



The Research Value and Prospect on the Phonology of the Stele Inscription

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Abstract

The scholars do study on the problem of the Chinese historical phonetics by using Literature handed down at present. However, the stele inscription is the really reliable material for the Chinese historical phonetics research. Many problems of the field can be researched deeply, and it supplies the new evidence for the voice phenomenon, and corrects the errors of the academic outcome by utilizing the stele inscription to make the Chinese historical phonetics research. The method of research can be carried out from the Synchronic and Diachronic.

Key words: The stele inscription; Chinese historical phonetics; Value; Prospect

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INTRODUCTION

The international academic symposium of “revive epigraphy” was held in Hangzhou sponsored by the west cold mid-stream on October 19, 2009. The topic of the meeting is a massive project academic seminars specifically around the “epigraphy” for the first time, which was strong academic and authority and put forward the slogan of “revive” of epigraphy. Inscriptions literature

as an important part of the “epigraphy”, which has been attracted extensive attention of scholars at home and abroad in recent years. As a commodity in the excavated documents, stone inscription literature described as “the history of the inscription on the stone”, which has important research value, and gets more and more attention. As a result, there is emerging the trend of “stone inscription research hot”.

The stele inscription, a special form of literature, has a unique research value because of the particularities of writing materials and the save way such as history, calligraphy, classics philology, literature, geography, medicine, language and so on Compared with the literature handed down from ancient times. In recent years, there have been some scholars began to work on stone inscription literature history, calligraphy, philology and other related research work. However, the study of the phonology of the literature of stone inscription is rare. This article is to talk about the stone phonology research value of literature, from the perspective of phonology and prospect the phonology of stone inscription literature research, so as to provide some references for further in-depth research in the future.

1. A DEFINITION AND VALUE JUDGMENT STANDARD OF THE STELE INSCRIPTION

The stele inscription refers to stone inscriptions literature for writing materials, engraving, writing on the stone, carrying all information of a certain language. Through the above definition of the stele inscription, we can see that make the definition mainly from the following three aspects: One is stone material; second, carving, engrave means; three is the text symbols, images, sculptures and other cultural information. We can call it the tombstone documents as long as meet the three conditions above. Mr. Mao Yuan-Ming once wrote: “To measure a corpus research value can be a lot of measures, but the basic

is the following points: enough material available for study, the universality of the content; the authenticity of corpora and the value of language style” as early as in 2005.

The stele inscription just meets these criteria. First of all, the stone inscription literature has a long history. A lot of stele inscription have been preserved from the beginning of the Han dynasty, which provides us with sufficient research materials. Second, the stele inscription has many kinds of shape such as a stone tablet inscriptions literature, paper, aluminum, stone table que, cliff, vouchers, proclamations, by building, statues, which reflect the extensive content including politics, economy, military, laws system, the name, the name, customs and ideas, astronomical calendar and so on various aspects of social life. Again, due to long buried in the ground, the stele inscription, the time of its writing and literature is almost at the same time, which has a higher reliability compared with the literature handed down from ancient times. At the same time, the stone inscription literature is a kind of “self-sufficiency” literature, and most of them are written on the carving time. It’s time for history of Chinese language, fixed-point research provides a convenient condition.

In addition, the stone inscription recorded the written form of elegant and dignified. To study spoken language has great value. However, the written language is the bulk of China’s ancient Chinese, and important to describe the track of the evolution history of Chinese language development in our country comprehensively. The stone inscription provides us with reliable written material by recording written language in our country.

2. THE RESEARCH VALUE OF THE STELE INSCRIPTION

2.1 The Further Study of Chinese Categories

The Chinese phonology is a study that deals with the Chinese phonological system and the laws of its development. At present, the main emphasis of our research is ancient phonology. However, it is not very clear on how it has evolved in the early middle ages, especially in Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties. If we use the stele inscriptions of Han Wei Northern and Southern Dynasties and induce its categories, we can have a clear sense of the development of ancient rhyme, which will greatly help us to research on the phonology of this period. Two books, Professor Wang Li’s *Chinese language history draft* and Professor Xiang Xi’s *Concise history of Chinese language*, which record of the development of the mediaeval categories, especially in southern dynasties that is not very specific. The reason may be that the study on ancient rhyme is relatively weak.

2.2 The Stele Inscription Provided New Evidence for the Further Study on the Chinese Phonology in the Future

Formerly, we study on phonology of the literature, we mainly use the handed down literatures, however, it is difficult to ensure the reliability of the literature handed down from ancient times. In recent years, a large number of inscriptions unearthed literatures provide a lot of new evidences for the further study on the Chinese phonology in the future. Such as *Kong Biao tablet* in Han Dynasty inscription term “Zhou (胄), Xiu (秀); Liang (良), Fang (方); Ming (名), Qing (清), Cheng (成), Ting (庭), Zheng (征), Cheng (程), Zhen (贞); Ce (恻), Ji (极), Yi (意), Xi (息), Li (力); Cun (存), Tian (天), Qing (青), Bing (并), Ling (灵)” and so on, which reflect valuable phonetic phenomena such as the Zhen (真), Wen (文) rhyme; Zhen (真), Geng (耕) rhyme; Xin (心), Ren (人) as-sociation; Qin (侵) department -m tail and Zhen (真) department -n tail mixed.

2.3 The Stele Inscription Correct the Mistakes of Previous Phonological Research

Mr. Duan Yucai said that the four tones in ancient are different from rhyme today. There are three tones in ancient China from Xizhou to Qin-Han, which are different from today. Duan Yucai’s view that Wei Jin tones into falling tone and even tone into more oblique tones ideas do not conform to the actual situation at that time, which is wrong according to Liu Shengju’s analysis and investigation. Wang Li puts the row in order to three periods of the Northern and Southern Dynasties in the book of *Poet rhymes of the northern and southern dynasties* according to the condition of the poet rhymes of the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Mr. Wang pointed out that the second period in addition to Jiang Yan, Wang Jian and Xie Tiao, the line of Dong (东), Zhong (钟) is very clear, and that the share of eastern bell is too little, which can only be regarded as an exception after the second period. However, we found that Mr. Wang’s conclusion is not very reliable through a large number of investigations to the rhyme of inscription in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties. As Mr. Wang said that Dong (东) Jiang (江) words very few, but tablet rhyme seems to be consistent with Wang Xie’s view, such as Dong (东) rhyme share 11 times, the Zhong (钟) 7 times, and Dong (东), Zhong (钟), Dong (冬) 1 time. In terms of monuments, it cannot be simply explained by the exception. As a result, the rhyme in the stele inscription is different from Mr. Wang Li’s view that Dong (东) doesn’t mingle with Dong (冬), Zhong (钟) in the second period.

2.4 The Stele Inscription Can Complement the Verse of Literature Handed Down Through Thousands of Years, Which Is Conducive to the Further Study of Chinese Phonology

Mr. Wang guo-wei advocated dual attestation, which is excavated document to verify the literature handed down from ancient times. This method can also be applied to the

study of Chinese phonology actually. Therefore, we can say “dual Evidence” is also a product of the times, as he said: This dual Evidence but in today before it may. For a long time, scholars of phonology study materials often focus on the literature handed down from ancient times, however, they ignore the unearthed document especially the stele inscription such as gold material and bamboo and silk documents. Senior scholars may be may be difficult to collect inscription literature due to the limitation of objective conditions. With a number of large stone inscription literature reference books such as *China's Historical Past Dynasties Stone Carving All Make Up*, *New China Unearthed Epitaph*, *Tang Dynasty Epitaph Assembly*, *Sui Tang Five Dynasties Epitaph Assembly* and so on have been published, it is relatively easy to collect inscription literature. We're going to have such a vision that we use inscriptions literature to supplement or verify the literature handed down from ancient times, which to provide new materials for the study of Chinese phonology and to explore new field of vision and open up new research situation.

2.5 The Stele Inscription Is Helpful to the Research on the History of Chinese Phonetics

The research on the history of Chinese phonetic in Han-wei and Six Dynasties is less. Rhyme books of the South and North Dynasty have been lost. Derivatives materials are conserved in other books such as *Jing Dian Shi Wen*, which also has some defects in judgment and choice of the linguistic materials because of limitation of times and research methods. We can Comprehensive study of the rhyme in this period from the time of the verse and crambo. Literature handed down from ancient times such as the South and North Dynasty can't reflect the language features during this period. However, the stele inscription has much value in the study of the Chinese of the South and North Dynasty, because its completed time is fixed and it was written in oral languages. Thus, the advantages of stone inscription document at this time also. The stele inscription provided us with precious materials such as preface and inscription to study the categories of the period. The main body of the stele inscription is special. The stele inscription is helpful to the research on the history of Chinese phonetics and makes up for the defects of the research in this period.

2.6 The Special Value of Research on the Rhymes

The rhyme of the stele inscription is regular, or a rhyme to the end, or in rhyme. We can observe the whole piece of inscriptions in rhyme through the rhyme word. We can study a great deal of stele inscriptions unearthed in the same historical period by using the rhyme as links, which can peep out the real appearance of the rhyme in this period. In addition, we can review the rhyme of the inscriptions and determine preliminary the meaning of words according to the laws of the rhyme when

interpreting it, which are the deformed inscriptions and difficult interpretations. If the stele inscriptions are vulgar, we can determine what word is according to the laws of the rhyme when interpreting the stele inscription, which also can yet be regarded as s an effective means to interpret the complicated words.

3. THE PROSPECT OF THE PHONOLOGY OF THE STELE INSCRIPTION

We believe that the study of the phonology of the stele inscription is mainly divided into two parts:

3.1 Synchronic Study

With the appearance of a sufficient amount of monographic and synchronic research on Chinese vocabulary, the Synchronic study has become more and more important. We can do cohort study according to the phonology of the stele inscription in the same historical period. We will do a keen and genuine description as far as possible so as to get exhaustive statistics on the basis of the study with the door closed and the qualitative, quantitative and systematic analyzed. We can divide a particular historical period into several periods, such that Wei Jin southern and northern Dynasties period can be roughly divided into the official period, which can be analyzed in detail. We should not only pay attention to the characteristics of the phonology of the stele inscription in different periods so as to generalize the universal law of it.

3.1.1 The Comparative Study on Rhyme Between the Stele Inscription and Contemporary Classics Handed Down From Ancient Times

We can also do the comparative study on rhyme between the stele inscription and contemporary classics handed down from ancient times. We should find the differences between them and the value of the research categories. Particularly in the northern and southern dynasties, ancient poems are concentrated in the south and north is few; on the contrary, the stone is concentrated in the north, which will help us to do the comparative study.

3.1.2 The Comparative Study on Rhyme Between the Stele Inscription and Contemporary Or Dialect Materials Unearthed

We can do the comparative study on rhyme between the stele inscription and Contemporary or dialect materials unearthed according to the unearthed place of the stele inscription, and then find out the similarities and differences between them, which is a new research field of dialectology.

3.2 The Diachronic Study

3.2.1 The Diachronic Study on the Rhyme of the Stele Inscription in the Different Historical Period

We sort out the stele inscription in different historical period in chronological order, and then do the diachronic

study on the rhyme of the stele inscription in the different historical period. The researchers concluded that is closer to the time of the language rhymes with the study of the development of the inscriptions in rhyme and describing the development track of Chinese categories in different historical periods.

3.2.2 The Diachronic Study on the Rhyme of the Stele Inscription and Literature Handed Down Through Thousands of Years in the Different Historical Period

We can do the diachronic study on the rhyme of the stele inscription and literature handed down through thousands of years in the different historical period. Compared the stele inscription with literature handed down through thousands of years, we can further clarify and categories the cohesion and the development of future generations of the Chinese language. We can analyze the evolution process of Chinese and provide reference for the history of Chinese language through the study on two complementary materials. All in all, our aim is to reveal the real appearance of rhyme in every historical period.

All in all, the stele inscription, as a special form of literature, with its material reliability, self-sufficient, the elegant and dignified language style and many other

advantages, is rare precious writing research materials, which have its own unique research value. Predecessors have done study on the stele inscription such as history, calligraphy, literature and language research. However, they have not dug an in-depth study on the rhyme of the stele inscription, which will be worth our research in the future.

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