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A REEXAMINATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN THE BRONZES OF SHANG CIVILIZATION AND THE NORTHERN REGION

ABSTRACT:

The northern border of Shang culture moved south during the Yinxu period. At the same time bronzes belonging to the Northern complex spread through a vast region to the north of the Shang cultural area.

The appearance of Northern bronzes, characterized by specific types of short swords, fu battle-axes and daggers -- which we may take to represent the Northern bronzes of Period 1 -- must predate the Yinxu culture. During the early Yinxu period they exerted a fairly considerable influence. Analysis of the bronzes unearthed from the Fu Hao tomb reveals that, at the time of Wu Ding, the Shang were already using some Northern bronze articles. The Shang artisans not only copied Northern bronzes, they also adopted their chemical composition to improve traditional Shang tools and weapons.

On the other hand, bronzes from the Shang culture area exerted a similar influence on Northern bronzes. Some of these influences were limited to relatively close areas, whereas the ripples of other influence extended far into the distant regions. For example, the Northern "beak halberd" 啄戈, the creation of which was influenced by the Shang ge-halberd, was diffused as far as the Minusinsk Basin. The origin of the bronze bow-shaped article, however, which has, in the past, been taken as strong evidence for the extension of Shang influence as far as this basin may very well be in the region to the north of the Shang culture, and the Yinxu style bow-shaped bronze may, on the contrary, have been a variant of the Northern article which developed during the early Yinxu period. The influence of the authentic Yinxu style bow-shaped article only extended as far as the area of Jibei 冀北. The lobeless, geometric-patterned, hollow-socketed fu-axe, which developed from the hollow-socketed fu of the Erligang to Yinxu periods, may have early on exerted an influence as far as the southern edges of the Eastern Siberian forest.

A reexamination of the ties between the Karasuk and Yinxu cultures is needed. The theory that Seima bronzes exerted an influence on the Yinxu culture must be abandoned.

DISCUSSION:

Lin Yun summarized his views on cultural interaction between Shang and Northern regions by explaining the tool types on his hand-out sheet.

## Shang Beyond Anyang

Kao Ch'ü-hsün said there had been much confusion in the past due to the hazy concepts of style imposed on the cultures of the "Northern System," and to imperfect chronology. He expressed agreement with Lin Yun's geographic differentiation of various regions in North China and Southern Siberia. Lin had not fallen into the trap of the "Animal Style" concept often used to assert the occurrence of diffusion from the North into Shang China. If "Animal Style" were to be defined in the sense suggested by Northern bronzes -- objects in the shape of animals realistically rendered -- then Shang art never had an animal style.

Kisselev's original chronological scheme for culture succession in Southern Siberia had been modified under the influence of an exhibition of bronzes from Anyang held at Moscow in 1939, Kao recalled. He recommended to Lin the articles by Karlgren, "Some Weapons and Tools of the Yin Dynasty" (BMFEA 17[1945]:101-144), and Jettmar, "The Karasuk Culture and its South-Eastern Affinities" (BMFEA 22[1950]:83-126).

Kao Ch'ü-hsün expressed disagreement with Lin on several points; the bronze mirror, he said, was not derived from Karasuk, but from Iran. Lin Yun agreed that Karasuk was of course not the origin of the mirror, and that it had not been diffused directly from there into Shang China; his contention was only that it had been known in Karasuk before being transmitted to China through the cultures of the "Northern System." Kao also maintained that the gongxingqi 弓形器 was not used as a bridle holder, but, as was clear from its location in the tombs at Anyang, as part of a bow. This is also Shih Chang-ju's published opinion.

Kao finally made it clear that he believed Chinese influence in the North to be more important than Northern influence in Shang China.