

Inscribed Oracle Bones of the Shang Period Unearthed from the Daxinzhuang Site in Jinan City

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I. Brief Introduction

Daxinzhuang site is located at southeastern of Daxinzhuang 大辛庄 Village, Wangsheren 王舍人 Town, Licheng 历城 District of Jinan 济南 City, Shandong 山东 Province. To the south of the site is the piedmont Tai-Yi 泰沂 mountain chain, and few than 3 km north of the site is the Xiaoqinghe River 小清河. Jiao-Ji 胶济 Railway passes through the south part of it. The site was found and recorded first in middle of 1930s by F.S. Drake, a professor in Cheeloo University. Archaeologists in Shandong provincial archaeological units and Shandong University made field reconnaissance many times from 1950 to 1970. Based on these surveys, the site was well known by its huge area of 300,000 sq m. A quite big scale excavation was carried out by Shandong University, Shandong Provincial Institute of Antiquity and Archaeology and Jinan Museum in the fall of 1984, which let us know basically about the main remains and cultural chronology of the site, and set up a good foundation for studying next step.

For further understanding of the character of cultural remains and the role of the site played in the Shang period, three archaeological units were re-excavated on March 17, 2003. From the second day, several inscribed oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty were unearthed. The following report will give a brief introduction.

II. Deposit of Cultural Layers

The excavation area is located at southeastern of the site, and 30 grids of 4×4 m were set in total. The inscribed oracle bones were found on the surface of the layer 5B in

T2302 and T2402, the layer 2 and affiliated features as well. The deposit in T2302 and T2402 will be introduced as follow.

Layer 1 is modern cultivated soil, around 15 cm thick. Layer 2 is modern disturbed deposit, 5 cm to 10 cm thick. The soil is light yellow in color and loose. Tomb M62, burial of the Shang period, was overlapped by this layer. Layers 3 and 4 are the Han and Zhou periods, but they both do not exist in grids T2302 and T2402. Layer 5 is the Shang period deposit. It can be divided into two sub-layers. Layer 5A is 5 cm to 15 cm thick. The soil is grayish-brown in color and loose. Layer 5B is 10 cm to 20 cm thick. The soil is yellowish-brown in color and loose.

III. Inscribed Oracle Bones

There is a trampling surface 15 sq m in area on the layer 5B, which mainly distributes in grid T2302 and extends to grids T2402 and T2301. The surface is hard and flat, and trampling traces are visible. 14 pieces of oracle bones and 2 flat rocks were found on the surface.

The inscribed oracle bones are very important (Figs. 1–3). It is put together by 4 smaller pieces, and includes three fourth of whole tortoise ventral shell. The shell was carefully cut and scraped, so became well proportioned and slick. Right side of shell bridge has a small hole, and left side of tail shell has a semicircle hole. The traces of drill, cut, and heat are all obvious and arranged in order. The survived shell is 18 cm in length, and 10.7 in width. The writings on shell are records of divinations, which distribute on different parts of obverse left, obverse right, reverse left, and reverse right. Some characters on



Fig. 1 Obverse of oracle bone (T2302 ⑤ B:1)

reverse left and obverse right are fuzzy.

34 characters are recognized in different parts. They are as follow.

Obverse left shell: Do not move, good to move. On the day of □ You, to perform Wen sacrifice. 不徙? 允

徙? □酉, 温.

Obverse right shell: Do not move, good to move. Do not perform Wen sacrifice. 不[徙]? 允[徙]? 弜温.

Reverse left shell: Do not move, good to move. Four or fourth. Sacrifice of Yu to Mother with one boar, one



Fig. 2 Reverse of oracle bone (T2302 ⑤ B:1)

hog, and two pigs. Mother or woman one. [不徙]? 允
[徙])? 四. 御母彘豕豕豕. 母一.

Reverse right shell: Do not move, good to move. Do
not sacrifice of Yu. Sacrifice of Yu. 不徙? 允徙? 弗御.
御. 𠂔.

The writings can be divided into three groups, con-
cerning three different activities. Divinations were done
with both affirmative and negative manners.

The first group is the writings on reverse left and
reverse right of the shell.



Fig. 3 Details of the reverse of oracle bone (T2302 ⑤ B:1)

Sacrifice of Yu to Mother with one boar, one hog, and two pigs. Do not sacrifice of Yu.

Yu 御 is a common sacrificial method in oracle bone inscriptions in Anyang 安阳. In this inscription, the object of Yu sacrifice is mother or Mu. The animals this sacrifice used are one boar, one hog, and two pigs. Another possible explanation for the writings after the mother or Mu is that they may be the given name of the mother or Mu. The writing of Four or fourth 四 on the reverse left shell perhaps can be linked with mother or Mu. If so, the objects of Yu sacrifice should be four mothers, instead of one. Using four animals to sacrifice for four mothers, it just can be matched. Bi 弜 means does or not.

The second group is the inscriptions on several parts of the shell, which repeated four times.

Do not move; good to move.

Xi 徙 can be seen in Anyang oracle bones. One meaning of it can be explained as move. But the Xi sometimes can also be interpreted as a special sacrifice. Here we prefer to the first meaning.

The third group is the writings carved on the obverse left and obverse right parts.

On the day of □ You, to perform Wen sacrifice; do not perform Wen sacrifice.

Wen 温 in Anyang oracle bone inscriptions has two

meanings. One meaning is a place name; the other is a sacrificial method. The writing of Wen on Daxinzhuang oracle bone should be the same as the latter one.

The writing of 𠂔 has never been found before. The meaning is not clear. We suspect that it is a place name here.

IV. Conclusion

According to analysis of pot shards from ash-pit H509, which superimposed upon by 5A and intruded into 5B, the date of oracle bone unearthed from the surface of layer 5B can not be later than the third phase of Yinxu 殷墟 Culture. At the same time, according to pottery style of H547, the oracle bone cannot be earlier than the pit, the second phase of Yinxu Culture.

We invited more than ten experts like Li Xueqin 李学勤, Lin Yun 林沄, Li Boqian 李伯谦, Zhu Fenghan 朱凤瀚, Wang Wei 王巍, Song Xinchao 宋新潮, Zhang Xuehai 张学海, and Wang Entian 王恩田 come to study the oracle bones at first. All scholars proposed the Daxinzhuang oracle bones belong to the same writing system as Anyang, whatever in process of shell, drilling method, cutting type, and font style, grammar as well. However, the Daxinzhuang oracle bone has its own characteristic in writing arrangement and individual differences in very few writings. According to the writ-

ing and grammar features of Daxinzhuang oracle bone inscriptions, the date was believed during the second and third phases of Yinxu Culture. This opinion is supported by stratigraphy and pottery chronology.

Inscribed oracle bones were only found in Anyang and Zhengzhou 郑州 before, the latter case was just for practice, and not found in excavation. Therefore, inscribed oracle bones found at the Daxinzhuang site is exclusive case besides Anyang. It is an extremely important discovery in the history of oracle bone studies. It also tells us that Daxinzhuang site had played an important role in the Shang Dynasty, perhaps a capital settlement of local state. The discovery provides important material for studying the role of Daxinzhuang, the relationship between the Shang Dynasty and the Eastern people, and

the political structure of Shang Dynasty as well.

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Note: The original report was published in *Kaogu* 2003.6: 3–6 with three photos and written by Fang Hui 方辉, Dang Hao 党浩, and Fang Daoguo 方道国. The present version, an abridgment from the original, is prepared and English-translated by the first author.