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THE YI-KUA IN THE SHANG DYNASTY AND VARIOUS PROBLEMS PERTAINING
TO DIVINATION

ABSTRACT:

The method of divining by yarrow stalk in accordance with the scheme of 64 hexagrams did exist in the Yin Dynasty. Numerical strings of three and six lines on oracle bones recently unearthed provide the new evidence for the above statement and many scholars have discussed it. My paper contributes the following new points:

- (1) Comparing the 64 hexagram names in the Ma-wang-tui manuscript with those appearing in the so called Kuei-tsang (歸藏) recorded by later scholars, we find some similarity on both sides. This indicates that the Kuei-tsang is not a legendary matter.
- (2) Some Hsin-tien 辛店 period wares found in Kansu also show the numerical marks such as $\overline{\text{三}}, \text{六}, \overline{\text{三}}$. This also suggests that such trigram images had been used by still earlier people.
- (3) The graph for nine "九" was found on one oracle bone from Ch'i-chia 齊家. It shows that the Western Chou people had advanced the way of divining and thus the emphasis on Yin 陰 of the Yin people had been developed into the emphasis on Yang 陽.
- (4) I try to interpret, with reference to the sentences of Chou-yi, the divining hexagrams which appear on the bamboo strips found in T'ien-hsing-kuan 天星觀, Chiang-ling 江陵. As the symbol of \wedge (六) was still employed by the Ch'u people, it seems that they were following the way of the Yin people in the emphasis on Yin.

DISCUSSION:

Answering a question by Terry Kleeman (University of California, Berkeley) Jao explained that in Zuo zhuan there was a number system distinguishing between the elementary numbers 1 to 5 and the "composite" numbers 6 to 9. Later, the numbers 2 to 4 were eliminated from it. Due to the cryptic nature of the textual evidence, it was essential that archaeological information be adduced to explain the true significance of this system, Jao contended. He had heard that systems consisting only of the numbers 5 to 9 had become known as the result of archaeological research.

Zhang Zhenglang made a number of comments on Jao's paper. He claimed to have seen more numerical symbols on archaeologically

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excavated objects, a large number of which, however, were fragmentary and could not be used. Numerical systems such as the one described by Jao are known from the Xia dynasty onward, testifying to a very early presence in China of oracular modes of thought. The Xindian cultural evidence Jao had dwelt on, however, was probably later than Xia, and by no means constituted the earliest or most significant such evidence known. The earliest numerical, and possibly oracular, records discovered so far are on ceramic vessels found at a site in Nantong 南通 in Northern Jiangsu, belonging to the Songze 松澤 phase of the middle Neolithic Majiabang 馬家浜 culture. This most primitive system used all numbers from 1 to 9. Interestingly, Fu Xi 伏羲, the legendary inventor of the Eight Trigrams, is supposed to have lived in this region of Southeastern China. However, apart from the trigrams, there is evidence that the hexagrams, too, had been known in that part of China since very early times.