in print in 1992.

Other attempts to locate the stems and branches in an origin in symbolism of Southwest Asia include Guo Moruo's postulation that they follow the sequences of the Babylonian zodiacal symbolism.⁷ Guo's projections are unlikely, since the twelve Babylonian zodiacal symbols had not at the time of the Shang yet been specifically reduced from the greater number of calendrical asterisms, the Thirty-six Stars, because the zodiacal belt at that time had not yet been determined to identify a particular ecliptic significance, and the oblique nature of the sun's ecliptic had not yet been realized. It is doubtful that, while in the much more advanced Babylonian astronomical understanding the zodiacal belt had not yet been singled out for particular significance, the Shang astronomers would have alighted already on this band's singular importance. However, while we need not agree with Guo's specific projections, his account of the stems and branches, dating to the 1920s, was the first of which I am aware that attempted to locate their origins astronomically.

A fresh and brilliantly conceived attempt to locate the Stems and Branches astronomically reached me just as this manuscript was undergoing final preparation for publication. Jonathan Smith has projected the branches as lunar phases and the stems as zodiacal signs. Smith found his stimulus in a paper delivered by David Pankenier at a conference at Columbia University in early February 2009 in which Pankenier apparently projected the square *ding* stem onto the zodiacal belt as the square of Pegasus and correlated that square with the Shang god Di. Pankenier's idea to project *ding* astronomically could only have originated in these very chapters, in their 2003–4 incarnation. However, projecting *ding* onto the zodiacal belt suffers from many weaknesses, including most superficially that, as we mentioned in the case of Guo's zodiacal projections of stems and branches, the zodiacal belt had not during the Shang or early Zhou yet been singled out for particular significance even in the far more advanced Babylonian astronomical sciences, so that ascribing to the Shang an even more advanced observation of the critical calendrical nature of the zodiacal belt is an unlikely proposition. Jonathan Smith's projection of the complete set of Heavenly Stems onto the zodiacal belt, based on Pankenier's projection of the stem *ding*, thus also is unlikely, though his believable and brilliantly creative projection of the twelve Earthly Branches

⁷ Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "Shi zhigan" 釋干支, in *Jiagu wenzi yanjiu* 甲古文字研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo kexueyuan chubanshe, 1976).

to be symbols, some graphic to varying degrees and others more abstracted, of lunar phases is fascinating, well reasoned and researched, and well worthy of further pursuit. My only reservation over Smith's lunar projections of the branches is that the branches as calendrical signs employed by the Shang court were not coordinated at all with lunar phases or lunar months. The branches, along with the stems, rather were deployed to count days in the ten-day *xun*, or week, six of which weeks constituted the basic sixty-day Shang calendrical counting cycle that proceeded independently of either the solar or lunar cycles. On the other hand, Smith explicitly proposed that his lunar phase projection of the branches was intended to identify the original meanings of the branches, that is, their phenomenal referents that preceded their proposed later calendrical use. In this approach Smith agrees with my own assessment, outlined both above and immediately below, that the original referents of the stems and branches likely were external phenomena and, specifically, astronomical in their nature.⁸ Still the question remains, however, why, if the branches were originally depictions or descriptions / symbols of *calendrically significant* lunar phases, they so quickly became divorced from true lunar / solar calendrical reckoning.

Common to Xu Zhongshu's, Edwin Pulleyblank's, Victor Mair's, Guo Moruo's, Jonathan Smith's, and my own approaches to understanding the stems and branches is an underlying assumption that a system of representation of a calendar is an abstract construct that cannot be reproduced directly in graphic form without the use of symbols. Then originally the very basic forms of the Heavenly Stems (and Earthly Branches), like their Southwest Asian consonantal counterparts (and possible models), surely served other, more germane, purposes in expressing fundamental meanings that were perceived in, absorbed from, and recreated into the external

⁸ Jonathan Smith (University of Pennsylvania), "The Dì Zhī 地支 as Lunar Phases and their Coordination with the Tiān Gàn 天干 Ecliptic Asterisms in a China Before Anyang" (prepublication paper sent to me by the author on April 16, 2009, just as revisions to the three volumes of this manuscript were being completed). Mr. Smith kindly approved of my referencing of his paper here. With David Pankenier's permission, in his paper Mr. Smith references and describes some points of Professor Pankenier's February 2009 paper, "'Heavenly pattern reading' 天干 and the origins of writing in China," which was presented at the Columbia Early China Seminar on Writing and Literacy in Early China, February 7–8, 2009; to be published in Li Feng and David Branner, eds., *Writing and Literacy in Early China* (Seattle: Washington, forthcoming [2010?]). I have not seen Professor Pankenier's paper but only Mr. Smith's references to and quotations from it; nor was I in attendance at the Columbia conference.

environment (the latter as written graphs). In the case of the graph 𠄎, which defines among the most germane and meaningful designs that humans can absorb as stimulus from and recreate as expression in their socio-biological environment, its uses as a calendrical symbol and temple-name designation must be understood to be secondary or tertiary. That is, the fundamental symbol 𠄎, whatever phenomenon from the external environment it originally recreated graphically, must have been borrowed, as Xu suggested, for its oral expression's phonetic similarity to the phonetic expression of what was already the oral — but not written — name for the fourth of the ten Heavenly Stems, or what in Chinese came to be called "*ding*." Then 𠄎 can be understood always to represent the sound that in modern Mandarin Chinese has come to be pronounced as "*ding*" but whose meanings can vary widely with context as both a free-standing character and as a building block — or radical — of other characters.

Thus, in order to understand the base meaning(s) of 𠄎, we must investigate closely its usages in both Sinitic lexicon and syntax to tease out shadows of meaning. As we ought to expect of so fundamental a character developed in so religiously oriented a society as the court of the Zi royal clan, the 𠄎 that became particularized as the Heavenly Stem calendrical and derivative temple / ritual *ding* originally was at once both much more broad and also quintessential in its religious meaning. As we shall see, the character originally mimicked in graphic form the pinnacle of high religious power in this society, the phenomenon of the square that rotated in the center of the asterism for Di at or near the Neolithic-Bronze NCP, and, later but still prior to or outside of the phonetic loaning that applied its graph to the fourth Heavenly Stem, on the basis of that fundamental reference to the high religious power located at the pinnacle of the night sky, derivatively came to denote the power of ritual space and, thus, also ritual. I will demonstrate that these three meanings, highest religious power, ritual space, and ritual, constitute the core significance of the form 𠄎 in the Shang world. In addition, I will show how it is likely that the Sinitic graphs of two other stems, *jia* 𠄎 (Chinese 甲) and *yi* 𠄎 (Chinese 乙), likewise also derived their appearance from the patterns of stars at and surrounding the ancient NCP centered on Thuban.

Table 1. Temple Names of Shang Royal Ancestors and Kings

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order, Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
	上甲	A1 (Pre-dynastic Ancestor 1), Shangjia ⁹
	報乙	A2, Baoyi
	報丙	A3, Baobing
	報丁	A4, Baoding
	示壬	A5, Shiren
	示癸	A6, Shigui
	大乙	K1, Dayi (Cheng 成, Tang 唐, Tang 湯)
	大丁	K2, Dading
	大甲	K3, Dajia

⁹ Sources: *LZ*, vol. 3: 1474; Keightley (1999b): 234-235. Romanized names in boldface indicate that the king was a member of the main lineage (*dazong* 大宗).

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order, Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
𠄎	卜丙	K4, Bubing/Waibing (外丙)
𠄎	大庚	K5, Dageng
𠄎	小甲	K6, Xiaojia
𠄎	大戊	K7, Dawu
𠄎	呂己	K8, Lüji
𠄎	中丁	K9, Zhongding
𠄎	卜壬	K10, Buren
𠄎	𡗗甲	K11, Jianjia
𠄎	祖乙	K12, Zuyi (Zhongzong 仲宗)
𠄎	祖辛	K13, Zuxin

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order, Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
十 𠄎	羌甲	K14, Qiangjia
口 𠄎	祖丁	K15, Zuding
𠄎 𠄎	南庚	K16, Nan'geng
十 𠄎	𩺰可甲	K17, Xiangjia
	(alternate characters in Chinese for xiang: 𩺰, 𩺰, 𩺰)	
𠄎 𠄎	般庚	K18, Pan'geng
𠄎 𠄎	小辛	K19, Xiaoxin
𠄎 𠄎	小乙	K20, Xiaoyi
𠄎 𠄎	武丁	K21/Wuding
𠄎 𠄎	祖庚	K22, Zugeng

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order, Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
十 𠄎	祖甲	K23, Zujia
	廩辛	K24, Linxin
𠄎 𠄎	康丁	K25, Kangding
𠄎 𠄎	武乙	K26, Wuyi
𠄎 𠄎	文武丁	K27, Wenwuding
	帝乙	K28, Diyi
	帝辛	K29, Dixin

Theories of the Meanings of the Graph 口

From the 1930s through the 1960s prominent Chinese scholars of oracle bones, such as Jin Zutong 金祖同, Yang Shuda 楊樹達, Wu Qichang 吳其昌, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, Chen Bangfu 陳邦福, Chen Zhi 陳直, Wang Guowei 王國維, Ye Yusen 葉玉森, Fu Sinian 傅斯年, and Tang Lan 唐蘭, realized that the 口 design that scriptologists erstwhile had conceived of as simply the calendrical stem and temple name *ding* was in fact something much more complex. Early on several of these scholars proffered that, aside from the Heavenly Stem *ding*, the form 口 was also related to the box surrounding the cross in the character for the name of the high ancestor (that is, the first of the pre-dynastic lineage ancestors of Shang kings to receive cult, or Ancestor 1 [A1]), 𠄎, whose name they knew from later records to be Shangjia 上甲, meaning "High Jia." The cross 十 of Shangjia's inscriptional name they already knew to represent the second syllable of the name, *jia*, in that it is the first of the Heavenly Stem numerical calendrical symbols. Therefore, these scholars also knew, the 口 form of Shangjia's name here had to constitute the *shang* 上 of Zhou and later Chinese, which means "high" or "above."¹⁰

Some, such as Ye and Wu, hoped to relate this meaning of "above" with the shape or form of the Sinitic character *ding* in its various simplified or smudged appearances in mostly Shang and Zhou bronze inscriptions, which they commonly believed represented the shape of a nail (please see several of these forms above in Chapter 3). They worked from the facts that the phonetically and graphemically Chinese *ding* 丁-derived Chinese characters *ding* 釘 and *ding* 頂 mean "nail" and "top," respectively.¹¹ While the meaning of "nail" likely derived from the later, Zhou, graph for *ding*, that is, 丁 (or this character later took on the meaning of "nail" because it looked like a nail), Ye and Wu probably were correct that the base meaning of Sinitic *ding*, that is, 口, was — or was derived from the position of something that was — "above" or "top." This will become apparent below.

Others, including Chen Bangfu and Chen Zhi, reasoned in a related way that since 口


¹⁰ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 178–180.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 179–80.

possessed the meaning of *shang*, "above," and because Shangjia was what was above and most exalted, then the 𠄎 form must represent directly, that is, pictorially, what otherwise was above and exalted, and also the seat of Shangjia, which was heaven (*tian*). Chen Zhi also considered that 𠄎 was a ritual offered to heaven.¹² While to direct their attention toward the heavens, that is, the sky, probably was correct, at the same time, as we know, the graph *tian*, which in the later, Zhou, period referred to "heaven," in the Shang did not. Thus the 𠄎 form, while truly denoting something that was "above" and also a ritual, could not have referred during the Shang to specifically *tian*.

In regarding 𠄎 as both a noun and a verb, Chen Zhi's views shared a certain similarity with those of Yang Shuda, Jin Zutong, Chen Mengjia, and others, but the latter, Chen Mengjia, saw in 𠄎 additionally both the nominal meaning of altar or temple to an ancestor and the verbal meaning of *beng* 禘, which was a later (Zhou) ritual offered to ancestors. Chen's thesis derived largely from Yang's earlier recognition that the 𠄎 form is four-sided, i.e., it is a square, and the character for the *beng* ritual, 禘, includes the phonetic element derived directly from the character for *fang* 方, or square, which we have seen above also means, and meant in the Shang as well, "direction." In a related way and also on the basis of shared square shapes in religiously pregnant characters, Wang Guowei offered that 𠄎 resembled nothing if not an ancestral tablet (*dan* 璽) or an altar or shrine to an ancestor (*shi* 禘)¹³ — one notes in each character the unmistakable figure(s) of the square.

In fact most Chinese scholars working subsequently on the issue followed Yang's and Wang's thesis and from it derived various more complex theories, mostly on the basis of additional inscriptional evidence involving the names of pre-dynastic ancestors. These scholars noted,

¹² *Ibid.*: 179. Another related but architecturally oriented theory posits that the base meaning of 𠄎 derives from its use in the character *gong* 宮, "temple" or "palace," which in Sinitic script looks like this: . It is theorized that the upper 𠄎 depicts a smoke-hole in a temple roof through which the burnt offering to what was above and outside the hole, heaven, ascended (see Xu Zhongshu [1998]: 1548–9). Quite apparently this theory also borrows the idea of *shang* from the name of Shangjia. As quaint as this is, this theory suffers from one of many flaws typical of most fanciful explanations of character origins. In this case, the meaning of a later, complex form that is not a cognate but rather results from simple graphic loan is read back unreflexively into one of the base forms from which the complex character is made. For more on this theory that Xu reports, see the text further below.

¹³ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 178.

perhaps due to Wang's use of the character *dan* 囷 whose external element constitutes an incomplete square, that a partial, or three-sided, square constitutes the outer form of the inscriptional names of the next three high ancestors after Shangjia and descended from him, that is, A2, A3, and A4. These are Baoyi 報乙, Baobing 報丙, and Baoding 報丁, respectively. Since the *yi*, *bing*, and *ding* portions of the names already identified the latter syllable of these Shang ancestors' names, which in each case is his stem name, Jin Zutong, Wu Qichang, Ye Yusen, Tang Lan, and Yang Shuda and Wang Guowei themselves focused on the meaning of the remaining portion of the ancestors' graphic names, the form 匚 for *bao*, which they considered to be related to the 匚 form of Shangjia's name. That is, they believed that the shapes of both forms had something to do with the ritualized cult that the Shang kings offered regularly to these highest of their pre-dynastic ancestors.

Wang Guowei, Yang Shuda, Ye Yusen, and Wu Qichang all considered the two forms 匚 and 匚 to depict equivalently an altar. Yang called this a *beng* 禋, which he described to be most fundamentally a square / rectangular "gate of a temple" but which was extended in meaning to denote an altar or temple. He suggested that in each case the form 匚 or 匚 denoted a temple dedicated to the ancestor named. Yang's *beng* 禋 really is equivalent to Wang's *dan* or *shi*, though *beng* suggests a verbal or active element involving the actual ritual offering of cult to ancestors.¹⁴

Ye Yusen proffered that the two forms differ only due to the physical perspective by which one views them: 匚 represents one's view of an altar from directly in front of it, and 匚 resembles an altar viewed from the side. Wu picked up on Yang's identification of the presence of four sides to 匚 and claimed that it is nominally *fang* 方 and, as such, derivatively and verbally *beng* 禋. In explaining that a 禋 is a ritual of declaring, or "*bao*" 報, that is, 報, to an ancestor, Wu thereby

¹⁴ This theory finds a recent echo in Li Lixin's 李立新 study "Jiaguwen 'ding' zi kaoshi yu huanbei shangcheng 1 hao gongdian jizhi xingzhi tantao" 甲古文 '口' 字考释与洹北商城1号宫殿基址性质探讨. *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中国历史文物 48 (2004.1): 11–17. Li postulated that the recently excavated foundation of a Shang structure dating to the Yinxu period was a temple, *gong* 宮, and that it recreated in its concentric square design the shape of Sinitic *ding* 口; 口, Li avers, means just this, temple. This accords with my own thesis regarding one of the meanings of *ding*, to be elaborated below.

attempted to combine cleverly the implications for meaning of the shapes of the two graphemic forms 𠄎 and 𠄏 with the meaning of *shang* 上, from 𠄎, and *bao* 報, from 𠄏.¹⁵

Fu Sinian and, following him, Tang Lan regarded the two forms to be related but subtly distinct. Fu thought that the difference lies in the pictorial representation of a tablet to an ancestor placed either in the center of the altar, as with the highest ancestor 𠄎 (Shangjia), or, representing slightly lesser status, to the side, as with 𠄏 Baoyi, 𠄐 Baobing, and 𠄑 Baoding. That is, these ancestors receiving cult at this central temple altar on days *yi*, *bing*, and *ding* were in status slightly lower than the high ancestor who received cult at this altar on *jia* days, and this lesser status is reflected in their having been placed at the sides of 𠄎 (the highest *jia* ancestor, or *shangjia*) on the altar.¹⁶ (Or on separate, peripheral altars in the central ancestral temple? Or in separate peripheral ancestral temples that we know existed? This is unclear.)

Of all explanations considered thus far, Fu's is among the most sensible and acceptable, for it relies not on clever adjustments in theory to accommodate later-developed linguistic and/or cultural phenomena in the Chinese language and society but rather straightforward exegesis on the basis of the little evidence available. However, problems remain. Most troubling is that inscriptions show that Shangjia received cult via a sacrifice that, if we follow Fu strictly, should not have been offered to this highest ancestor. This sacrificial ritual is none other than 𠄏, that is, the *bao* or *beng* element in the temple names of Baoyi, Baobing, and Baoding, and is the element that Fu would have us believe denoted peripheral ritual status (and peripheral placement on the altar) for those ancestors A2-A4 vis-à-vis the central and high Shangjia, A1. We read, for example, about a divination to:

¹⁵ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 178–180.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 179.

Perform a 𠄎 with wine to Shangjia, offering nine *qiang* (humans? sheep?) and slaughtering one bovine. 西 𠄎 于上甲九羌卯一牛. *You 𠄎 yu shangjia jiu qiang liu yi niu.*¹⁷

Actually, Fu's and several others' theories concerning 𠄎 and 𠄎 / 𠄎 are undone by the fact that many inscriptions describe a 𠄎 ritual performed to none other than 𠄎:

Offer a 𠄎 ritual to 𠄎, sacrificing thirty bovine. 有 𠄎 于𠄎三十牛. *You 𠄎 yu 𠄎 sanshi niu.*¹⁸

Neither, then, do the theories described above account for the fact that this 𠄎 was a spiritual entity that received cult from the Shang king.

Therefore, it is apparent that while these theories drawing largely on the shape of 𠄎 reflect that character's certain core religious value and an apparent altar-centered significance, they do not exhaust its apparent usages or purport in the context of actual inscriptions. They do not inform us of meaning in instances when 𠄎 appears independently as an individual character, removed from any obvious influence of other intimately modifying characters.

Theories of 𠄎 as a Character in Inscriptional Context

All of the scholars whose work we reviewed above were aware of the problem of the free-standing 𠄎, and none more so than Chen Mengjia. He surmised that this unmodified cult-receiving 𠄎 was always the simplified name of an ancestor's ritual appellation, whether it was equivalent to the modified ritual 𠄎-appellages Xiong-𠄎 (兄𠄎, "Elder [Brother] 𠄎") or Di-𠄎 (

¹⁷ *HJ* 356.

¹⁸ *HJ* 1946; see *LZ* 795 for further examples. These will be discussed below.

帝口),¹⁹ or the temple name of K21, Wu-口 (Wuding 武口).²⁰ However, as Shima Kunio noted, Chen had no specific proof to endorse his thesis that 口 necessarily was equivalent to particularly *xiong*-口, *di*-口, or Wu-口 (which mostly Chen considered to refer to specifically Wu-口).²¹ Furthermore, if 口 referred to a specific ancestor, then it is unusual that in so many cases no familial honorific term preceded the 口, as in the appellages by which 口 ancestors usually were, other than by their specific temple names, addressed. These alternate familial ritual names include Da-口 (大口 “Greater-口”), Xiao-口 (小口, “Lesser-口”), Erzu-口 (二祖口, “Second Ancestor-口”), Sanzu-口 (三祖口, “Third Ancestor-口”), Sizu-口 (四祖口, “Fourth Ancestor-口”), Houzu-口 (后祖口, “Later Ancestor-口”), and Fu-口 (父口, “Father-口”).²² These modes of address occur in hundreds of inscriptions and must, of course, be read to refer each to a given 口-ancestor. Finally, to Chen’s thesis we may object that in at least one inscription an independently named 口 and *xiong*-口 (兄口) both are divined to receive cult:

Crack-making on Xinsi day (day 18): the king performs a *liao* to Shangjia, offering 10 pigs; performs a *you* to 口; and performs a *yu* to *xiong*-口... *Xinsi bu, wang shangjia liao shi zhu, you 口 yu xiong*口. 辛巳卜王上甲燎十豕侑口禦兄口...²³

If free-standing 口 referred to a specific 口-ancestor, then why would the king and the diviner have employed the familial in one instance and not the other? Chen’s thesis does not

¹⁹ “Di-口” occurs only twice, in two Period III inscriptions; they are reviewed below along with similar inscriptions. “Xiong-口” occurs nearly 100 times, mostly in Period I but also in Period IV (see LZ 1469–70); it could refer to any 口-ancestor but K27, Wenwu-口 (Wenwuding), since he was the last king in Period IV.

²⁰ Chen Mengjia, *Buci zongshu* 卜辭總述: 437; idem, *Shang wang ming hao kao* 商王名號考 (Beijing: Yanjing University - Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1940): 40.

²¹ We may further object that “*di*-口” does not necessarily indicate any one specific ancestor. See the continued discussion of 口, further below.

²² See LZ 1418–1419; otherwise see the hundreds of inscriptions designating a “Fu-口” at LZ 1455–60.

²³ HJ 19812A.

answer such a circumstance, and this inscription is but one of many in which a free-standing 𠄎 occurs alongside modified-𠄎 temple appellages. Thus at the very least Chen's thesis is incomplete but most probably generally inaccurate. Even by his own admission Chen's thesis was mostly conjecture that was based on little evidence.

On the other hand, Shima Kunio also lacked clear or even convincing evidence to support his own thesis that the character 𠄎 acted as (1) a simplified reference in Period I to Zuding 祖 𠄎 (K15), or, in Periods II and III, Wuding (K21); (2) the name of a Period-V ritual performed to especially one's father but also older kingly 𠄎-ancestors; or (3) the high god Di. Shima's immediate point was to show that 𠄎 had something to do with ritual propitiation of particularly one's father. His final point was to try to prove that 𠄎 as a character was cognate with *di* 帝 in its both nominal (as the godly entity Di) and verbal (as the ritual) applications, in order to prove further that Di indeed received cult in the Shang ritual system.²⁴

Like Chen, Shima relied on *very* thin evidence to identify 𠄎 as necessarily the ancestors Zu-𠄎 and Wu-𠄎, though in some cases his and Chen's assessments certainly were accurate. Essentially Shima's narrow identifications rested on a ritual order by which ancestors received cult that Shima assigned, which order he in turn developed on the basis of only a couple of inscriptions when 𠄎 received ritual attention alongside various ancestors such as Shangjia, Dayi, and so on. But Shima's order of ancestors' ritual receipt, like Chen's rather arbitrary assignment of identity to 𠄎, is not in any way reliable. Therefore, we cannot follow either scholar's identifications without making in-depth inquiries into specific uses of "𠄎."

Moving on to Shima's final intent, that is, his attempt to equate 𠄎 with *di* both nominally and verbally, his reasoning is so convoluted and tendentious that refuting it would involve mostly unraveling largely ill-conceived and often even impossible logic. Consuming nearly a volume by itself, such an exercise would only overstate the obvious, which is that, despite some intimate relationship that does indeed exist in the inscriptions between *di* and 𠄎 (see below), they perform entirely distinct roles in the inscriptional record and are in no way cognate. Robert Eno remarked that Shima could show neither that (1) nominal Di received cult in sacrifice (this also was the

²⁴ Shima, *Kenkyû*: 177–189 (on 𠄎); 189–216 (on *di* as both godly entity and ritual).

subject of Eno's article, mentioned previously), while in the inscriptions it is clear that 𠄎 did receive cult, nor (2) Di and 𠄎 shared common influences over human and earthly affairs. In short, Professor Eno objected, and I concur, that Shima's "arguments rest on an extremely tenuous base of ambiguous 'loan' relationships and tortuous reasoning," which "are inadequate to overcome a central difficulty, which is that the functions of these graphs are almost completely disjointed in the oracle texts."²⁵ Professor Eno also objected that the recipients of the 𠄎 ritual sacrifice, which we will investigate below, were Shang kings Wuding (K21) through Wenwuding 文武𠄎 (K27) and the consort Mugui 母癸, while the objects of the Di sacrifice, as we saw previously, are numerous and dissimilar.²⁶ While the recipients of 𠄎 ritual exceed Professor Eno's estimate, indeed he is correct that the objects of the two sacrifices 𠄎 and *di* are very distinct.

On the other hand, Shima and, earlier, Chen Mengjia, surely were at least on track when they identified 𠄎 to be one or more 𠄎-ancestors. They merely did not thoroughly investigate (1) to what ancestors 𠄎 could refer, and (2) why, after all, they were "𠄎-ancestors." We will review this issue in more detail below.

David Keightley is the most recent contributor to the discussion of what he and the other scholars discussed above all have considered to be the non-*ding* 丁 uses of 𠄎 in oracle-bone inscriptions. He posits that in many inscriptions 𠄎 is short-hand for 𠄎, or *ri* 日, "sun."²⁷ Among the reasons he offers this possibility is, first, we may infer, that he has noted the existence of a powerful spiritual entity identified in inscriptions as "𠄎" but which has often remained ambiguous to modern readers of the inscriptions, and, second, as he explains explicitly, he does not believe that one necessarily must accept that all non-calendrical, free-standing appearances of 𠄎 in the oracle-bone inscriptions denote Wuding. Professor Keightley cites and aims to refute Qiu Xigui's argument that very often 𠄎 can be identified as Wuding in Bin 賓-diviner-group (late

²⁵ Eno (1984): 184.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 184–5, 185–9.

²⁷ David 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," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117.3 (1999): 517–524.

Period I ~ early Period II, or c. 1190s-1170s BC) inscriptions from the generation of Wuding's sons, Kings Zugeng 祖庚 (K22) and Zujia 祖甲 (K23).²⁸ Really, Qiu's is the same argument that Chen Mengjia made many decades earlier. Shima also covered this ground, though he expanded the reference of 日 to include Zu-日. Regardless of whose thesis it was, Professor Keightley is right to challenge it, for it does not explain satisfactorily most uses of 日. Further, as Professor Keightley objects, and as we argued above, if 日 served for Wuding's sons as a reference to their deceased father's spirit, then why was it not preceded, as was the custom, by the appropriate familial prefix, which in this case should have been *fu* 父, "father"?²⁹ Professor Keightley also objects that a 日-ancestor would not, as does 日 as an independent character, receive cult on a non-日 (i.e., non-*ding*) day.³⁰ His concern is valid, even though (1) in early periods ancestors did receive cult on days other than their temple-name day (see discussion, further below), and (2) this phenomenon can be explained, as it will be below, very simply even when reading the independent 日 to refer to ancestors. But furthermore, as Shima noted of Chen Mengjia's and we noted of Shima's thesis, we may object that no solid or even consistent evidence demonstrates that a majority of incidents of so-called non-calendrical or non-*ding* 日 usages refers to particularly Wuding or a specific 日-ancestor. That is, the theory is mostly conjecture and does not recognize the enormous potential for more accurate understandings of the meaning of this independently occurring 日.

However, neither ought we to accept in most cases Professor Keightley's pensive (and intentionally daring) identification of 日 as a simplified form of 日. While in a very few cases, one

²⁸ See Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Lun 'lizu buci' de shidai" 論'歷組卜辭'的時代 in *Gu wenzi yanjiu* 古文字研究 6 (1981): 311-320.

²⁹ Otherwise Fuding 父日, "Father 日," was indeed employed to refer to Wuding and other 日-ancestors in several hundred inscriptions dating to Periods I, III, and IV. See LZ 1455-1459. These usages, obviously naming directly a 日-ancestor who was the father of the divining king and not referring to the generalized 日 that interests us (though ultimately they are related), will not be treated further.

³⁰ Keightley (1999): 520, 522-523.

must concede, 𠄎 quite apparently does represent 日,³¹ in fact in most cases it does not. When 𠄎 *does* rarely act as 日, the lexicographic context and syntactic patterns make this readily apparent (see previous note), but there is no reason to force this reading in different contexts on what otherwise is a character whose meaning and usage obviously differ vastly from those of 日. Most importantly, while as a recipient of cult 𠄎 was divined to receive such ritual observances, sacrifices, and entreaties as the 燎 *liao*, 祐 *you*, 西 𠄎 *you*, 侑 *you*, 賓 *bin*, 𠄎 / 𠄎 *beng / bao*, 肇 *zhao*, 禦 *yu*, and 𠄎 *hui*, and it further received ritual reports, 告 *gao*, the sun (日) did not. Rather, in the inscriptions, 日, indicating the sun, almost always acts to describe by its physical presence, absence, or movement either momentary time (in compound expressions such as sunrise, sunset, midday, morning, evening, end of the day, yesterday, this day, tomorrow / the next day) or numerated days (such as X-日, where X is a numerator such as *ding*). It almost never, if ever, receives direct sacrifice.³² Moreover, while 𠄎 acts as a verb (to be reviewed below), 日 does not. If 日, written in the inscriptions as 𠄎, otherwise acted in a way commensurate with 𠄎, that is, receiving cult and acting as a verb of ritual / sacrificial offering, then we could entertain that at times we may understand, as Professor Keightley asks us to do, the character 𠄎 to be a cognate of the character 日. However, 日 neither receives cult nor acts as a verb. The characters very apparently act in entirely distinct ways.

Furthermore, in many instances reading 𠄎 as 日, Professor Keightley stretches the

³¹ See, for instance, Tun 2615 (found at LZ 427), which Keightley employs to support his case and which records a sacrifice divined either during the time of or to the “入口,” that is, the “entering 𠄎,” which phrase appears to denote the setting of the sun (i.e., *ruri* 入日). However, it should be noted that the pair of phrases in which this usage occurs, i.e., Tun 2615, constitute the only two occurrences of such a phrase in all OBIs.

³² Even Keightley’s examples (see previous note) might not represent the sun’s actually having received cult, for the ritual just as easily could have been performed “at the time of the rising (or setting) of the sun” as “to the rising (setting) sun.” The key term is once again *yu*, “to” or “at,” whose specific meaning in this case we cannot decipher. At any rate, references to the rising and setting sun (and, specifically, to “日,” not “𠄎”) are very few, numbering only fifteen when including Tun 2615 (see previous note). This demonstrates that even if these phrases did in fact advert to a ceremony directed at the sun, it was not a common or thus very important ceremony.

In comparing the usages of both characters at LZ 793–798, on 𠄎, and LZ 425–31, on 日, one cannot help but understand that these are very distinctly applied characters with thoroughly separate meanings.

meaning of 𠄎 beyond the point if not of possibility then at least of reasonable credibility. In such instances we must employ Occam's Razor to remind us of how easy it is and how much sense it makes to read 𠄎 simply as 𠄎. How we understand 𠄎 as 𠄎 we will return to momentarily, but first we can note an example of Professor Keightley's interesting but overextended interpretation of the character. In reading a few phrases following the pattern "Crack-making on day XZ, we divine: to Ancestor Y we 𠄎, offering perhaps a *lao* set of beasts" (*XZ bu, zhen: Y 𠄎 qi lao. XZ 卜 貞 AncestorY 𠄎其牢*), where X is the ritual-calendrical day among the Heavenly Stems that immediately precedes the temple-calendrical day Y in the ancestor's name (e.g. where X = *jia* 甲 and Y = *yi* 乙, parallel to the way that the number 2 [X] precedes 3 [Y] in Arabic numerals) and Z is any Earthly Branch numerator, Professor Keightley wishes to understand 𠄎 to mean "the next day." In this way, Professor Keightley argues, the inconsistency between the day of crack-making / divining / offering and the temple day of the ancestor to whom in a given instance the cult is offered, which by most accounts should be identical, is resolved. This much is true, although the inconsistency can be explained more directly and simply, as Zhu Qixiang indicated regarding the ritual 𠄎, by acknowledging that some rituals were performed to a given ancestor on the evening before his or her temple day in order to welcome the spirit for the following, main, day of cult offering and receipt.³³ Furthermore, instances of this pattern occur when X does not precede Y in the Heavenly Branches order, as, for example, when an offering to a *jia* (day 1) ancestor was divined on a *ding* (day 4) day,³⁴ or even when a *ding* ancestor (Wuding) was divined to receive cult on a *ding* day (and thus Professor Keightley's "next day" reading of 𠄎 is particularly anomalous).³⁵ Many more inscriptions following this pattern do not record the days of divination, even though clearly the pattern that Professor Keightley observed, i.e., that Y was divined on X day, generally prevails. Again, however, Zhu Qixiang's exposition regarding ritual timing explains this.

Additional obstacles to reading 𠄎 as 𠄎 in this pattern are as follows: (1) the character 𠄎

³³ Zhu Qixiang (1989): 455.

³⁴ *HJ* 27438.

³⁵ *HJ* 35932.

otherwise is not employed in any consistent way to indicate "the next day" or "a coming day"; rather, either the character 翌, "the next day" / "the coming day" / "tomorrow," or the phrase 來日, "a coming day," relates this meaning, and normally the day is reported explicitly immediately following the time expression;³⁶ (2) of the 112 instances that I count of the occurrence of the divinatory pattern examined above, i.e., "Ancestor Y 口 其牢," in *not one* do we find the character 日. *In every case* 口 is specified. If this were meant to be 日 receiving sacrifice, then we should expect that in most cases, likely at least 105 of 112 or so, the recipient 日, and not 口, should have been identified specifically. However, never is 日 named in place of 口;³⁷ (3) the fact that in reading 口 as 日 in all 112 instances we render the divination pattern universally verbless makes this substitution highly unlikely for so consistently employed a phrase; (4) other verbal uses of 口, to be viewed below, make it clear that here 口 should be understood to be a verb by which cult is offered to the named ancestor; (5) reading 日 for 口 simply leaves too many other uses of 口 yet unexplained; and (6) most convincing, in some instances we find 口 and 日 in the same inscription in which 日 describes the day and 口 clearly is to receive cult:

Crack-making on *dingwei* day (day 44), Bin divining: This day we perform the *you* ritual to 口, sixth month. 口未卜賓貞今日侑于口六月. *Dingwei bu bin zhen jinri you yu 口 liu yue.*³⁸

Consequently, I believe it is clear that, except in an extremely rare instance and one that is irrelevant to our study since it follows a divination pattern that in its subject and syntax is identifiably 日-oriented (i.e., regarding the rising and/or setting sun), 口 cannot be understood as 日.

³⁶ See this character's usage in this way with regard to observances of 口, for instance, in the inscriptions *HJ* 22580 and *HJ* 22618.

³⁷ For these 112 instances of this phrase's usage, see *LZ* 797–8.

³⁸ *HJ* 339.






What is 𠄎?

If 𠄎 is not 𠄎, and if 𠄎 neither can be understood often to be specifically one or another 𠄎-ancestor (*ding*-ancestor) nor, as Shima hoped to establish, *di* in its both nominal and verbal uses, then how finally can we identify more clearly to what this multi-faceted character referred for the Shang ruling elite? Starting again from the most basic evidence of simple characters and moving into more complex inscriptional contexts, by treating the 𠄎 form and character thoroughly we will be able to see clearly that 𠄎 was all of the religious and political center, a ritual performed at that center, and a spiritual power whose physical shape took the form of a square and which thereby could inhabit the square religious center of the Shang, the altar in the ancestral temple. In all cases, 𠄎 describes or involves mostly only the power of royal ancestral spirits. As such, there is no need to interpret 𠄎 beyond its essential identification as *ding*.

𠄎 and Related Shapes in Sinitic Characters

The square shape took several forms in Shang characters. Some of these, appearing on bronzes and demonstrated already in Chapter 3, we will not revisit. The most common and important variation from the form of 𠄎 as found in Sinitic characters is 𠄎. Another, more distant, relative is the form 𠄎. Although usually the forms 𠄎, 𠄎, and 𠄎 have been treated as distinct Sinitic characters,³⁹ and they have been understood to have distinct basic meanings, really no one knows for certain what were these original fundamental meanings; explanations are

³⁹ For instance, in the encyclopedic dictionary *Kôkotsu moji jishaku sôran* 甲骨文字字釋綜覽, ed. by Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄 and Takashima Ken'ichi 高島謙一 (Tokyo: Tôkyô Daigaku, 1994), see the character 𠄎, understood as Chinese *kou* 𠄎, listed on p. 30 (#86); the form 𠄎, transcribed into Chinese most often as 凡, listed on p. 364–5; and the form 𠄎, understood to be mostly the Chinese character *ding* 丁, listed again separately on p. 392–3 (#1683).

almost all purely conjectural,⁴⁰ even if in the case of  (which is recognized to have become *kou* 口, "mouth," in Chinese), they make sense: according to Xu Zhongshu and many others, Sinitic  originally depicted a vessel for use in presenting ritual cult. On the other hand, Xu, drawing on others' explanations, offers for consideration that the original sense of Sinitic 口 was as an opening in a roof, particularly as seen in the Sinitic character for *gong* 宮, "palace" or "temple," which is written thusly: . The idea is that, while the lower 口 depicts a doorway, the upper 口 in *gong* represents a smoke-hole in the temple or palace roof through which smoke from ritual oblations performed within the temple could escape to reach what is above, *tian* 天, "heaven." Consequently, we are told, 口 ("ding") came to mean "above" or "top," or *ding* 頂 in Chinese, but expressed in the simple form of *ding* 丁, which is the most common transliteration of 口 in modern Chinese (i.e., as we have seen, most scholars agree that the equivalent of Sinitic 口 in Chinese is usually 丁). The idea is that the head element (頁) of the Chinese *ding* 頂 would have been added later to redifferentiate the original meaning of *ding* 丁 from various other evolved or derivative meanings expressed by combining in one graph *ding* with additional signifiers. Now, in his Han dynasty *Shuowen* dictionary Xu Shen described *ding* 頂 to mean *dian* 顛, or "top." On this basis the modern Xu Zhongshu, offering that *ding*, *dian*, and *tian* all shared the same pronunciation in ancient times, equates these meanings in the form 口, explaining that thus 口 also became a phonetic loan for *tian*, "heaven," and therefore in oracle bone inscriptions often means just that, heaven. But we are not yet through. Xu Zhongshu continues that the Chinese character *chen* 陳 in ancient times also was pronounced identically with *ding*, *dian*, and *tian*. Considering that *chen* means to "lay [things] out," and, in this case we are to take the character to mean specifically "to lay out ritual objects for the performance of a ritual in the *gong*," then, we are told, 口 also describes a ritual in which such objects are laid out to assist the performance.⁴¹ But in this case Xu Zhongshu's 口 must be understood specifically as Sinitic , not Sinitic 口, for according to Xu only  is understood to be the vessel in which ritual goods are set out.

⁴⁰ Leafing through *ibid.* only strengthens this impression, particularly in the case of *ding* or other simple (Type 1) and flexibly applied characters.

⁴¹ Xu (1998): 1548–9.

Although the essential meanings of 冂 and 凵 to which Xu subscribes ("above" for 冂; "ritual vessel" and "ritual goods" for 凵) seem to reflect the essential meanings that these graphs represent in inscriptions, his ratiocinations explaining their development are fanciful, even if engaging. One problem with this specific explanation is that, with regard to *gong* 宮, Xu Zhongshu (or Xu's sources) made the error of confusing cognates (such as *ding* 頂) with loans (such as *gong* 宮). Furthermore, to draw *chen* out of a hat phonetically to explain the ritual 冂 by means of the semantic value of *chen*, "the laying out of ritual goods," is a particularly far stretch. Moreover, Xu Zhongshu's argument that 冂 referred in OBIs to *tian*, "heaven," ignores the fact that during the Shang the Sinitic graph equivalent or ancestral to Chinese *tian*, "heaven," did not mean "heaven."

Furthermore, why in this theory should speculation center only on the superior 冂 form in the graph 𡩶 and not the inferior 冂? Taking the latter into consideration would alter significantly any theoretical projection regarding the base meaning of 冂. Finally, we cannot escape from the fact that the Shang did not employ the character 𡩶 to mean "temple" or "place of ritual oblation/sacrifice." For the Shang the character 𡩶 described only (1) the name of a particular place where the king hunted, or (2) a palace where the king lived, but not a temple.⁴²

What we ought not to miss here, though, is Xu's acceptance of the obvious general equivalence of the core meaning of both 冂 ("a smoke-hole" and "heaven" in the explanation above) and its relative, 凵 (here *chen* 陳, for which idea in the etymology above 凵 as ritual vessel / object obviously served as stimulus), which meaning revolves around the offering of religious ritual in a temple to a spirit or god. While as it turns out, as we shall see below, that 冂 possesses more the sense of the physical space and 凵 the meaning of the vessel of ritual, both characters denote ritual spaces that occupy the center of the ritual and which in ritual are occupied by the god (i.e., whether an altar or a vessel, the existence of each centers on its square / squarish internal or open space, which is filled during ceremony).

Here we can note the fact that the inscribers themselves understood the proximity of the two forms 冂 and 凵 and at times interchanged them. For instance, the Sinitic character for *zhong*

⁴² For (1) see Zhu (1989): 982 (pp. 264–5); for (1) and (2) see Xu (1998): 832–834.

中, "center" or "central," was written with both forms, producing 中 and 𠄎.⁴³ In the case of 𠄎, again this character component appears in many graphs that also can be written instead with 口, as, for example, in Sinitic graphs that are transliterated as Chinese *zi* 子, both (1) meaning "male newborn" or "son" (and thus in the context of royal inscriptional usage also "prince") and (2) used as the first of the earthly branches calendrical set. In Sinitic *zi* can take these various forms quite commonly: 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎, 𠄎.⁴⁴ Very apparent in these designs is the equivalence of the component forms 口 and 𠄎, 𠄎.



Finally, in the case of 口 and 𠄎 (also 𠄎), in later Chinese *xiaozhuan*, *lishu*, *kaishu*, and other scripts, these forms melded into the common shape of Sinitic 口 but came to be understood as *kou* 口, "mouth" or "opening." Thus, to the Chinese *kou* was ascribed the meaning mostly of the Sinitic 𠄎 but assigned the written form of Sinitic 口, *ding*. Therefore, Chinese *kou* is an amalgam that followed directly from an earlier inconsistency in differentiating the two forms clearly. Below we shall see how this occurred due to the similarity in the meanings that they brought to characters that they helped to form. However, one must be careful to note that not in all cases do the two forms agree. In some instances, as in the exceedingly similar two characters 邑 (city; Chinese *yi* 邑) and 兄 ([a] elder brother [Chinese *xiong* 兄]; [b] a sacrifice [Chinese *zhu* 祝]), retaining the difference between 口 and 𠄎 quite obviously is crucial.




口, 𠄎, and 𠄎 as Center and Religious Power







First, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3 the meaning of 口 as center is obvious in the character 中 (or 𠄎, 𠄎), which in Chinese is *zhong* 中 and means in both scripts "center" or "central." A

⁴³ See Matsumaru and Takashima (1994): 15 (#38); cf. 417 (#3041). See also Xu (1998): 39, 40–42, for additional characters that employ the form 口 but in which characters the form is understood to be 𠄎. On Sinitic 中 see also Zhou Fagao, *Jinwen gulin*: 310–324.

⁴⁴ Xu Zhongshu (1998): 1570.

second character both showing a square shape in its center and possessing the meaning of centrality or center is , which, we know from Chapter 3, in Chinese becomes *yang* 央, "center." In Chapters 2 and 4 we saw that both (1) the character  (Chinese *ya* 亞) pictorially representing the Shang royal tombs and (2) the Shang royal tombs themselves were square-centered crosses: they place the king or consort in a *square* tomb in the *square* center of a *square* defined by the crosshairs of a giant *squared* (or *rectangled*) cross dug into the earth.






That the square in the center represented the physical and spiritual center of human power and activity is evident from all of these examples, and especially from the tombs, but we see it perhaps most clearly again in a character of interesting design, which has no Chinese counterpart but which was used in oracle-bone inscriptions to depict and refer to the city wall: . The minaret-like figure  that emanates from each of the four sides of the *central square*, when it stands as an individual character , depicts an altar (see **Table 2**), but here it is borrowed and multiplied by four perhaps to represent guard towers on the four walls of the *square* city. (Or perhaps there were subsidiary altars established atop the walls to encourage gods and spirits to lend them their protection? This possibility is enhanced by the evidence presented below showing the religious significance of the square shape.)




Sinitic characters demonstrating the religious value of , , and  and showing specifically that they represent ritual, ritual space, and spiritual identity and power, are too numerous to describe in narrative. Some of the more salient among them are depicted, with Chinese equivalents and English descriptions or definitions, in **Table 3**. We may note that all three forms of the square quite obviously possess a powerful religious significance and that they can be discussed generally under the rubric of  without our needing to draw out further the commensurate  and  forms.

□ in Inscriptional Context

□ as Ritual Space

From these □-containing characters it is evident that Fu Sinian's and others' attempts to establish for □ a core meaning of ritual space reserved for a god's habitation, i.e., an altar, were at least in part on target. This becomes even clearer when we consider a pattern found in nine inscriptions in which divination was made regarding a given "Y □-person Z," where Z, always a female, was a recipient of beneficence from an unnamed spirit or power who may have been □ (Z was necessarily female likely because of the presence of her womb, which is itself a critical ritual space of both reception and gift), and Y indicated the central altar of an outlying Shang region. The phrasal pattern therefore can be read to mean "Z, the □-person of Y," where □ very apparently indicates an altar or ritual space. This pattern shows the centrality in ritual of the form □ and the certainty of its referring in some way at some times to a sacred ritual space or altar. To demonstrate this, we may consider one inscription in which the meaning of ritual space for □ becomes particularly clear. Here the ritual space □ is indicated specifically as the location in which a spirit is to be *bin*-ed, i.e., hosted, apparently on behalf of what is the female □-person, and, given the anticipated result, likely in her womb:

On *bingwu* day, crack-making. [We] divine: The □-person at Xiao,  (Yu?), will not die. In the □ [of Yu? () the spirit] is *bin*-ed in order that [Yu ()] may receive the blessing of a child. 丙午卜貞效□人  不囚在□家祐子。
Bingwu bu, zhen Xiao □ren  *busi; zai □ bin you zi.*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *HJ* 3096. The Sinitic character that became in Chinese *jia* 家, written , is normally read as *bin* 賁 (see Zhu Qixiang [1989]: 266). Zhu Qixiang (1989) considered Z to be the altar-keeper for god Y, but his identifications of both Y and Z are mistaken. For one thing, in Period I, on two separate *bing* days (*bingxu*, day 23, and *bingwu*, day 43) were divined two inscriptions regarding two distinct □-persons (□人) Z for the same Y, which Y was Xiao (Z was identified as Xi  嬉 in *HJ* 3097; Z was identified as  (Yu?) in *HJ* 3096; the latter inscription is translated above). There seems little reason to believe that two □-persons Z were altar keepers for god Y. This is so especially

The *bin*-ing in a woman's womb of seed from a god reminds us of other ancient tales in which a god impregnates a woman. In this case what is particularly striking is the appearance of the form of 冂 as recipient space, the same as that on which Buddha's mother slept when dreaming the Dream of Mahâmâyâ by which she became pregnant with the son, the future Buddha, of the vehicle of Indra, the divine white elephant. The coincidence is very suggestive.

冂 as Ritual

A pattern that commonly acts in Periods I-III as a nominal phrase also occurs in Period I as a verbal V-O expression. This is the phrase 冂-zong (冂宗), which as a V-O means "perform a 冂

since among the nine inscriptions mentioning a 冂-person Z, in all cases in which a name Y is given, it is the name of either a place out from the center of the Shang or a person's name who likely controlled that territory. In the case of Xiao (*HJ* 3096, 3097), he was a prince and territorial lord during Period I; here, again, the name likely refers to his territory and, specifically, the main altar at the ancestral temple in his territory's capital. Consequently Y likely adverts not to a god Y whose altar Z keeps, but to the main altar of that territory Y at which Z seeks knowledge and favor. "Y" then ought to be read to mean "at Y."

Furthermore, in the inscriptions, Z certainly seems to indicate a woman who is to receive a god or its beneficence in her womb for the purpose of warding off nefarious influences or bringing good fortune. She therefore serves as a host for the spirit to enter, as in the case of her apparent *bin*-ing of the god (冂?) in *HJ* 3096, above, to receive a child in her womb. In this specific case of the use of "冂-person," then, the ritual involving the god besought might be considered a fertility ritual. However, this is not always the case in instances of "冂-person" inscriptions.

Indeed in one case the diviner hoped to ascertain the likelihood of a woman Jia's 𠄎 (嘉) becoming ill (*HJ* 13720).

In misidentifying the nature of Y, Zhu seems to have been misguided by his misreading of *HJ* 3096 (Ming 明 387), in which, strangely, he read Xiao to be Yiyin, the deceased ancient human hero-turned-god. Zhu's misreadings apparently led him to believe mistakenly both that (1) the Y figures in the inscriptions were gods, and (2) 冂-persons Z were altar keepers.

Robert Eno suggested on the basis of perhaps relevant bronze inscriptions that the women of these oracle-bone inscriptions (my "Z") were consorts, which is likely. I would add that they seem to be consorts of lords of outlying regions of Shang allied / princely territories. See Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven. Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: SUNY, 1990): 185.

to *zong*," where *zong* indicates either the ancestral spirits or the ancestral temple in which the ritual to the ancestors was performed. Either way, the meaning is equivalent, for the ancestors were thought to inhabit the altar while being ritualized. This we know from inscriptional context, but also from an understanding of the construction of the character *zong*. *Zong* 宗 shows in both Sinitic (𠄎) and Chinese (宗) an altar (Chinese 示; Sinitic 𠄎, 𠄎, or 𠄎) situated beneath a roof (Chinese 宀; Sinitic 宀) and means literally ancestral temple and, by extension, the altar within the temple. As such, a *zong* historically has been seen, again obviated by its graphemic components, as the ritual domicile of ancestral spirits. In two Period I occurrences of 𠄎-*zong* we read an identical inscription, translated as follows:

Crack-making on *yiyou* day (day 22), Bin divining: We will perform a 𠄎 to the ancestral spirits; [we will receive] only blessings; sixth moon. 乙酉卜賓貞𠄎宗無不若六月. *Yi you bu bin zhen 𠄎 zong wu bu ruo liu yue.*⁴⁶

That the 𠄎 was performed to ancestors, and *only* to ancestors, bolsters the argument that 𠄎 always related to ancestors, whether as a verb or, as we will see shortly, also a noun.

A series of Period V inscriptions employs the reverse phrase of 𠄎-*zong*, i.e., "*zong*-𠄎" 宗 𠄎,⁴⁷ in which 𠄎 acts again as a verb and it describes the performance of a ritual at the *zong* (temple or altar) of a given named ancestor, according to the following pattern: "Ancestor X *zong* 𠄎 *qi* Y" ("At the temple of Ancestor X we 𠄎 [i.e., 'perform a 𠄎 ritual'], perhaps offering Y"), where Y is a sacrificial offering. Among the charges employing this pattern 宗 𠄎 we read, for instance, of the performance of a 𠄎 at the temple / altar to Wuyi (K26), with the offering of a *lao* set of beasts:

⁴⁶ *HJ* 13538, 13589.

⁴⁷ *LZ* 793–4.

Crack-making on *jiayu* day (day 11): We divine at the temple (*zong*) of Wuyi a □ ritual, perhaps offering this one *lao* set of bovines. 甲戌卜貞武乙宗□其牢茲用.
*Jiacheng bu zhen Wuyizong □ qi lao ziyong.*⁴⁸

Many additional divination inscriptions occur, following the identical syntax, inquiring over this ritual □ to an ancestor at his temple; these ancestors include Wuyi (K26; totally four inscriptions),⁴⁹ Zuyi (K12; one inscription),⁵⁰ and Wenwuding (K27; three inscriptions).⁵¹ Very telling in this list is the fact that each of Wenwuding (文武□) and Zuyi possesses a □ in his main or alternative temple name: in the case of Zuyi the □ occurs in his alternative temple name, Zhongzong 中宗 (中宗, "Central Altar [Ancestor]"). Wuyi was included in this "cult of □" for other □-related reasons, as we shall see below in this chapter. Moreover, each one of these former kings was of the main Shang royal lineage, the *dazong* 大宗, and thus was among the most powerful spiritual and political influences for the Shang. Thus far, then, a direct association occurs between the offering of the □ ritual and, as its recipient, aside from only Wuyi, those who both belonged to the main royal lineage and who also *were* □.

And this association remains generally consistent in other verbal uses of □, as well. We have reviewed previously the Period V pattern

Crack-making on day XZ, we divine: To Ancestor Y we □ ("perform the □"), offering perhaps a *lao* set of beasts." XZ *bu, zhen: Ancestor Y □ qi lao.* XZ 卜貞 AncestorY □其牢.

It turns out that in this verbal-□ pattern, the ancestral spirits who fill the role of Ancestor Y

⁴⁸ HJ 36082.

⁴⁹ HJ 36078, 36082, 36090, 36091.

⁵⁰ HJ 36086.

⁵¹ HJ 36094, 36150, 36154.

include Zuding (K15, Zu-□ [祖□]), Wuding (K21, 武□, who sometimes is thought to have been addressed also as Zu-□ [祖□]), Zujia 祖甲 (K23, a.k.a. Fujia 父甲, Dijia 帝甲), Kangding 康□ (K25), Wuyi (K26, a.k.a. Wuzuyi 武祖乙 and Fuyi 父乙, "Father Yi"), and Mugui 母癸 ("Mother Gui"). Otherwise Fuyi ("Father Yi," who is K26 Wuyi), Wenwuding (K27), and consorts Bigui 妣癸 and Biji 妣己 received cult via the □ sacrifice, as well.⁵² Once again, the five kingly ancestors all belong to the main royal lineage, and all but two, Wuyi again and now Zujia, possess a □ or □-cognate in their names. Furthermore, while the female ancestral spirits never do possess the □ (either *ding* or otherwise) in their names, still, each of three □-ancestors (Zhong-□, Wu-□, and Wenwu-□) kept a consort whose posthumous temple name was Bigui (and who thus received cult on *gui* days; no other Biguis received cult). Thus each Bigui receiving □ accompanied and was associated intimately with the power of a main-lineage male kingly □-ancestor. In addition, one of these, and it had to have been the consort Bigui of Wenwu-□, who would have been the mother of the king Diyi (K28; Fuyi?), the king who ordered the divinations in question, was the Mugui ("Mother Gui") of our inscriptions. Therefore, Mugui also received □-cult via her intimate association with a □-ancestor. Finally, each of the main lineage kings Zhong-□, Zhongzong, and Zu-□, each of whom also possesses a □ in his temple name, kept a consort Biji, who received cult on *ji* days.⁵³ These Biji too, then, received □ cult because they were associated intimately with and accompanied □-ancestors of the main Shang kingly lineage. Consequently, of the ten ancestors whom we know received cult via the □ sacrifice, eight of them, which number excludes only Wuyi and Zujia, belonged to the □ group and thus *were* □. They also were among the most powerful and important Shang ancestral spirits. Wuyi's and Zujia's receipt of □ will be explained below.

The only other uses of □ that appear to be verbal occur in polynomial verbal phrases in Period I inscriptions. One, "□-*zong*" (□宗), we will analyze below, but presently we can note that sometimes a "□-*shi*" (□示), or "□-ritual" or "ritual at □," was divined to be employed as a

⁵² LZ 797–8.

⁵³ See Shima, *Sōruī*: 555–556.

means of inquiring into future events.⁵⁴ Aside from demonstrating either (1) further that 冢 was a ritual space where ritual was performed, or (2) that perhaps 冢 served as a verb not only in Period V, as is often assumed, but also in earlier periods, these few 冢-*shi* inscriptions do not help us narrow the definition of the form / character. We now return to more fruitful evidence, which involves reading 冢 as a nominal recipient of cult.

冢 as a Cult-Receiving Spiritual Power

We know from several patterns involving 冢 that it was a spiritual power in receipt of cult and ritualized reportage. One such pattern occurs in inscriptions of Periods I-III; it is the phrase 冢-*zong* (冢 冢 ; Chinese 冢宗). 冢-*zong* acts largely as a nominal phrase, though as we have seen at times it also serves as a verbal phrase (V-O).

As a composite noun 冢-*zong* means, simply, temple of, or place of ritual enactment to, 冢. Thus, 冢 can be known to be a spirit. For example, we read in a broken and largely unintelligible inscription of a divination over whether or not something (obviously a ritual) will occur "at the temple (*zong*) of 冢" ("zai 冢-*zong*" 在冢宗).⁵⁵ Another inscription records a divination made over whether or not the king ought to

perhaps report [to/at] the *zong* of 冢 that he will travel [on an inspection tour of the Shang territories]. 其告步冢宗. *Qi gao bu 冢 zong*.⁵⁶

We cannot know from the vague syntax whether the report was made *at* or *to* the temple/altar of 冢, but again, the point is moot since in any case the report was divined to be made

⁵⁴ For instances in which 冢-*shi* denotes a ritual, see *HJ* 14906A, 14907, 14908, 20141, and 34125.

⁵⁵ *HJ* 13533.

⁵⁶ *HJ* 13535.

ultimately to 冢, through the temple / altar of 冢. That is, a report made at such a temple/altar is also by its very nature a report to the spiritual entity to which that temple / altar is dedicated. Regarding the identity of 冢, while one might proffer that this 冢 could refer in shorthand to a single 冢-ancestor, we must nonetheless recall that the consistent lack of a familial honorific salutation preceding the 冢 in these inscriptions renders this possibility quite slim.

Similar inscriptions but (1) without *zong* following 冢, and (2) with the interjection of the preposition *yu*, "to" or "at / in," between the verb, *gao*, "report," and the object, 冢 (i.e., they read 告于冢, ["*gao yu* 冢," meaning "report to 冢 [some kingly action]"), strengthen the case that 冢 is a spiritual entity, since it must serve as the object of *gao*.⁵⁷ That is, in these many inscriptions, without any other possible direct object, such as *zong* "temple / altar," of what necessarily is the transitive verb *gao*, then 冢 certainly is the direct object of this verb, and it therefore must identify the direct object that receives the *gao* (i.e., *gao* requires a direct object, and 冢 is the only possibility; as such it cannot be an indirect object, and, thus, it must actually receive the *gao* offered). Therefore, here 冢 necessarily is a spiritual entity (direct object), and not an altar at which a *gao* is performed (indirect object). Consequently, we can confirm that in our previous example (*HJ* 13535), in which a *gao* regarding travelling was divined to be performed *at* or *to* the 冢-*zong*, 冢 must be understood to have been the spiritual recipient 冢 of this *gao*.

A Period III inscription involving 冢宗 but in which the phrase again serves as a compound noun strengthens the sense that 冢 always involved ancestors. We read,

Crack-making on *dingwei* day (day 44): Perhaps ritualizing at/to the gate to the *zong* of 冢, we will perhaps perform a *xie* ritual to Cheng. 冢未卜其示冢宗門惟成協. 冢wei bu qi shi 冢zongmen wei xian xie.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ For "*gao yu* 冢" inscriptions see *LZ* 795–6.

⁵⁸ *LZ* 794, Tun 屯 737. A *xie* 協 ritual became, in Period V, one among the five rituals that constituted the regular cyclic cult offered to ancestral spirits. In Period III it can be understood to have been a large ritual combining several smaller ritual performances.

In this case the *zong* of 冢 is inhabited by a high ancestor, dynastic founder Cheng (K1, i.e., Dayi, Tang), who is not recognized traditionally to be a “冢-ancestor” (because his 冢, though present in both of his names *Cheng* 成 (成) and *Tang* 唐 (唐), is not phonetically demonstrative; that is, it is not pronounced as “*ding*” in later records that ascribe Chinese character transcriptions and thus also pronunciations to the Shang kings’ and other ancestors’ names). His inclusion in the *zong* of 冢 clarifies that 冢 was something to which a select set of certain 冢-related ancestors, that is, those included not simply in the traditionally defined “*ding*,” or “冢-ancestor,” group, belonged. As we saw previously and see again now, the members of this select set of ancestors, like traditionally recognized “冢-ancestors” and including them, almost invariably demonstrate by way of the presence of a 冢 in one of their temple names their membership in a certain set known as “冢.” 冢 thus seems to be not only a temple but also an external construct, a habitation for ancestors, with which the 冢 temple, through ritual, communicates, and by which communication the ritualized temple activates and localizes the power of 冢, or the powers of the now *broadly* defined 冢-ancestors. In the above inscription the main verb is the character 示, 示, or 示 (示 *shi*), meaning “ritualize,” that otherwise itself indicates an “altar” and constitutes the central part of the character *zong*. Cheng (Dayi, K1) is sought tentatively for receipt of a large *xie* ritual at or in the gate to either the physical space or spiritual domicile (*zongmen*) of — or that is — 冢. Cheng inhabits this space, whether in the temple on earth or in the spiritual realm.

Strengthening the case that 冢 identified ancestral spirits are the following facts. First, the rituals / sacrifices offered to the spiritual power 冢 also were those generally offered to directly addressed ancestral spirits (i.e., Shangjia, Da-冢, etc.). These rituals have been enumerated above and, with but two exceptions to be reviewed in further depth below, will not be repeated here. When comparing *individual* spirits’ receipts of cult in such sacrificial rituals, in some cases it becomes apparent that 冢 received an amount or degree of cult commensurate with that enjoyed by other *individual* ancestral spirits (e.g. one to ten *lao*, thirty beasts, etc.). Thus it appears that the spiritual entity 冢 could be addressed either corporately or via its individual comprising spirits. Among the cases in which 冢 seems to indicate a single spirit are those divinations in which the

king queried whether or not to offer a ritual / sacrifice on a 𠄎-day. This strengthens the sense that such divinations were directed at a specific 𠄎-ancestor, though, again, the singularity of 𠄎 is not certain.

But the number of sacrifices divined to be offered to 𠄎 on 𠄎 days by no means represents a majority of sacrifices to 𠄎. In fact, ritual sacrifices performed to, or divinations regarding, 𠄎 occurred on all ten days and, aside from a series of ten inscriptions on one bone made in Period I that obviously target a specific 𠄎-ancestor or set of 𠄎-ancestors for receipt of cult, 𠄎-day sacrifices are in fact very few.⁵⁹ In performing a *gao* (report) to 𠄎, for instance, a *ji* 己 day was favored; for a 𠄎 *hui*, an *yi* 乙 day was preferred.⁶⁰ Therefore, while from the type and usual small size of sacrifice we can deduce that 𠄎 was ancestral in nature, surely we cannot conclude that 𠄎 referred in more than a few cases to a specific 𠄎-day-receiving 𠄎-ancestor. Thus other ancestors were in receipt of this cult to 𠄎, and likely it was one or more of those ten or eleven ancestors whom we saw above received cult via the 𠄎 ritual and thus belonged to the cult of 𠄎: Dayi/Cheng (K1), Zuyi (K12), Zuding (K15), Wuding (K21), Zujia 祖甲 (K23, or Fujia 父甲, Dijia 帝甲), Kangding 康𠄎 (K25), Wuyi (K26), Wenwuding (K27), and one or more consorts Mugui, Bigui, and Bijī. However, this list likely is not exhaustive; nor is it necessarily stable. Below we continue to refine our understanding of the constitution of 𠄎.

Further evidence confirms clearly that 𠄎 was not one but rather many spirits, and, in particular, ancestral spirits. For instance, that when divinations were made to determine the advisability of offering ritual and/or sacrifice to the high ancestors Shangjia (A1) and Dayi (K1, i.e., Cheng/Tang) this potential activity was also reported (告 *gao*) to 𠄎 demonstrates that this spiritual entity 𠄎 was not only a power more authoritative than even these highest of individual ancestors (A1 and K1), but that it therefore also had to have been a corporate power comprised of

⁵⁹ LZ 796. In Period I divinations were not always made to ancestors strictly on their cult days, but increasingly this became the norm throughout the late Shang such that exceptions rarely occurred in Period V. With regard to 𠄎, its having been divined so consistently on non-𠄎 days across a variety of periods and rituals demonstrates strongly that it often does not represent a single 𠄎-ancestor.

⁶⁰ LZ 795–796.

many high ancestral spirits.⁶¹ For instance, we read in a Period II inscription that a *gao* was divined to 𠄎 in relation to the offering of a *sui* sacrifice to Shangjia:

Crack-making on *guiyou* day (day 10), Ji divining: Perform a *sui* sacrifice to Shangjia, perhaps reporting to 𠄎, offering one ox. 癸酉卜即貞上甲彳歲其告𠄎一牛. *Guiyou bu ji zhen shangjia chi sui qi gao 𠄎 yi niu.*⁶²

Commanding the authority to receive such a report on the highest of ancestors, it is unlikely that this 𠄎 indicates an individual 𠄎-ancestor.

𠄎' s Receipt of Massive Sacrifices

The most convincing evidence demonstrating that 𠄎 was corporate and ancestral includes four inscriptions in which 𠄎 was divined to receive massive sacrifices of 300 humans or animals. This is more than any single spirit ever received in known inscriptions and is an amount commensurate only with the cult enjoyed at once by a large group of ancestral spirits. Below I translate all four such inscriptions to 𠄎:

(1) "...offering to 𠄎 300 *qiang*." 三百羌用于𠄎. *Sanbai qiang yong yu kou.*⁶³

(2) "Crack-making on *renzi* day (day 49), Bin divining: Perhaps this evening [we will] offer 300 *qiang* to 𠄎." 壬子卜賓貞惟今夕用三百羌于𠄎. *Renzi bu bin zhen jin xi yong sanbai qiang yu 𠄎.*⁶⁴

⁶¹ *HJ* 22678, 22680, 22755.

⁶² *HJ* 22680.

⁶³ *HJ* 295 (e). Once again we cannot be sure whether the *qiang* sacrificial goods were humans of the Qiang tribe or the *qiang* type of sheep.

(3) "[Crack-making on X-] *chou* day, Bin divining... 300 *qiang* to 口." 丑卜賓貞... 三百羌于口. *Chou bu bin zhen... sanbai qiang yu 口*.⁶⁵

(4) "[We] divine: Perform a *zhao* to 口, offering 100 sheep, 100 dogs, and 100 small pigs." 貞肇口用百羊百犬百豚. *Zhen zhao 口 bai yang bai quan bai tun*.⁶⁶

First, we know that this 口 likely was not defined by an identity with a particular 口-day 口-ancestor from the intelligence that in the only instance among these four inscriptions in which a day of crack-making is known, the day is not a 口 day but a *ren* 壬 day. This is consistent with 口 generally *not* otherwise referring in the inscriptions to specific 口-day-receiving 口-ancestors.

Furthermore, we know that this 口 could not be a single ancestor, since the only other instances in which such enormous sacrifices were made either (1) involved joint offerings made to several high ancestors usually in the order of their kingly succession, (2) were offered to a select group of main-lineage royal ancestors (i.e., those of the *dazong*), including Cheng (K1; Dayi, Tang), Da-口 (K2), Daijia (K3), Zuyi (K12; Zhongzong), and 口, or (3) consistently did not specify recipients.⁶⁷ Obviously, therefore, this 口 was the singly most powerful entity of the Shang

⁶⁴ *HJ* 293.

⁶⁵ *HJ* 294.

⁶⁶ *HJ* 15521. *HJ* 15522, though broken and incomplete, also offers to 口 at least 150 sacrificial victims of some unknown type.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, *HJ* 300, 301. In *HJ* 301 口 occurs as a recipient, but it is uncertain whether or not in this case a modifying name preceded the character, i.e., whether or not it formed part of a 口-ancestor's temple name. Here 口 is followed by the temple names Dajia and Zuyi, and preceding the character 口 the inscription is broken and unclear.

LZ 385 lists eight inscriptions in which 500 sacrificial humans captured from the troublesome Kou 寇 tribe were divined to be sacrificed on mostly *gui* 癸 days (day 10 of any given 10-day ritual cycle), but which also, in two instances, were divined to be offered on *ren* 壬 days (day 9; these are *HJ* 559A and 562). Consistently in these

pantheon, and its company was multiple Shang ancestors. Once again our evidence points to 𠄎 as consisting of a corporation of many ancestors.

A similar circumstance occurs in the Shang performance of the “great *dashi*” (*dashi* 大示) ritual. This was not a very common ritual, and most often the term *dashi* denotes the “great altar,” which presumably was the great altar to the main-lineage (*dazong*) kingly ancestors.⁶⁸ When it occurs as a verb, the *dashi* ritual was offered, most likely at the *dashi* itself, only to an undisclosed large number of — and perhaps all — main-lineage kingly ancestors. In most cases we read of a *dashi* to be offered to ancestors specifically “from Shangjia [and on],” that is, all of the main-lineage kingly ancestors (and consorts?). Otherwise it is offered once to He and Wanghai, which two high powers we have seen participated in Di; here they are treated as ancestors.⁶⁹ The only other clear case of *dashi* acting as a verb occurs in an inscription in which the sacrifice is offered to 𠄎:

“Divine: With wine, make a *dashi* offering to 𠄎.” 貞酉 大示于𠄎. *Zhen you dashi yu 𠄎*.⁷⁰

Given the context of the use of *dashi*, i.e., that otherwise only multiple ancestors received this sacrifice, and extremely rarely even then, therefore 𠄎, though certainly ancestral, could not have been a single ancestral spirit. It must have been, like the spirits “from Shangjia [and on]” who at other times received *dashi*, a high corporate ancestral spiritual recipient.

In several inscriptions 𠄎 received cult explicitly in corporation with other ancestral spirits. In some cases, in which a particular series of ancestral recipients “from X to Y,” including an

inscriptions no recipient was revealed.

⁶⁸ On *dashi* as a verb, see Zhu Qixiang (1989) 131–132 (#437).

⁶⁹ It is instructive that Yang Shengnan has proffered that the Shang treated the He (Yellow River) power as though it were an ancestor. See Yang’s “Yinxu jiaguwen zhong de he” 殷墟甲骨文的河 in *Yinxu bowuyuan yuankan* 殷墟博物院院刊 I (1989): 54–63.

⁷⁰ *HJ* 14364.

independently standing □, is identified, this □ looks very much to be Wuding or another particular □-ancestor.⁷¹ In other inscriptions the nature of □ is not clear. In these inscriptions we find the following combinations of ancestral recipients, here listed within each combination in the order in which they appear in the inscriptions, in each case including □: (1) Zuyi (K12) and □;⁷² (2) Dayi (K1) and □;⁷³ (3) □, Zuyi, Zu-□ (K15), Qiangjia (K14), Zuxin (K13);⁷⁴ (4) Dajia (K3) and □;⁷⁵ and (5) Pan'geng (K18) and □. Since in none of these inscriptions is "□" preceded by a normal familial honorific such as *fu*, "father," or *xiong*, "elder brother," the inscriptions remain ambiguous. It is possible that □'s membership revolved, perhaps based on days, *xun* weeks, sexagenary cycles, seasons, years, or some other as yet undetected factors. Then this □ still could

⁷¹ See, for instance, *HJ* 6583, where a *gao* ritual report is divined to ancestors "from Cheng (Dayi, K1) to □." Here □ could refer to Da-□ (K2), Zhong-□ (K9), Zu-□ (K15), or Wu-□ (K21). Another inscription (*HJ* 1650) records a divination to all of "Zuyi (K12) to □," but once again we cannot be certain if this □ refers to Zu-□ or Wu-□. One additional inscription divines regarding making offerings to ancestors "from Shangjia (A1) to □" (*LZ* 800, Huai 懷 24).

Some similar cases in which the number of ancestors' altars at which cult is divined to be offered (or ritual performed, etc.) is enumerated make it clear that □ specifies a particular □-ancestor. We read, for instance, of an inscription (crack-making on *yichou* day, or day 2) in which "a *hui* sacrifice [will be offered to kingly ancestors from] Dayi to □-ancestor (□祖), [altogether] nine altars" (*HJ* 14881). Beginning with Dayi (K1) and counting through the kingly lineage, the ninth serial kingly ancestor is Zhong-□. This □ then obviously refers to Zhong-□. Finally, in one broken Period IV inscription (*HJ* 32385) there is reference to all of the following kingly ancestors, in this order, including two incomplete "□" appellages: Dayi, Da-□, Dajia, Dawu ... Geng (Dageng? Pan'geng?) ... □ ... □, Zuxin, Zu-□. We cannot identify in this inscription the two ambiguous "□" specifically, since the order of ancestors does not follow the natural genealogical progression. However, we can be quite certain that they refer, like Da-□ and Zu-□, to specific □-ancestors that could only be, divining from Period IV (Kings 26 & 27), two of the following three former kings: Zhong-□ (K9), Wu-□ (K21), and Kang-□ (K25).

⁷² *HJ* 7084.

⁷³ *HJ* 6583, 22755.

⁷⁴ *HJ* 22911.

⁷⁵ *HJ* 295, 1449A.

refer to the corporate □ if, when the divinations were made, the additionally listed ancestors were momentarily revolved out of □.

To *Bin* □ and *Di* □, and Di-□

Two rituals in particular deserve renewed attention with regard to □. These are *bin* 賓 (賓) and *di* 帝 (帝). *Bin* was a hosting ceremony shared among the elite powers of Shang. As we reviewed of this ritual in Chapter 4, high ancestral spirits *bin*-ed one another and also *bin*-ed Di. In addition, the Shang king *bin*-ed various of the ancestral spirits, as well as Di and the nature spirit He.⁷⁶ Furthermore, in several instances the king *bin*-ed □. A typical such inscription reads,

Crack-making on *jiazi* day (day 1): We divine that the king *bin*-hosts □; there will be no disaster. 甲子卜貞王賓□無尤. *Jiazi bu zhen wang bin □ wu you.*⁷⁷

Therefore, □ was a member of the group that was *bin*-ed and, aside from He, which spirit at any rate we have reasoned belongs to Di, □'s company in this group included mostly specific ancestors and Di. On this basis, then, once again it is apparent that □ was also both ancestral in nature and a member of Di.

Strengthening the sense that □ formed part of Di is another instance among several of the king *bin*-ing □. There we find, from a pair of inscriptions, that the king through this ritual sought to bring rain. In this, □ again joins high ancestors (Shangjia, Xiayi, Si), nature spirits (He, Yue, Tu), heroes' spirits (Yiyin, Wanghai), and, as I argue, the composite to which they all belong, Di, in being able to manipulate rain. We read in this pair of inscriptions that,

⁷⁶ See LZ 766–770. The king might also have *bin*-ed the mountain spirit Yue, but the inscription is fragmentary, and Yue rather might have been divined to *bin* another spirit (see LZ 770; Ying 英 1152).

⁷⁷ HJ 23062.

(a) Crack-making on *yichou* day (day 2): The king will *bin* 𠄎. 乙丑卜王即賓𠄎.
Yichou bu wang ji bin 𠄎;

(b) [The king] will not *bin* 𠄎 to bring rain, sixth moon. 勿即賓𠄎雨六月. *Wu ji bin*
𠄎 *yu liu yue*.⁷⁸

We note once again that this query was made not on a 𠄎 but rather an *yi* day. As before, this helps to indicate that this 𠄎 was not a 𠄎-day 𠄎-ancestor.

Other examples of the *bin*-ing of 𠄎 include an inscription in which 𠄎 was divined to receive a 𠄎 𠄎 *beng* sacrifice to induce it to allow rain to fall;⁷⁹ several other instances also demonstrate clearly that 𠄎 controlled rain.⁸⁰ Consequently, we know that, along with high ancestral and other powerful spirits, 𠄎 acted with the power of Di to manipulate weather. As such it must have been Di, as well.

Indeed additional inscriptions allow us to identify 𠄎 with Di. First, 𠄎 received the *di* sacrifice. We read in a Period II inscription of

Crack-making on X-you day, Xian(?) divining: Perform the *di* to 𠄎, offering one
lao set of beasts. ... 酉卜 貞帝于𠄎其牢. *You bu xian(?) zhen di yu 𠄎 qi lao*.⁸¹

Receiving *di*, 𠄎 must have been part of Di.

In another instance in Period I 𠄎 was again divined to receive the *di* sacrifice, this time during a *zhao* ceremony:

⁷⁸ *HJ* 12590.

⁷⁹ *HJ* 1972.

⁸⁰ *HJ* 12527, 12850, 12551, 12553, and 33274.

⁸¹ Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, *Yinxu shuqi xubian* 殷墟書契續編 (n.p. [China], 1933): 2.18.9.

Crack-making [on XX-day], we divine: In the *zhao* ceremony, perform a *di* to □, offering one *lao* set of beasts. [XX] 卜貞肇口帝一牢. *Bu zhen zhao □ di yi lao*.⁸²

In two additional and nearly identical inscriptions that appear on one bone □ was again divined to receive the *di* sacrifice:

Crack-making on *yisi* (day 42): When daylight arrives we will perform a *di* to □.
乙巳卜帝日惟口. *Yisi bu di ri wei □*.⁸³

As we have seen in other cases, here □ is not likely to have indicated a specific □-ancestor, because the ritual was divined to be performed on an *yi* day. Two additional inscriptions identify a Di-□ (帝□) that was divined to receive offerings:

⁸² *HJ* 8. Reading this *di* as a verb is very likely, though not perfectly certain. Mostly this is predicated on the fact that otherwise the inscriptions show that □ received the *zhao* ceremony/sacrifice (see *LZ* 882). One of these was among the four massive sacrifices to □, noted earlier, in which 300 animals were offered to this power (*HJ* 15521). Still, one cannot deny the possibility of a nominal reading for *di* in this instance, whereby □ would become its modifying adjective, producing a “□ of Di” that receives the *zhao* sacrifice. Either reading supports my thesis, which is that □ helped to constitute Di.

⁸³ Shima (1967): 158. It is possible, though from syntax not likely, that on this *yi* day the king wished to know if he should perform a *di* ritual on the coming □ (*ding*) day (*ri* 日). By no means can one read *ri* to be the recipient of the *di* ritual, since in such a case the appearance of □ makes no sense, and otherwise no secure evidence establishes *ri*'s receipt of ritual. Li Xueqin proposed that in such instances we should read *diri* to mean “the day on which [the prior king] Di receives cult,” after which the named stem (such as □ here) refers to such a day in the rotation of the ten stem days. Li believes that the stem portion of the temple names of ancestors was thus chosen (see his *Ping zong shu* 評綜述, in *Kaogu xuebao* 1957 (3): 123). However, subsequently K. C. Chang has shown quite convincingly how the selection of stems was not so arbitrary and in fact was determined by a regular pattern of succession among generations of the various stems, with the *ding* □ and *yi* 乙 stem groups (along with the *yi*-associated *jia* 甲 group) dominating the succession. See both below, this chapter, and Chang's “Shang wang miao hao xin kao” 商王廟號新考, in Chang Kwang-chih (K. C. Chang), ed., *Zhongguo qingtong shidai* 中國青銅時代 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1982): 85–106. Chang's more advanced findings leave my reading of this phrase, above, intact.

(a) “Crack-making on *jiayu* day (day 11); the king orders that we divine: Do not offer a report to Di-□; out of sequence.” 甲戌卜王曰貞勿告于帝口不繫. *Jiayu bu wang yue zhen wu gao yu di* □ *buxi*;⁸⁴







(b) “Crack-making on *yimao* day (day 52): Perhaps offer a *sui* sacrifice to Di-□, offering one *lao* set of beasts.” 乙卯卜其侑歲于帝口一牢. *Yimao bu qi you sui yu di* □ *yi lao*.⁸⁵

As has occurred in every other inscription quoted in this analysis, both divinations were made on non-□ days. Especially by Period II, when (a) was divined, doing so to a □-ancestor was becoming increasingly unlikely. Therefore, barring □ being some sort of nature spirit such as He, Yue, or Tu, which interpretation no evidence specifically supports or even suggests and which our evidence otherwise contravenes, then □, receiving cult consistently on various non-□ days (and, in fact, on *all ten* cult days), must be ancestral and corporate. In this case, then there is no other way to read the nominal expression “Di-□” than to understand that □ modifies Di such that the recipient of the report and cult is the □ of Di.

⁸⁴ In two separate sections of *LZ* (254, 795) this inscription is identified to be *HJ* 24982, but *HJ* 24982 in fact bears no resemblance to this inscription; *LZ* must be mistaken, and I am at a loss to identify this inscription’s actual numbering in *HJ*. In the inscription, “out of sequence” refers to this divination being made outside of the normal sequence of sacrifices and the king’s own acknowledgement of this. In doing so the king apparently hoped not to offend the spiritual powers when he did not follow the appropriate sequence.








⁸⁵ Shima (1967): 158. While Chen Mengjia believed that this □ spirit was Wu-□ (K21) and most scholars follow this, his reading was based on the fact that at least from Period III and on other former kings were addressed as “Di,” their stem names following this honorific. However, in this case no explicit evidence supports reading □ as Wu-□. Considering our analyses above, where we have found that □ commonly adverts simultaneously to several ancestors corporately, then it is more likely that □ modifies Di such that Di-□ indicates a part of Di that is □.

Table 2. The Square in the Names of Shang Royal Ancestors and Other Spirits

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order/Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
	上甲	A1, Shangjia ⁸⁶
(	報乙	A2, Baoyi)
(	報丙	A3, Baobing)
	報丁	A4, Baoding
	示壬	A5, Shiren
	示癸	A6, Shigui
	成	K1, Cheng (Dayi 大乙, Tang 唐, Tang 湯)
	唐	K1 (Cheng, Dayi, Tang 湯)
	大丁	K2, Dading

⁸⁶ Source for all names included in this list: *LZ*, vol. 3: 1361-1474.

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order/Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
	呂己	K8, Lüji
	中丁	K9, Zhongding
	仲宗	K12, Zhongzong (Zuyi 祖乙)
	祖丁	K15, Zuding
	南庚	K16, Nan'geng)
	魚可 _甲	K17, Xiangjia
		_甲
		_甲
		_甲
	盤庚	K18, Pan'geng)

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Order/Pronunciation (Other Names)</u>
	武丁	K21, Wuding
	康丁	K25, Kangding
	文武丁	K27, Wenwuding
	黃(寅)尹	a powerful spirit of a former ranking human (mostly in the time of Wuding)
	伊尹	a powerful spirit of a former ranking human (mostly during & after Wuyi's reign; may have been the same spirit as Huang (Yin) Yin, above)
	杏	the name of a (ancestral?) spirit
	公	spirits of exalted deceased humans; the king

□, Di, the Ancestors, Shangdi, and Xiadi





That □ described many of the highest ancestors, that is, many of the most important of the main-lineage deceased kings and other royal ancestors, becomes ever more apparent when we view the temple names of such spirits. **Table 2** shows this clearly. In this list I delineate both every □-ancestor (i.e., *ding*-ancestor) and non-□-ancestor who nevertheless possessed a □ form in his name. Of the twenty-nine dynastic kingly and six pre-dynastic ancestors receiving cult,⁸⁷ or thirty-five in total, while as many as nineteen possess some type of square-shaped form in their names, strictly speaking we should count only fifteen.⁸⁸ Of these fifteen, thirteen, or 87%, belong to the main ancestral lineage, the members of which lineage, their fathers and sons also having been kings, commonly and consistently received cult. Very apparently, an intimate association existed between a great majority of main-lineage royal ancestors and □, whether or not they were *ding*- (□-) stem ancestors. To bolster this finding we need only recall that the □ sacrifice was offered almost exclusively to (1) main-lineage ancestors who possessed a □, or (2) female royal ancestors who received this cult due to their intimate association with a main-lineage □-possessing deceased king.

With this evidence in mind and reviewing again the graphemic design of the character *di*, noting particularly the prominent central position in *di* of the shape □ or its simplified equivalent,

⁸⁷ The last two Shang kings, known from the Han dynasty Shang genealogy included in Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 to have been Diyi 帝乙 (K28) and Dixin 帝辛 (K29), are not named in the oracle-bone inscriptions and thus cannot be considered for inclusion in either Di or □. They are also excluded from this analysis. For a list of ancestors and kings, see **Table 1** above, as well as Shima, *Sōru*: 556 (also LZ 1474).

⁸⁸ This sum of nineteen includes all of Baoyi (A2) and Baobing (A3), whose bao 匚 has been considered to share with □ a most fundamental meaning of "altar" or "ritual space" (see text above, this chapter); and Nan'geng (K16) and Pan'geng (K18), in whose names the Sinitic characters for *nan* and *pan* include the form 𠄎, which we have determined above is in some cases equivalent with □. However, since in each case of these four their names do not clearly possess a true □ form, I am disinclined to include them in the list of □-possessing ancestors. Thus I count only fifteen such royal ancestors. Their names appear in parentheses in **Table 2**, which lists the temple names of kingly ancestors and other ranking spirits that contain the □ and related forms.

⊥ (which, like □, we know from Chapter 3 scholars have recognized to mean both "central" / "center" and "altar"), it is difficult not to conclude that □ constituted the center of Di.

Strengthening the case for Di's embodiment of □ is a Sinitic form of the character *di* that clearly expresses this relationship. This Period I form shows □ situated exactly in the center of the *di* character: .⁸⁹ Most interesting is the fact that in one instance of this form's occurrence, on one oracle bone are inscribed two distinct forms of *di*, including this one possessing the □ form, , and the other, , which does *not* include the □ in its center.⁹⁰ Their common appearance on one bone might indicate that the former was directed specifically to the □ portion of Di while the other was directed at the greater corporate structure of the generic Di. Since, as we have seen, □ was a corporation of high ancestral spirits, then it becomes apparent that □ was the central body of Di and consisted of high Shang ancestors. That this central court was the highest body of power of both Di and the entire Shang pantheon is known most particularly from the immense sacrifices offered to it on several occasions, reviewed and translated above. □, then, which by itself we know possesses the meaning of *shang* 上, "above" (such as in the name of Shangjia  and, peripherally, through cognates such as *ding* 頂, "top" or "above"), can be identified as Shangdi 上帝, High Di, while the sundry other corporate members of Di must have constituted Xiadi 下帝, Lower Di.

□ as the Central Stellar Home of the High Ancestors and Conduit of
Communication from the Center of Earth with the Center of the Sky

The chapters of this and the previous volume have established the following salient points about ancient civilizations of the northern hemisphere:

⁸⁹ *HJ* 20319, 21174.

⁹⁰ *HJ* 21174.

- 1) the religious and political importance to them of the northern celestial pole;
- 2) a very common observation of the quadrilateral and other patterns that polar stars could be seen to form;
- 3) a clear tendency to project the civilization's high god onto the celestial pole and its observed stellar patterns;
- 4) a clear tendency to establish the quadrilateral at the pole as the pivotal center of all other heavenly movements, including those of the sun and moon.

In the case of Shang China in particular, these same patterns occur, but with the following particularities:










- 1) the Shang royal clan concentrated its religious attention at the northern celestial pole, as evidenced by graphic representations of the pole in their ritual art and Sinitic characters, grave design and orientation, and inscriptional texts themselves;
- 2) the high power Di at the celestial pole was not itself the highest power, although it embraced the highest powers;
- 3) Di included spiritual representatives of non-Shang peripheral peoples and thus, in representing those peoples from time to time, could offer advantage to these peoples while bringing harm to the Shang; thus did the Shang need to maintain a ritual and sacrificial campaign dedicated to the various spirits of Di to encourage that consular power to incline to benefit and assist the Shang over others;
- 4) at the center of Di was the highest power of the spiritual realm, \square , which can be seen, again, to have occupied the old northern celestial pole of the 4th-2nd millennia BC;
- 5) this celestial polar \square was home to a cabinet of the highest Shang ancestors and thus provided the Shang royal house with a distinct advantage, but not a






















free hand, in influencing Di to meet its wishes. That is, this Shangdi enabled the Shang to dominate, but not thoroughly control, Di, for the rest of Di, Xiadi, still could influence environmental or earthly matters that came to bear on the Shang.

From this one cannot but notice that the Shang, known for their eclectic absorption of non-Shang peoples in what seems to have been the dynasty's conscious establishment of a rudimentary and limited "universal," or inclusive, empire, appear very broadly representative or even parliamentary in both the principle and praxis of their religion, with an eclectic parliamentary and universally governing Di at whose center, 中, the ruling party, the Shang royal house, was able to "establish the center" (*lizhong* 立中, an important Shang ritual through whose execution the king apparently planted physically the political center of the dynasty in the location chosen for the ritual)⁹¹ by placing its own high royal ancestral spirits, or cabinet, literally within the celestial center of 中.








What ruling party of what government does not monopolize the central cabinet by which it rules? But remarkable is the unconscious wisdom (Or a recognition of necessity borne of the known diversity of peoples and inchoate tribal polities surrounding the Shang territories? Or tradition?) that the Shang ruling clan exhibited in allowing other, non-aligned, powers to influence the will of the universal high power whose preponderant favoritism toward the Shang was crucial to the Shang's survival. By enacting ritual and sacrifice to these 中-named spirits at the 中-mimicking altar, each practicing king escorted into and maintained in the celestial high court 中 these same 中 ancestors and thus thereby also both queried them for their foreknowledge regarding future events on earth and manipulated them for their ability to influence those same events. In this way the Shang court paralleled and thus monopolized the celestial — and therefore universal — center, the 中 or heart of the heavens, and did so through a sympathetic magic centering on the shape of 中.

⁹¹ On this august ritual divined tens of days in advance, see Keightley (2000): 85–86, as well as below, this chapter.

That the essential verbs that describe the actions by which the Shang kings effected this magic describe graphemically the celestial polar , that is  (*zhen* 貞, “to divine”) and  (or , , or  ; *zhan* 占, “to prognosticate”), should not be lost (see **Table 3** for these and many other significant ritual- / spiritual-oriented characters that contain a  form). Nor should we lose sight of the fact that the design of the most common and significant character identifying the divination process, , directly mimics the design of the double-trapezoid hexagon that peoples of the Neolithic Dawenkou, Hanshan, Qingliangang, Songze, Bei Yinyangying, Xuejiagang Jing’an, Daxi Tangjiagang, Liangzhu, and Bronze Qijia cultures commonly employed seemingly to represent the center of the heavens. It seems apparent that the Shang, in its eclectic absorption of many preceding and contemporary traditions, including observation and representation of the *old* celestial polar , owed much to their Neolithic and early-Bronze predecessors.

Three additional perspectives provided by inscriptional evidence help to confirm this reading of Shang religion, and specifically that to the Shang royal house  represented high ancestors situated in the celestial center. The first involves two Sinitic characters of exceedingly similar design. These are Sinitic  and . The former, formed from three  forms, becomes in Chinese *pin* 品 (which character in its Sinitic form usually identified ritual goods offered to spirits and the ritual vessels that contained them); the latter, , consisting of three  forms, becomes in Chinese both *jing* 晶, “perfect (celestial, i.e., star) light” and, thus, “crystal” (deriving originally from the meaning of Sinitic  of “starlight”), and *xing* 星, “stars.” The alternate Sinitic forms of *xing*, star(s), include the following: , , , , , , , , in most cases demonstrating a number of square-shaped stars suspended as if on a tree (see also **Table 3**, below, for additional forms of Sinitic *jing/xing*). Very obviously,  represented stars directly in the archaic character for stars, . This proves beyond a doubt that, at the same time that it indicated ancestors, sacrificial ceremony, and the altar at which ceremony was offered to ancestors,  also graphically depicted individually what lie in the heavens, the stars. We can take these  to refer generically to stars and ancestors, as well as the original inspiration for drawing heavenly objects in the form of , which was the  at the old northern celestial pole. Striking is the fact that even as late as the Han the Chinese were depicting these stars — or the quadrilaterally

shaped center of the stellar environment, the northern celestial pole of the Neolithic and Bronze periods — as the square centers of the coins that drooped from mortuary “spirit / money trees” recovered from Han tombs (see Volume I, Chapter 4, **Figures 15ab**; compare these against the last three forms of Sinitic *xing* reproduced above). Thus, we should not continue to refer to these trees as “money trees,” or even “spirit trees,” as suggested in Volume I, Chapter 4, but rather “star trees” or “stellar spirit trees.”



Meanwhile, Sinitic , estimated to have depicted graphically sundry sacrificial goods contained in sacrificial vessels offered as a set to a particular spirit,⁹² in fact also acts in the inscriptional record as a verb denoting a sacrifice. This sacrifice was divined for making offerings in tandem with the sacrifices *bin* 賓, *you* 酉, and *si* 司 (i.e., 祀).⁹³ Striking is Zhu Qixiang’s assessment that this Sinitic character 𠄎 means “to offer sacrifice to *the sundry ancestors together*.”⁹⁴ The reason, we discover, is that the Chinese character *qi* 齊, meaning “all alike,” i.e., “equally” or “all together,” in Sinitic was written in a form () exceedingly similar to that of Sinitic *pin* (品), or , and identical to a Sinitic form for “star” (*xing* 星), or . ⁹⁵ Here we need recall only that the two forms  and  were in many cases cognate to understand that once more strong evidence supports the idea that the fundamental concept of religious power in the Shang centered on the form  and its association with religious attention paid to royal ancestral spirits.

We are now also aware of how closely — and in cases even identically — “ancestors” and “stars” were depicted graphically in the Sinitic script, an unmistakable identification of essence. That *ding* 𠄎 originally meant “star,” and thus derivatively also “above” / “top” (in / of the

⁹² Xu Zhongshu (1998): 197.






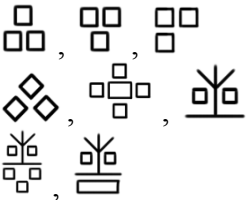
⁹³ LZ 279–280.

⁹⁴ Zhu Qixiang (1989): 113 (#346).











⁹⁵ Xu Zhongshu (1998): 207–208. Zhu Qixiang (1989: 113 [#346]) also cites the ancient Chinese lexicon *Erya* 爾雅 to indicate that the form 品 meant *qi* 齊. *Erya* surely was drawing on the very solid evidence available in its day of the two Sinitic counterpart characters’ (i.e.,  and ) literal graphic near-identity.







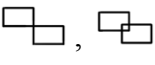

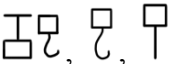

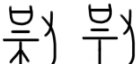

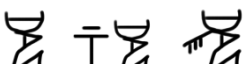







heavens) and, by their location at the top of the heavens, "high ancestors," now seems readily apparent. Thus could *ding* 冂 / 丁 lend its essential meaning to the Chinese *ding* , "above," "top," which character thus appears to elucidate among the primary, or primarily derived, meanings of the original graph of 冂.







Table 3. The Square as Center, Ritual, and Ritual Space in Sinitic Characters


<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Description</u> ⁹⁶
	中	center
	央	(1) center (2) name of a son of Wuding
	富	a ritual space; a ritual
	富	a ritual space in the wilds
	品	(1) ritual/sacrificial goods (2) sacrifice to several ancestors (3) several ancestral spirits
	晶/星	star (s)

⁹⁶ Sources for all information included in this table include Xu (1998); Zhu (1989); Matsumaru and Takashima (1994); LZ; and in many cases my own readings in *HJ*'s 27 volumes.

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Description</u> ⁹⁶
	吉	beneficence from gods/spirits (good fortune; good tidings)
	貞	to divine (primary character)
		to prognosticate (to "read" cracks)
	占	to divine, prognosticate
	(城)牆	the outer city wall, showing square center
𠄎 (𠄎, 𠄎 𠄎)	示	main Sinitic character for altar
	豆	an altar on a stand
	豆	an altar
	石	an altar in the wilds (an altar under a ledge)
	司	an altar

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Description</u> ⁹⁶
		a ritual space
		(1) an altar or ritual space (2) for a spirit to enter ritual space to receive offerings (<i>ru</i> 入)
		an altar for receipt of ancestral spirits
		name of a place outside the Shang capital where rituals were performed
		a sacrifice
		a sacrifice
		a sacrifice
		a sacrifice
		a sacrifice
		(1) a ritual offered to an ancestor (2) ritual offerings (3) name of a (ancestral?) god

<u>Sinitic</u>	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>Description</u> ⁹⁶
	登	to lift up [sth.] in ritual offering
	登	to lift up [sth.] in ritual offering
	興	two people lift an offering to spirits (above an altar)
	告	a ritual report
	冊	to offer a written ritual report to a spirit
	豕, 𠂔	a sacrificial animal
	董	(1) disaster from above (drought) (2) a ritual
	崇	for a spirit to rain down disaster

Finally, two related inscriptional contexts provide additional evidence demonstrating that Shang ritualists apparently looked to 𠂔 in the night sky and inscribed their having done or planned to do so. First, in two instances we read of a circumstance in which the king planned to  𠂔, or

jian-見, "observe 見." The verb 見 meant, as does its Chinese counterpart *jian* 見, to view or observe. It also meant to observe in the sense of "investigate," which usage from my own readings also seems to extend to possess the sense of "waiting [until a later date] to observe the results [of a given prognostication]," that is, something very much like the way in English we extend our verb "to see" to mean "to see [how things turn out]." It is in this latter sense that one of the inscriptions likely must be understood. This inscription reads,

The king prognosticates, saying, "Good fortune. Perhaps on [the coming] *geng* day [an unnamed consort] will give birth to a boy. [We will wait until the coming] 見 day to observe [the results.]" 王占曰吉其惟庚冥見見。 *Wang zhan yue ji qi wei geng ming jian jian kou.*⁹⁷

Contextual phrases in *HJ* demonstrate that in such circumstances, that is, in prognostications concerning the birth of a baby boy or another anticipated event, the character following the verb 見 is normally the name of a Heavenly Stem day.⁹⁸

On the other hand, the second usage of 見 見 that interests us does not provide so easily determined a context, and reading *jian*-見 to mean "observe 見 in the heavens" is, considering the foregoing study and the syntax and lexicon provided by the inscription, the most logical and appropriate interpretation:

The king prognosticates, saying, "Perhaps this evening of [this] *gui* day we will observe 見." 王占曰惟今夕癸見見。 *Wang zhan yue wei jinxi gui jian jian kou.*⁹⁹

First, the time at which the action is to take place, nighttime, when the stars are visible, and

⁹⁷ *HJ* 811B.

⁹⁸ *LZ* 220.

⁹⁹ *HJ* 667.

second, the fact that aside from *jian*- 𠄎 there is no other verb or object in this sentence, cause one to recognize that this 𠄎 most likely refers to the physically visible 𠄎 in the night sky, the nocturnal northern celestial pole. It thus appears once again to be clearly an object of Shang reverence.

Other inscriptions that relate 𠄎 with evening activities of course draw our attention and scrutiny. We have seen previously how a *di* sacrifice to 𠄎 likely was divined for the coming of dawn. This implies that activity directed at or observation of 𠄎 was transpiring during the night preceding the dawn. Furthermore, another inscription explicitly divines offering ritual sacrifice to 𠄎 "this evening" or "tonight":

Crack-making on Day 1 (*jiazi*), we divine: Tonight we will offer a *zhao* sacrifice, with wine, to 𠄎; eleventh month. 甲子卜貞今夕酉肇𠄎用十一月. *Jiazi bu zhen: jinxi you zhao 𠄎 yong shiyi yue.*¹⁰⁰

So much evidence indicating clearly that 𠄎 simultaneously depicted for the Shang (1) an altar, (2) sacrificial goods, (3) ancestral spirits at the center of heaven, (4) a sacrifice to these 𠄎-dwelling ancestral spirits, and, probably most fundamentally, (5) circumpolar stars and the nocturnally observed celestial polar 𠄎 asterism, could not have occurred in concert in a mere haphazard and remarkable coincidence. This very *consistent* coincidence of evidence is in fact sufficient to suggest strongly that, from Neolithic times through at least the Shang, the 𠄎 at the center of the heavens was the center of proto-Chinese religious attention and, usually, sacrifice.


Ding, Di, and Taotie

Nighttime inquiries of Di might demonstrate further how Ding, Di, and the Taotie motif can be understood to represent together a cohesive portrait of Shang court religion and the political organization through which the Shang court understood its relationships with its neighboring

¹⁰⁰ *HJ* 15517.

trading partners, competitors, and combatants. In Chapter 2 of this volume we saw how the Taotie face appearing on Shang ritual bronzes, in all of its sundry variations, always appeared within a rectangular frame. We concluded with the speculation that the Taotie faces represented the Shang royal ancestors who resided within the polar rectangle found at the ancient pole. In the present chapter we have demonstrated that the quadrilateral Ding was in Shang OBIs both the highest power within Di and that, like the Taotie, it represented the highest, most powerful Shang ancestors. In Chapters 3 and 4 we theorized that the rectangle and its shortened forms that appear in the Sinitic character for Di represented both the polar quadrilateral and the altar on which ancestors were both ritually invested in that stellar rectangle and propitiated and thus fed, and on and in which they alighted to partake of the cult offered to them thereon. Likewise, the bronzes, on which the Taotie appeared, constituted the ritual space into which both the cult was placed and the spirits descended to receive the cult. The face of the Taotie on any given bronze, then, may simply have represented the ritual face of the ancestral spirit called to receive cult. It might be that the face so presented in the ritual assisted the spirits in understanding to which among them the cult was being offered. In short, the Taotie may have represented the faces of those who resided in the central rectangle of Di, which was Ding, and that all three of the rectangular motifs of Di, Ding, and the Taotie represent the *Ur*-quadrilateral, the concretely visible rectangle at the pole. The ancestors of the Shang dynastic line then resided at the pole.

One objection to so identifying as the residence and representation of Shang royal ancestors to be the singular quadrilateral at the pole might be that, as we have seen, from the perspective of the observer on earth the orientations of the polar quadrilateral to which we can trace the two patterns visible in the Taotie and Di designs are 180° inverted from one another. That is, the same stars demonstrating Di, when revolved 180° , manifest the outline of the Taotie face. The reason seems to be that the Shang wished in each representation to sustain the crucial position of the northern polar star, Thuban, as the absolute height and center of the religio-political hierarchy of power: in Di it sits at the top of the character (in the center of the top horizontal) and thus also the hierarchy of power, and in the Taotie the star forms the mouth, which is the crucial locus of the ancestors' ingestion of the comestibles offered them via the medium of the bronze vessel wherefrom the Taotie gazes symbolically. That Thuban served as the absolute center of Di,

Taotie, and, we can assume, Ding, is known from the fact that Shang royal tombs were pointed specifically at this star. But it surely is no meaningless coincidence, either, that in at least two instances Di was inscribed on oracle bones very purposefully inverted ()¹⁰¹ such that its mirroring of the polar stellar patterns matches precisely that of the Taotie. It seems that at the time of divination in these particular cases, Di of the heavenly pole was itself inverted in the sky and thus found its identical representation in the inversion of the character on the bone.

Ding, Yi, and Jia: Establishing the Center





Some time ago K. C. Chang reasoned that the Heavenly Stem characters that appear in the posthumous temple names of Shang kings, empresses, consorts, and royal family members identified "stems," or groups, of the Shang royal house of Zi 子. He also demonstrated that, while the kingship rotated among the ten stems, the two most powerful and thus dominant groups, and who therefore produced the most kings, were the *ding* 丁 and *yi* 乙. A third, the *jia* 甲, he discovered to align prominently with the *yi* 乙 group, providing it through intermarriage with both genetic diversity and supplemental socio-political power.¹⁰² Chang's study therefore demonstrates that among individual stem groups, the *ding* was the single most powerful. Considering the findings of our preceding study, that this group represented by a square was the most powerful seems only natural.







¹⁰¹ *HJ* 21087, 21175. In the first case *di* seems to serve as a verb; in the second, a noun. I take as strong support for my position the fact that since this manuscript was first prepared and distributed David Pankenier has also noticed one of these instances of Di's inversion and has linked it to the rotation of the pole (2004: 234).


¹⁰² Chang Kwang-chih (1982): 85–106, esp. 90–98. Although Chang called the stem groups *zong* 宗, "lineages," from his own findings and the direct-descent father-and-son relationships that occur between distinct stem-named ancestors (such as 丁 and 乙, as in the case of father Dayi 大乙 and son Taiding 太丁) we know that these were not true genetic sub-lineages within the Zi royal clan. The stems in temple names describe rather a regular pattern of generational rotation of the kingship but which involved complex marital relationships occurring among generations and actual lineages. The stem terms in kings' temple names, then, seem not to have been posthumously selected, even though they were indeed posthumous titles.

Indeed the supreme power in the Shang royal house of the two groups *ding* and *yi* seems to be reflected in the positions that they took physically in the heavens. Already we have seen that this is true particularly of the *ding* stem, whose stem character appears physically at the northern celestial pole. We recall from above in this chapter that certain high ancestors who belonged to [1] the *ding* stem (or who possessed a *ding* in one of their temple names or were *ding*-related), [2] the *yi* stem, or [3] the *jia* stem, all received *ding*-directed cult since they formed part of the high power Ding at the pivot of the celestial dome. K. C. Chang's work answers the question of why a non-*ding* ancestor from either the *yi* or *jia* stem counted among the ancestors included in the central Ding power in the heavens: it seems that power borne of social ties to the center buys one into the center, a finding that is hardly surprising.

On the other hand, in the case of both the *yi*-stem and *jia*-stem ancestors, perhaps they enjoyed their own representations in the asterisms at the pole. What I have treated as the meridian of the ancient polar heavens seems to appear in both Sinitic characters *yi* and *jia*. We recall that this stellar line in the West forms the tail of Draconis, the Serpent, and in ancient China constituted the central ridge of the various expressions of the stellar facial motif (as represented in the Liangzhu AZ motif, the Longshan jade monster faces, and the Shang Taotie), as well as the dragon that *Shiji* 28 (12) reports represented Taiyi's spear on the Numinous Banner (*lingqi*) wielded at Han Wudi's court in the late 2nd century BC.

This line also may be represented as the vertical line of the cross that appears within the square of the Sinitic character for the first pre-kingly, and highest, Shang ancestor to receive cult, Shangjia . Considered only visually, then, this character appears to reproduce the geometry created by stellar patterns appearing at the ancient pole, represented by (1) the cross that depicts the perpendicularly intersecting stellar lines (Mizar-Thuban-Kochab; and Edasisch-Thuban-Kappa Draconis / 4 Draconis-2 Draconis / Giasar, i.e., the tail of Draconis) with their intersection at Thuban, and (2) the square that recreates the polar quadrilateral that also centers at Thuban. Furthermore, these two elements of the character  reproduce the graphs of two of the Heavenly Stem branch groups that were most powerful at the Shang court. These stem graphs are *jia*  and *ding* . Then the graph for the temple name of the highest Shang royal ancestor Shangjia may in fact represent visually his most exalted status by depicting his both (1)

perceived immortal residence at the very vortex of the understood universe, the old pole star Thuban, and (2) simultaneously his descendent relatives and polar cohabitants at the pole, the deceased high royal members of the *jia* and *ding* (and *yi*) stem groups who had been initiated into the cult of the single most powerful group, the Ding. The character  may then represent both a rank signifier, in that it displays two of the three most powerful stem groups of the Shang ruling clan, one of which, *ding*, that which refers to "stars" and thus "top" or "above" (reading Sinitic *ding* 𠄎 as "stars" and also Chinese *ding* 頂 back into *ding* 𠄎, i.e., the Zhou *ding* 丁), is the single most powerful group, and a simple sighting device to locate the pinnacle of power among the heavenly host. This would explain the reason for the *ding* square's having been drawn into the character for Shangjia . We recall from Chapter 4 that this character was also written thusly,  and , with the superior line or lines representing the meaning and sound of the first syllable of the name, *shang*, meaning "upper" or "superior" and thus, by extension, "greater" (as contrasted with other *jia*-stem royal ancestors, such as Xiangjia [K17]). The standard form , then, really is an ellipted form of the character, and *ding* is thus not represented phonetically in the name. *Ding*, the square surrounding the stem name *jia* , then appears to represent rather (1) the status of Shangjia as one among the *ding* group of the polar heavens and cult-receiving ancestral group resident there, and (2) his physical location in the perceived very "top" and center of the stellar universe, the pole. This positioning of Shangjia thus places the highest ancestor of the Shang polity and ancestral pantheon in a location in the sky identical to that enjoyed by the high gods An, Enlil, and Marduk in Mesopotamia and Indra and Varuna in India. The similarity is striking.

We have seen previously as well how the stellar line that appears to produce the vertical in the character for the *jia* stem also comprises the vertical shaft of the character *zhong*  that bisects the square *ding* at the pole. We saw previously how we may thus draw the character *zhong* in the very center of the heavens. But to do so we drew a straight line through the median space between a long series of stars aligned only imperfectly to create such a line, as we did again in the case above of Shangjia. In the West, contrarily, one finds the long tail of Draconis traced according to the naturally curved trajectory that these stars, when connected, form. If we do the same for the vertical of the character *zhong*, we produce a slight variation on the character, as shown in **Figures 1ab**. Now compare this vertical with the Sinitic form of the second stem *yi* 乙 that Shang inscribers

carved into bones: 𠄎. It is the same.¹⁰³

Therefore, it appears, from both inscriptional evidence that places *yi* and *jia* ancestors with or within Ding at the northern celestial pole and pictorial evidence that describes visually that place 𠄎 and 十 at the pole, that *ding*, *yi*, and *jia* ancestors enjoyed a unique central position in the center of the heavens. Their tripartite domination of Shang rulership or high influence over other Shang ancestors, the representative counsel of Di (as we know the vertical shaft of both *yi* and *jia* bisects the rectangle in the Sinitic character *di*, as well), and the Shang polity itself are thus portrayed visually in both the character *zhong* 中, meaning "center," and the Sinitic character representing the name of the first recognized pre-kingly ancestor, Shangjia, or 𠄎. While *zhong* represents both the *ding* and *yi* stems and Shangjia the *ding* and *jia* stems, in fact Shangjia, through the short straightened vertical of the cross that lies within the *ding* form of his temple name, may be considered to represent the *yi* stem, as well.

At the same time, the primacy of the *ding* stem remains readily apparent not only in K. C. Chang's projections of Shang royal marriage ties and accessions to the Shang throne, but also our entire body of evidence in this study that demonstrates the supreme spiritual power of the quadrilateral of Ding that lay at the center of the heavens.

¹⁰³ While the reverse form of the character (𠄎) became standard by the middle-Zhou, from which the formalized *xiaozhuan* (and later scripts') Chinese character derives (the now-standard 乙 being *kaishu*), throughout the Shang (all periods) and into the Zhou both forms were employed. The persistence of the two, reversed, forms likely can be attributed to individual scribal preference and, typical of such idiosyncratic styles expressed in the inscription of oracle-bone characters, does not imply any differentiation of meaning. For Shang and Zhou Sinitic forms of 𠄎, see Gao Ming (1980): 6; Li Xiaoding (1965): 4221; Zhou Fagao (1974): 7955–7956; and Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammatica Serica Recensa*, in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities No. 29* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1957; 1972 reprint): 138 (505a-e). For a further discussion of possible original meanings of Sinitic *yi* see below, Volume III, Chapter 6, note 17.

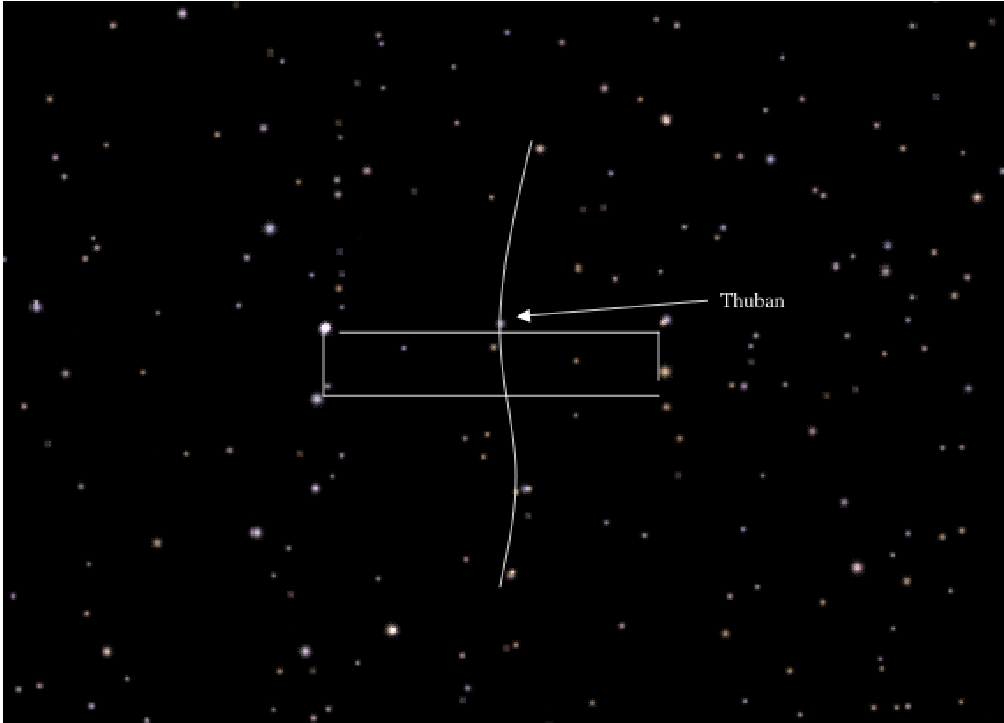


Figure 1a. The character “zhong” (中) in the stars of the pole, 1200 BC.



Figure 1b. The character “zhong” (中) in the stars of the pole, 1200 BC.

Finally regarding *zhong*, “the center,” and its graphic construction from the two constituent stem groups *ding* and *yi* who represent the highest ancestral and worldly powers in the Shang system, we recall that a significant Shang ritual, *lizhong* 立中, seems to describe the physical establishment of the center of the Shang polity.¹⁰⁴ In this case the character *zhong* always is written with upper and lower appendages that apparently represent standards waving in the wind: 𠄎. This *zhong* thus appears to represent the Shang’s establishment of their political center on earth. But we read from Eliade and others, as well as the physical and inscriptional evidence from the Shang, that such a physical center was meaningless without a spiritual center on which it could be

¹⁰⁴ David Keightley offers evidence from both Shang and Zhou bone and bronze inscriptions to support the argument that *lizhong* refers to the ritual establishment of the center (Keightley, 2000: 85–86).

based. This foundation most certainly was the celestial center just described as *zhong* 中, or the combined forces of the high ancestors of the *ding*, *jia*, and *yi* stems of the royal Zi clan that sat at the northern celestial pole. It is no wonder, then, that the term *zhongguo* 中國, "central region," has referred, in the subsequent Zhou and later periods down to the present, to the *mobile* center of power in China: it is not so much a geographic center of power, as the term eventually nonetheless *implies*, for the geographies of China and its center have shifted constantly during these thousands of years; rather, it is a religio-political center whose essence is literally in the high ancestors of the first identifiable dynastic polity of China. Wherever the earthly center moves, to whatever capital, as long as the descendent kings *lizhong*, that is, establish the high royal ancestors in their ancestral altar at the power center of the geo-political polity, then this is the *zhongguo*, or central region, that is the capital.¹⁰⁵

Appendix: The Polar Projection of Di and the Astronomical Projection of Ding

The Polar Projection of Di

Since this chapter and all of Volume II in their present forms were written in 2002–2003, David Pankenier has also projected the Sinitic character for *di* onto the celestial polar region of the middle to late 2nd millennium BC.¹⁰⁶ I welcome the support that Professor Pankenier's work offers my own thesis of a pole-centered godhead. However, our projections differ considerably, and the basis for our differences appears to be, as in the case of the shift in orientations of architectural structures between the Erlitou and Shang civilizations reviewed toward the end of Chapter 3, the

¹⁰⁵ For a study of the influence of the change from a previously shifting to a permanent Shang (Yin) center at Anyang and its influence on the developing idea of a Shang polity, see Nancy Thompson Price, "The Pivot: Comparative Perspectives from the Four Quarters," in *Early China* 20 (1995): 93–120, esp. p. 109–120.

¹⁰⁶ Pankenier (2004): 229–236.

unequal extent and depth to which we have considered contextual evidence for both (1) Eurasian and specifically Chinese Neolithic, Bronze, and Zhou period astronomical observation and polar mimicking in the creation of the godhead, and (2) Shang religion, and particularly the ritual cult focused on deceased ancestors and Di. Consequently, Professor Pankenier's projection of *di* onto the stars does not account for either (1) the symbolic significance of the quadrilateral form in the human creation of earthly designs of sacred architecture and the godhead's representation(s) during the periods prior to and during the Shang, and (2) ritualistic OBI graphs related to the worship of Di and all ancestors, whose forms need to be considered in tandem with the shapes that constitute the character for *di*.

First, Professor Pankenier's projection does not account at all for *ding* 𠄎, the quadrilaterally shaped ancestral cohort that was most powerful during the Shang and is represented in not only the character for Di itself but also, as we have seen, the names of numerous Shang ancestors and rituals devoted to them. And it was not only the Shang proto-Chinese who conceived of their godhead as most prominently a quadrilateral whose model resided at the celestial pole, but apparently also both Neolithic and early-Bronze proto-Chinese and other numerous other Eurasian civilizations, as well, as we saw in Volume I and the prior chapters of Volume II.

As a further consequence of Professor Pankenier's having neglected the context of the Eurasian (and, in fact, world) projection of the godhead onto the celestial polar quadrangle, his projection of *di* onto a series of stars near the contemporary pole neither can explain how the Zhou's high godhead, Tian, which we know well the Zhou equated with the Shang Di godhead, can fit into his projection scheme. That is, Tian and Di, if projected onto stellar patterns at the pole, must be constituted from the same group of stars. In Professor Pankenier's projection, the graph *tian* does not fit. His projection appears random, arbitrary, and hurried.

In a related vein, neither can Professor Pankenier's projection accommodate the graphs forming the names of the Shang high ancestor Shangjia and the Shang founder Dayi, nor even the polar god seated in pre-Han times at Thuban that we know was transmitted throughout the Neolithic-Bronze / Shang-Zhou civilizations of China, Taiyi. Neither, then, does his projection take into account the important role that *yi* 乙 and *jia* 甲, along with *ding* 𠄎, ancestors played in the power structure of the Shang and the polar godhead constituted of Di. Furthermore, Professor

Pankenier's projection does not place the character Di along traceable stellar lines: in his projection not only is the rectangle missing, but also the long legs are formed from just endpoint stars — the projected legs do not follow stellar lines.

Finally, Professor Pankenier assumes that the Shang had c. 1545 BC decided to abandon the old pole star Thuban for a new pole star, Kochab. But this neglects the weight of tradition surrounding the quadrilaterally shaped polar god centered at Thuban that for over a millennium had served its predecessor civilizations or cultures in northern and coastal China. That the Shang continued the tradition of recognizing the rectangular seat of the old pole god is apparent in all of its graphs for Ding and Di (not to mention specific ancestors Shangjia and Dayi), related ritually descriptive graphs, and the architecture of its tombs, as well as in the pictorial representations of its godhead as recreated in the Taotie rectangles cast on the sides of bronzes. Moreover, there would have been utterly no compelling reason for the Shang to have discarded tradition and switched pole stars, for Thuban and Kochab were virtually equidistant from the true point of the pole at this time, each hovering approximately 7° from the center of the heavens. In sum, I do not find evidence to support Professor Pankenier's particular projection of *di* / Di onto the pole, and it appears to be a hurried and arbitrary placement in a jumble of stars centering on a misidentified pole located at a star with no history of singular significance. At the same time, I welcome his substantial support of the idea that the Shang (and, by my own extension, other, earlier and later Chinese and Eurasian, civilizations) conceived of their godhead as a celestial polar god.

The Astronomical Projection of Ding

Even more recently now, David Pankenier has once more prepared and delivered a paper that treats matters of Shang and later Chinese religion that are closely associated with my own work on Di and Ding. I am very pleased that my work apparently has found, even prior to its formal publication, such influence with so prominent a scholar. Although I have not enjoyed access to Professor Pankenier's paper, I have learned from several individuals who observed him

deliver the paper at Columbia and who have read various drafts of it that he made no mention of my work on Ding, of which he has possessed a copy since 2004.¹⁰⁷

Professor Pankenier has projected an identity of the stem *ding* with a stellar square that he projects onto the Warring States-Han Chinese view of the sky, a square constructed from four stars that in the West has formed the quadrangular body of the asterism Pegasus. In some fashion that remains, from my very limited knowledge of Professor Pankenier's unpublished paper, unclear but which may relate in some way to my identification in my 2003–2004 manuscript of a center-plus-agency paradigm identifiable in Chinese religious systems from the Neolithic through the Warring States periods (an argument that is now found in Volume III, below), Professor Pankenier has proposed that the stem *ding* 𠄎 (Chinese 丁) can be identified with the four stars that in the West constitute the zodiacal square of Pegasus, apparently arguing that the significance of the square *ding* was both in its marking for the Shang of the beginning of the first new moon of the new year and its connection with the god Di at the northern celestial pole. It might be that Professor Pankenier has thus attempted to apply the center-plus-agency paradigm¹⁰⁸ to the specific role of *ding* / Ding that earlier I identified in Shang religion.

Professor Pankenier's projection of *ding* as the zodiacal square of Pegasus is very problematic, being without concrete support and thus very unlikely. The crux of Professor Pankenier's argument for the identification of the fourth stem *ding* 𠄎 with the square of Pegasus is found in the first line of the poem "Ding zhi fang zhong" (『定之方中』, Mao 50) of the *Shi Jing*, or *Book of Odes*. This ostensibly cryptic line reads in full,

¹⁰⁷ Again, I have not seen Professor Pankenier's paper of February 2009 but know of it and some of its arguments only through citations from it found in Jonathan Smith's paper of April 2009 and from email communications from colleagues in attendance at the February 2009 Columbia conference at which Professor Pankenier presented his paper.

¹⁰⁸ This paradigm I identified in limited form originally in my Ph.D. dissertation of 1998, as it applied in Warring States-Han through Tang-Song philosophical literature. For a brief summary of this system as it occurs in the metaphysics of Warring States-Han texts, see Didier (1998): 338–346. For the proposed extension of this system to earlier, Neolithic through Shang, times, see below, Volume III.

Ding zhi fang zhong, zuo yu Chu gong. 定之方中，作于楚宮。

Following the traditional commentarial interpretation that has prevailed in Chinese understandings of this poem since the Han period, Professor Pankenier understands the *ding* 定 that appears in the title and at the fore of this poem's introductory line to represent, through phonetic and graphic loan, the Sinitic stem *ding* 𠄎 and, as an alternative name, the asterism *shi* 室, that is, *yingshi* 營室 (Encampment). Since the Warring States-Han periods *shi* / *yingshi* has been counted among the twenty-eight celestial lodges / mansions (*xiu* 宿) and the one that in these periods identified the beginning of the lunar / solar new year since the first new moon of the new year rose in conjunction with the heliacal ascent on the east-southeast horizon of the representative star of the lodge *shi*, or β Pegasi. As the marker of the new year, *shi* thus was correlated with the first lunar month of the Qin Zhuan Xu calendar, which was *zheng* 正. (We have reviewed the significance of the lodge *shi* to the Zhuan Xu calendar of Ying Zheng already in Volume I, Chapter 3, above.) Professor Pankenier apparently assumes from the appearance of a 𠄎 in the Sinitic form of *zheng* 𠄎 and the meaning of the Chinese character *zheng* 正 of "straight" or "correct" that the Sinitic stem *ding* 𠄎 itself thus portrayed the "correct" (i.e., order-establishing) asterism of what later, in Chinese, he posits, came to be known as *ding* 定 (*shi* 室).






In essence, Professor Pankenier appears to propose a phonetic, semantic, and graphic association between the Sinitic graph for the stem *ding* 𠄎 and Sinitic and Chinese words and graphs that in their *Sinitic* graphs employ a form of Sinitic *ding* < *teenj 𠄎. These words and graphs are [a] *zheng* < *tjeŋs, "straight," "correct" (Sinitic 𠄎, Chinese 正), and [b] *ding* < *deŋs, "settle" (Sinitic 𠄎, Chinese 定). Professor Pankenier absorbs from these two graphs, each of which derives *in part* from the original Sinitic graph of 𠄎 (see below), the idea that, in Sinitic, 𠄎 represented at its most germane level the meanings of these later, derived, Sinitic and Chinese graphs, which meanings he considered to be respectively "straight" and "settle." From such distant associations spanning two languages, two scripts over some 1000 years, and a thorough standardizing reformulation of Chinese scripts in the 3rd century BC through the 3rd century AD to produce the currently common *kaishu* script (i.e., the script that is produced as

















"Chinese" in this and other modern writers' works), Professor Pankenier apparently leaps across several intervening dots to draw a line from the square Sinitic *ding* 𠄎 on one end of time and etymology c. 1300–1100 BC to a projected square *shi* 室 or *ding* 定 asterism on the other, 1000-year later, end of c. 300–100 BC.





Several assumptions in this thesis do not hold up well. First, in *Chinese* the character *zheng* appears to connote the establishment of an order, that is, here the order of the Qin's new Zhuan Xu luni-solar calendar, while in fact, when we review the etymologies of *zheng*, *ding*, and associated graphs, it does not seem really to do so. The Sinitic graphs for *zheng* 𠄎 and *ding* 𠄎 surely are related graphically with *ding* 𠄎, and perhaps *ding* 𠄎 lent these characters a phonetic element, but this phonetic loan, which is somewhat distant and thus very uncertain, does not explain the reason for the presence of the *ding* 𠄎 graph in the Sinitic characters 𠄎 and 𠄎.

While the primary loan from *ding* 𠄎 to these characters is graphic and semantic, the element of semantic loan from *ding* 𠄎 is more subtle than Professor Pankenier suspects. The meanings of "correct" or "straight" for *zheng* 正 and "settle" for *ding* 定 derive from *ding* 𠄎 not at all astronomically but through a fundamental — even if derived — meaning of *ding* 𠄎 that Professor Pankenier appears to have overlooked. The basic graph *ding* 𠄎 and the derivative graphs 𠄎 (*zheng* 正) and 𠄎 (*ding* 定) are not related through a basic meaning of either "straight" or "settle" for *ding* 𠄎, a meaning that does not appear at all to exist for that Sinitic word / graph.

To understand the semantic loan from *ding* 𠄎 to the derivative graph *zheng* 𠄎, let us review the latter graph's component elements and essential usage in OBIs. The Sinitic graph contains two elements, *ding* 𠄎 and 𠄎. The latter graphic element represents the meaning of "stop" and appears to reproduce the shape of the human foot. It is the Sinitic equivalent of the later Chinese *zhi* 止. Very often this sub-graph 𠄎 is redoubled in the Sinitic graph for *zheng*, producing 𠄎 below 𠄎, or 𠄎. This doubling of 𠄎 depicts a pair of feet stopping, which is borne out pictorially in several commonly found bronze versions of the graph for *zheng*, or 𠄎. In this Sinitic graph, then, we appear to find a meaning of someone stopping before an enclosure,

as all of Wang Guowei, Zhang Xuan, and Zhu Qixiang have proposed.¹⁰⁹ From the primary usage of the character *zheng*  in OBIs, we learn of what this enclosure consists: a square city wall. From our analysis of the *ding*  graph's various uses in OBIs that we conducted in the foregoing chapter, we know already that this meaning for *ding* indeed occurs in other OBI graphs, including , which depicts a city wall with altars installed on each of the four directional walls. Herein the  graph very obviously indeed means "enclosure" or "square city wall," which derives from the fact that the sacred space that is the capital city and its central altar was modeled in turn on the locus of the high god *ding*  at the apex of the heavens, the NCP.

The primary and by far the most frequent uses of *zheng* , , and  in OBIs and bronze inscriptions bear out the fact that the meaning in *zheng*  (etc.) of the borrowed graphic element of *ding*  adverts to a city wall. In the Shang and early Zhou the graphs *zheng* , , and  most fundamentally and commonly indicated a punitive expedition carried out by the king.¹¹⁰ Consequently, Sinitic *zheng* , while doubtlessly cognate graphically with the much later Chinese graph *zheng* , most fundamentally correlates semantically with what in Chinese appears graphically to represent a character derivative from *zheng* , which is *zheng* , "to carry out a punitive expedition," and, thus, "punish." In later Chinese usage, quite apparently a radical indicating a plurality of people, , which eventually came to be read as *chi*, was added to the basic form of *zheng*  to identify and tease out semantically the basic meaning of the Sinitic graph , which meaning evidently had become obscured during the early-Zhou period when this basic graph  was employed to represent various related meanings of spoken words, whether they were homophonic or not.

Very significantly, therefore, the use of the graph of *ding*  in the secondarily derivative character *ding* , "to settle" (or "pacify"), relates intimately with the meaning of the primarily derived *zheng* , : the *zheng* punitive campaign having been completed successfully, the

¹⁰⁹ See Zhu Qixiang (1989): 65 (#179); and Zhang Xuan 張瑄, *Zhongwen changyong sanqianzi xingyi shixu* 中文常用三千字形義釋序 (Hong Kong: Xianggang daxue chubanshe, 1968): 425–6.

¹¹⁰ Zhu Qixiang (1989): 65 (#180).

enemy city was thus "settled" or "pacified." That is, *ding* 𠄎, "to settle," derived from the successful (or hoped for) conclusion of the execution of a *zheng* 𠄎 punitive campaign against a foe. This extended Sinitic graph *ding* 𠄎, then, derived not at all from the meaning that we find associated with *zheng* 正 in Chinese of "straight," "correct," but rather directly from the primary use in OBIs of *zheng* 𠄎 to refer to the king and his troops arriving (stopping) at a foe's city wall enclosure to carry out a punitive siege against that foe. Once the foe had been defeated, the circumstance had become "correct," *zheng* 正, the problem "settled," *ding* 𠄎.

The use in OBIs of Sinitic *zheng* 𠄎 to indicate the first month of the luni-solar new year was much less common and very apparently derived phonetically according to the rebus principle. That is, the graph 𠄎 was borrowed to denote in script a homophonic word *tjens (or something phonetically fairly close to it) that independently denoted the beginning of the new year. As a result of this primary borrowing of the basic graph, eventually, in Chinese, the radical 𠄎 needed to be added to the basic graph 𠄎 to clarify the use of the graph to express its original and primary meaning of "to carry out a punitive expedition."







As we know from the preceding chapter, the primary meanings of *ding* 𠄎 include (1) the most exalted and square-shaped godhead of the Shang religion, and thus also (2) the ancestors that inhabited that square godhead, as well as, most fundamentally, the (3) star(s) from which the stellar godhead was comprised; and (4) derived and associated meanings of a square ritual space on earth, whether that space was the temple or shrine in which a square altar stood, the square altar itself, or the sacred enclosure that encapsulated overall these religiously potent internal sites, the city wall. There thus is no internal justification in Sinitic or Chinese usage of *ding* 𠄎 (Chinese 丁), whether by itself or in graphic loans of a phonetic or semantic nature to other, extended, characters, for identifying the graph with a square asterism along the ecliptic. And to attempt to identify cognate characters on the basis speciously of a single shared graphic element is, as we noted in Volume II regarding **m*^y*ag* (*wu*) and other characters constructed in part from the 𠄎/ 𠄎 (square, center) component, unsound when not accompanied by deeper and more careful study of graphic evolutions and relationships among characters and, particularly, their contextual usages in script.

This brings us to a further problem with the identification of *ding* 定 with this ecliptic

square of Pegasus. The asterism *shi* 室, one of the twenty-eight *xiu* 宿, celestial lodges, was not at all conceived in Chinese history as a square. Nor was *ding* 定 a common alternative name for *shi*, and indeed its only uses to refer to *shi* are highly insecure, as we shall see further below. While it is true that during the latter half of the 2nd millennium BC the Babylonian court astronomers had already identified the square of what came to be Pegasus to be one of their Thirty-six Stars, which was at that time simply a square known as *I-iku* and which fell within the exterior band of three that together mapped the heavens, that is, the band known as the path of Enki that correlates roughly with the ecliptic zodiacal belt, and this square was identified in the Babylonian Astrolabes to signal the beginning of the first month of the new year,¹¹¹ one cannot assume that this Babylonian square that was identified in the path of Enki, or, roughly, along the zodiacal belt (the moon's more wildly erratic course does not align closely with the sun's steady and thus easily recognizable ecliptic), traversed the entirety of Eurasia to reach intact, as a square, first India and then China during the 1st millennium BC. In fact, neither the Indian twenty-eight *naksatras*, which were adjusted from the seventeen ecliptic asterisms from among the Babylonian Thirty-six Stars, nor the Chinese twenty-eight *xiu*, which derived from the Indian *naksatras*, projected a square asterism in the place of the Babylonian *I-iku*. Indeed, in both the Indian and Chinese traditions the square was broken into two more or less vertical lines that together had comprised the Babylonian *I-iku* and later were elaborated in Babylon to constitute the body of the constellation Pegasus, each line comprised of two of the four stars of *I-iku*. In India the two *naksatras* that identify the two lines of two stars each that each represents a side of the Babylonian *I-iku* square are Purva Bhârapadâ and Uttar Bhârapadâ. In Warring States-Han China these two-star vertical lines that identify the very same lodges were and are known, respectively, as *shi* 室, "palace," and *bi* 壁, "wall." In each case the vertical lines comprising the lodges are α and β Pegasi (*shi*, Purva Bhârapadâ) and γ Pegasi and α Andromedae (*bi*, Uttar Bhârapadâ). As far as we can determine, the two lines never formed in either India or China the square that *I-iku* represented from these four stars in Babylon. Therefore, there is no case for identifying the square of the Sinitic stem *ding* 口

¹¹¹ On *I-iku* see Bartel van der Waerden, "Babylonian Astronomy II. The Thirty-Six Stars," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 8.1 (January 1949): 11–15.

with a square Warring States-Han asterism that did not anyway exist, Professor Pankenier apparently having misplaced the square of *I-iku* across Eurasia from Babylon.

We may note here as well with regard to the purported identity of *shi* and *ding* that aside from their common inclusion of a "roof" radical, being  (OBIs), , or  (Chinese), they otherwise derive in very distinct ways. Above we have reviewed already the origins and etymology of *ding*, but it should be sufficient here to note that the origin of Chinese *shi* in its Sinitic form  (OBIs) /  (bronze) betrays a graphic derivation quite distinct from that of *ding*. *Shi* has been and is understood physically, as a noun, to denote a palace or chamber, denoting, like the related later *wu*  屋, a covered inner space, and it is in this sense that the graph has been employed, since the Warring States period, to denote the asterism *shi*, one of the twenty-eight celestial lodges (*xiu*).¹¹² As such, and in the fact that it did indeed denote the beginning of the luni-solar new year in Warring States and Han times, it became the astronomical model from which the Qin emperor Qin Shi Huang Di (Ying Zheng) established his imperial palace south of the capital to represent not only his identification with the epochal beginning of his new Zhuan Xu calendar but also his *tertiary* status in the governance of the cosmos in its earthly manifestation and thus the earthly determiner of the cosmic calendar that was bestowed on him annually (and, through him, the world) by the cosmos. On this development see both Volume I, Chapter 3, above, and Volume III, Chapter 6, below.

Furthermore, as we noted previously, the zodiacal belt had not yet during the time of the Shang (1545–1045 BC) been identified even in the astronomically far more advanced Babylon as a particularly significant sector of the sky, since, in the system of the Thirty-six Stars as evinced through the Astrolabes, not only the path of Enki, but also the paths of Anu and Enlil, each divided according to a twelve-month scheme to map the entirety of the astral heavens in thirty-six sections, identified what were (often erroneously or idealistically) represented to be heliacally rising stars / asterisms (including planets) that together helped comprise the still idealized but increasingly mathematically derived calendar. In short, once again, the ecliptic had not at this time yet been

¹¹² For all of these forms see Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981): 7B:6a, 8b (p. 338–9); or Zhang Xuan (1968): 227, 251.

conceived to be an oblique circle defining the sun's actual path through the heavens relative the earth. Therefore, we cannot expect the stems of the Shang day-numbering system to reflect an actual ecliptically ordered asterismic day-counting calendrical mechanism. Such could only have occurred much later. Indeed, as we know, the stems, along with the branches, were during the Shang employed for neither solar ecliptic nor lunar calendrical annual reckoning but simply to count the days of the cycles of ten and sixty that most significantly constituted the Shang's day-reckoning system. Such sixty-day cycles based on the counting mechanism of the stems and branches were entirely independent of solar and lunar calendrical time, though of course each of the sixty days in a given cycle constituted a solar day. In short, we cannot at all expect them to identify ecliptic or heliacially rising asterisms.

Finally, the very identification in the Han and later commentarial tradition of *ding* 定, as it occurs in the poem "Ding zhi fang zhong" (Mao 50) of the *Shi Jing*, to advert to the asterism *shi* 室, is inaccurate. This gloss very clumsily ignores entirely the very obvious syntactic parallelism of the first two lines of the poem. We may consider now these two lines together:

Ding zhi fang zhong, zuo yu Chu gong;

Kui zhi yi ri, zuo yu Chu shi.

定之方中，作于楚宮

揆之以日，作于楚室

The character *ding* 定 as it appears in this poem has been understood universally since the Han to identify nominally the Warring States asterism and lunar lodge *shi* 室; the preposition *yu* has been interpreted to mean either nothing and has thus been skipped entirely in reading this poem — a quite untenable proposition — or it has been understood to mean *wei* 為, "to be," "as." Both of these traditional readings of *yu* skirt entirely the fundamental prepositional meaning of the character to mean "in," "at," "to," or even "from," and leave the line overall with absolutely no believable coherent meaning.¹¹³

¹¹³ For the gloss that proposes that we read *yu* to mean *wei*, see Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shi jing quan shi* 詩經詮

Professor Pankenier has followed the arbitrary assignment of *ding* in this poem to denote the lunar lodge *shi*, an assignment that likely began with the only other Han or earlier identification of this *ding* to be *shi*, in the often very fanciful and here surely unreliable very late Han-period *Erya* 爾雅, and in tandem with this interpretation of *ding* Professor Pankenier has followed the unnatural and forced inherited misreading of the preposition *yu*.¹¹⁴

On closer inspection of the text of the Mao 50 poem, one can see clearly that interpreting *ding* to represent *shi* (and skirting the necessarily present meaning of *yu*) is mistaken and misguided. We need only consider the syntactic construction of the first phrase of each of the first two lines of the poem to recognize this clearly. Given that *ding* is in question, and indeed that if *ding* is read as a noun the first line of the poem makes little sense in light of both the overall context of the poem and what really is known of the Chinese language of perhaps the 9th-8th century BC, we therefore need to begin our current analysis with the more easily readable second line of the poem, whose syntax is abundantly clear. The first character of the second line, *kui* 揆, quite securely can be understood to mean "to measure" or "to mark out by measuring." Thus, the second

釋 (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe, 1983): 90. On the both very specific prepositional and very relevant and often even concretely verbal uses of *yu* in the *Shi jing*, see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The Locative Particles Yü 于, Yü 於, and Hu 乎," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106.1 (Jan.-Mar. 1986): 1-4.

¹¹⁴ According to Smith (2009: 33), Pankenier (2009: 19) translates, "When [the asterism] *Ding* had just culminated, he started work on the *Chu* palace; when he had measured it by the sun, he started work on the *Chu* hall." This follows largely Waley, who, following religiously the Han interpretational tradition, renders these lines, "The Ding-star is in the middle of the sky; We begin to build the palace at Chu. Orientating them by the rays of the sun, We set to work on the houses at Chu" (Waley, 1996: 42). These translations ignore not only the parallelism quite apparent in the original but also improbably the preposition in each line, *yu*, thus rendering *yu* superfluous and, really, out of place in the original. Ignoring the obviously meaningful *yu* is not an acceptable practice. Also questionable is the reading of "start to," "begin to," into the verb *zuo* 作, which means simply "do," "carry out." For contrast, Legge translated these lines thusly: "At dusk the *Ting* star passed on to the west, And field work for the year was laid to rest. At Ch'u the duke his palace took in hand, And by the sun fixed how its walls should stand." (James Legge, *The Book of Poetry, Chinese Text with English Translation* [rpt. of edn. of the *Sacred Books of the East* series; New York: Paragon, 1967]: 53-4.) It is unclear from where Legge derived the meanings of west in the first phrase and field work and its laying to rest in the second phrase, and, as I have indicated already, reading *ding* to refer to an asterism, or any noun, is incorrect, but Legge's rendering of the two phrases of the second line more closely approaches the fundamental meaning of the line than the translations of either Waley or, following him (and in turn likely Needham and Wang), Pankenier.

line of the poem can be translated to mean, "Marking it out by measuring (*kui zhi*) according to (*yi* 以) the [movements of] the sun (*ri*), we carry out (*zuo*) [ritual] in (*yu*) the Inner Chamber of the Chu [Palace] (*Chu shi*)."

Now, while the second phrase of this poem provides clearly the syntax according to which we must understand in turn the parallel grammatical structure and thus the meaning of the first phrase, the first phrase provides us reciprocally with the context that enables us to understand the import of this second line. Reading the two phrases of the first line on the basis of the parallel structure (Verb - Pronomial Direct Object - Helping Verb - Indirect Object ; Verb – Preposition – Indirect Object) provided clearly by the second line, we can translate that first line thusly: "Establishing it (*ding zhi*) by squaring (*fang*) the center (*zhong*), we perform (*zuo*) [ritual] in (*yu*) the Chu Palace (*Chu gong*)." It should be noted that Chu denotes not the southern Zhou state of Chu but rather a hill in the northern state of Yong (in modern Henan-Shandong) on which the palace was built. Read together, the lines of this poem narrate the establishment of the center that is the *shi*, Inner Chamber, within the fundamental and greater contextual center that is the square *gong*, the Chu Palace:

Establishing it (*ding zhi* 定之) by squaring (*fang* 方) the center (*zhong* 中), we carry out (*zuo* 作) [ritual] in (*yu* 于) the Chu Palace (*chugong* 楚宮).

Marking it out by measuring (*kui zhi* 揆之) according to (*yi* 以) the [movements of] the sun (*ri* 日), we carry out (*zuo* 作) [ritual] in (*yu* 于) the Inner Chamber of the Chu [Palace] (*Chu shi* 楚室).

In this reading all words / graphs in the two lines are understood precisely parallelistically one line with the other, as the author very clearly intended through his identical grammatical structures. Read in this way, the first phrase explains the establishment of the foundation and essential external structure of the palace according to the form offered by the four-square directions that were delineated by the reliable gnomon found at the NCP, our familiar square high godhead *ding* 口 centered on the old pole star Thuban. In that this poem explains most viably the

establishment of a Yong capital city centered on the construction in its center of a square palace and, within that palace, a square inner ritual chamber, this interpretation of these lines in the poetic narrative context provides the only realistic understanding. This first line appears to represent, then, an early-Zhou descendant ritual of what in a section immediately above we described as a Shang ritual of "establishing the center" (*lizhong* 立中). The second phrase, in a style typical of both Chinese and Western descriptive texts, in which the initial narrative line provides the broader context for the more internal or explicit lines that follow (i.e., moving topically from the general to the specific), explains how the establishment of the Inner Chamber within the Palace on the basis of specifically identified solar movements provides, probably on the basis of heliacally rising stars, the explicit context for effective ritual performed to the astral powers that control the calendar and thus also the human environment amid the natural, and divinely ordered, world. It may be that this second line offers an early intimation of the existence of the twenty-four solar terms (*ershisi jieqi* 二十四節氣), though of this we cannot be certain. At any rate, it is clear from these two initiating lines of this poem that the Chu Palace was established literally squarely (*fang*), presumably on the basis of the stellar polar square, to constitute the center (*zhong* 中) of Yong rulership, and that the Inner Chamber, or *shi*, within the Chu Palace, was constructed, on the external basis of this essential square of the palace, more minutely on the basis of nodes of solar movements in the context of heliacally rising stars as measured against this essential square of the center that was provided by the northern celestial pole and, derivatively, the fundamentally square (*fang*, on the basis of the polar *ding*) architecture of the Chu Palace. In short, through parallelism evident in the structure of the second phrase, the *ding* 定 of the first phrase very clearly is a verb, not a noun, and it means, as simply as *ding* 定 most usually means, "settle," or "establish" or "set down." It does not advert at all to the asterism *shi* that dates to a much, much later time and anyway does not have any relation whatsoever with a square. Ironically, it is the verbal term *fang*, "to square," appearing in the first phrase of the poem, whose simple verbal reference "by making [something] square" (parallel as a helping verb with the *yi* 以, "by using," of the second line) that adverts cryptically to the old quadrilateral at the NCP, that was missed entirely in the very late Han commentarial

tradition and thus also in all of James Legge's, Arthur Waley's, and Professor Pankenier's readings, as well as in the reading of the poem by Needham and Wang.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the entire basis for Professor Pankenier's attempt to establish for Mao 50's Chinese character *ding* 定 a correlation with the Sinitic Stem *ding* 𠂔, the latter of which was in my thesis the highest power of the Shang pantheon, simply does not exist. It is worth mentioning that by the time of the Han, when this awkward and morally-politically motivated interpretation of the character *ding* was offered, neither of the Chinese characters *ding* 丁 or *ding* 定 had anything whatsoever to do graphically with the Sinitic character *teen 𠂔. Nor was the ancient form of 𠂔 for *ding* (*teen) even known at that time. Thus from several angles the traditional, and very late, Han-period interpretation of the poem's lines, followed by all of Legge, Waley, Needham and Wang, and Pankenier, which thoroughly misses the obvious parallelism of the first two lines and thus mistakes a very clearly verbal *ding* 定 to be a noun, is patently incorrect.

¹¹⁵ Needham and Wang (1959): 244.

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