

results, but Xia regretted that he was not informed about this research. Chang Kwang-yuan made it clear that he had been aware of the article in Kaogu (1982.1) and had, in fact, quoted it in his paper (footnote 44).

As to the crack produced by Chang Kwang-yuan on the plastron and read by him as auspicious, Chang Ping-ch'üan expressed his disagreement with such an interpretation. According to his investigations, based on ethnographic evidence from Yunnan and on ancient texts, the reading of a crack was contracted anew between the diviner and the supernatural powers every time a charge was made. We do not and cannot know how the Shang diviners arrived at their reading of any particular oracle bone, Chang insisted.

Lastly, Hu Houxuan called into question the merely utilitarian interpretation of each feature of the oracle inscriptions. He believed that several aspects of the oracle bones, at the very least their calligraphy, marked them as works of art, made with the conscious will to express aesthetic beauty. Other such aspects may be the arrangement of the inscription on the writing surface and the coloring of the characters (not all characters on a single bone or plastron are always colored the same way; some are not colored at all, whereas those characters most visibly colored are frequently the most calligraphically attractive ones). Hu ended by pointing out several examples of splendid, and artistically conceived, plastrons and oracle bones. Without calling into question the validity of Hu's assertions, Chang Kwang-yuan nevertheless maintained that these aesthetic qualities had developed out of functional requirements.

13. DAVID S. NIVISON (Stanford University)
THE "QUESTION" QUESTION

ABSTRACT:

This paper takes issue with the widely prevailing assumption that the "charge" (ming ci 命辭) in a Shang oracle inscription must always be understood as a question. I hold that we must distinguish between what the diviner is saying in the charge, and what he is doing in the whole divination rite. What he is doing is not always seeking information; and even when he is doing this, what he says is usually not a question. I present various arguments and examples to show this, e.g.:

(1) Li Hsüeh-ch'in's research proves that the oracle language possessed grammatical forms, such as final particles and final negatives, for marking a sentence as a question. Therefore, I hold, our first assumption should be that when a diviner does not use these forms, he does not intend his sentence to be understood as a question.

Shang Divination

(2) When two sentences in the same inscription -- e.g., charge and prognostication -- are alike in form (both of them being without final negatives or particles), it is a mistake to construe one of them as a question and the other as a statement. But a prognostication must be a statement.

(3) I give some examples that obviously have meanings requiring interpretation as statements. A very long charge cannot be interpreted as a series of separate questions (because the divination procedure yields a single decision); but to take it as a single long conjunctive question would be to add in the translation something that is obviously not in the original text.

I then present philological arguments to show that the divinatory word chen 𠄎 does not mean "ask," but means "certify," as Karlgren saw. Finally I offer a sketch of the possible evolution of the grammatical mood of the charge, from question, to test statement, to prayer or wish (which is what it always is in middle Chou examples).

The position taken in the paper is essentially a development of the views of Paul L-M. Serruys and David N. Keightley in earlier articles or papers.

DISCUSSION:

Chang Tsung-tung expressed his conviction that the charge in the oracle inscriptions was indeed meant as a question; he reasoned from: (1) the fact that even without a question word or question mark, any sentence could be made into a question by proper intonation, and (2) the absence of any punctuation in Shang texts. He was rebutted by David Nivison who stressed the fact that there were grammatical devices as question words Chinese speakers in Shang times could use to express a question, and if they did not use them, there was no reason to suppose any statement was meant to be a question. Paul L-M. Serruys (University of Washington) added that even though all languages know an interrogative intonation, the rule of redundancy additionally requires syntactic rules for the construction of a question. The examples Chang Tsung-tung tried to adduce to substantiate his theory were refuted by Nivison and by Edward Shaughnessy (Stanford University) who could show, e.g., that shang 尚 in " 尚有晉國 " did not mean "still" or "again," but rather "I hope." This Chang Tsung-tung was, in the end, ready to accept.