

*2. AN JINHUI (Henan Institute of Cultural Objects, Zhengzhou)
THE SHANG CITY AT ZHENGZHOU AND RELATED PROBLEMS

ABSTRACT:


The Zhengzhou Shang dynasty site is the location of an early Shang city, vast in area and abundant in archaeological remains, which was discovered by Chinese archaeologists in the middle and lower Yellow River basin during the early fifties. Within the site there is a Shang dynasty rammed-earth wall extending north-south in a rectangular shape and having a circumference of 6960 meters. These are the earliest Shang wall remains discovered to date.

Based on the stratigraphy and vessel types discovered in the course of excavating the four sides of the wall, it is certain that this wall is slightly later than the late Erlitou period, and that construction on it began before the lower strata of the Shang Erligang period, the "Yin Ruins" at Anyang. The discovery of the Zhengzhou Shang site was definitely not accidental. It represents an important stage in the development of ancient Chinese rammed-earth wall architecture. The method of construction places it in a continuous line of development from the rammed-earth wall of the Henan area middle and late Longshan culture and the late Erlitou rammed-earth platform foundation to the rammed-earth foundations of the palaces of the Yin Ruins at Anyang.

The grand scale of the Zhengzhou Shang wall, and the fact that inside and outside the wall were found palace foundations and workshops for the production of bronze, bone, and ceramic articles as well as numerous widespread storage pits, wells, ditches, house foundations, and tombs, and that many bronze, jade, primitive porcelain, pottery, stone, bone, and clamshell artifacts have been excavated here, including also some carved ivory pieces, pottery sculpture, and inscribed bones and pottery, lead us to conclude that the Zhengzhou Shang site was one of the early Shang capitals. Whether it is to be identified as Ao or Bo we cannot now say. In any case, the discovery and excavation of this site has supplied direct evidence of the greatest importance for the history of early Shang politics, economics, cultural, and military affairs.

DISCUSSION:

An Jinhui showed slides of Zhengzhou, but could not, unfortunately, provide any illustration of the newly discovered walled settlements of the Longshan period.

Kao Ch'ü-hsün did not accept An's identification of the Shang city at Zhengzhou with the capital Ao , because Zhengzhou was built too early and occupied too long. It was a conceptual issue, he argued, whether or not every major Shang city had to be viewed as the

seat of the imperial dynasty; as an alternative model, Kao suggested that one think in terms of the fengjian 封建 system, which epigraphic research has long proven to be a major feature of Shang civilization. This system would allow important regional power centers beside the imperial house, and Zhengzhou could conceivably have been the residence of one of the major non-dynastic clans, such as the Zheng 鄭 clan as previously suggested by Hu Houxuan.

Tu Cheng-sheng asked for more details about the walled settlements of the Longshan culture, especially about Pingliangtai of Huaiyang (see article in Renmin Ribao 21 June 1981). An said he did not have any information at hand.

Virginia Kane (University of Michigan) raised the perpetual question of why there was no wall at Anyang, whereas there was one at Zhengzhou, and, as we know, even at much earlier sites. Was there a relation between this phenomenon and the use of the chariot as a new form of defense? Chariot warfare is more mobile and needs open space; perhaps, in late Shang, chariots were able to ward off aggressors at some distance from the capital, thus rendering a city wall unnecessary, Kane suggested. She went on to hint at the psychological consequences this change could have entailed -- whereas the Shang of Zhengzhou would have been defense-minded and determined by closed space, the inhabitants of Yinxu left to archaeology the remains of a more aggressive, expansionist mentality.

This line of argument was refuted by An Jinhuai who pointed out that Chinese capitals both before as well as after Yinxu all had city walls, and that the development of city walls could be well traced in the archaeological record as a consistent progression. To date, the case of Yinxu must be regarded as an anomaly. In fact, An believed, Yinxu probably had a city wall, which had only so far escaped the archaeologists -- possibly because it was completely razed at the end of the dynasty. He pointed out that city walls had far more than merely a defensive function -- namely, from the earliest times, an important symbolic and ritual function; embodying cosmological order, they defined structures of political dominance as well.

Ken-ichi Takashima (University of British Columbia) asked if it was possible to determine whether or not city walls made by the banzhu method could have been destroyed by a large-scale flood, for the oracle bones recorded the phrase ru shui 入水 which he interpreted as meaning "flood."