



A Study on the Creative Approach of Luo Zhenyu's Oracle Bone Calligraphy

zongyang wu¹

¹Philippine Christian University Center for International Education, Manila, 1004, Philippines

Email: Author1zongyang wu (Email:172783449@qq.com)

Abstract: In the history of Chinese culture, the oracle bone script, along with the Dunhuang documents, the Han jian of the Western region, and the Great Treasury of the Cabinet, are known as the four major discoveries of the twentieth century. The oracle bone script has a history of more than 3,000 years. In the field of philology and archaeology, its appearance has brought original materials for the examination of the origin of Chinese characters; in the field of art, its appearance is a great asset for the study of oracle bone script calligraphy. From the dimension of the study of the history of calligraphy, the oracle bone script already possesses the three basic elements of calligraphy: the brush, the knotted character, and the chapter, and is the earliest system of writing with a more mature system and aesthetic nature in the development of Chinese writing. From the perspective of the pen, the oracle bone script was carved with a knife on hard turtle shells or animal bones, so the lines of the script are mainly straight lines of uniform thickness, showing a slightly thicker middle and slightly thinner ends, showing the aesthetic characteristics of thinness and solidity, uprightness and sharpness, giving people a strong three-dimensional sense and visual impact. As a script, oracle bones have both their linguistic communication and their calligraphic artistry. We examine oracle bone calligraphy in terms of writing instruments, brushwork, and chapter forms. The purpose of this paper is to identify problems and analyze them in a step-by-step manner by using a logical tree model of deduction through writing practice and documentary evidence to explore the feasibility of oracle bone calligraphy from three aspects: writing materials, brush structure, and composition form.

Keywords: Oracle Bone, Calligraphic Art, writing instruments

Introduction :

Although the oracle bone script has been around for over 3,000 years, the discovery of the oracle bone script is only about 100 years old, and the creation of oracle bone calligraphy was only started by Luo Zhenyu in 1922, less than 100 years ago.

When the oracle bone tablets were unearthed, the first person to interpret and study them was Sun YiRang. In 1904, he made an interpretation of the oracle bones recorded in the Tiejun Zangguo (Tiejun Zangguo Turtle), and wrote the first draft of the "Qifeng Wen Jue". This book, which was written earlier, was the first oracle bone examination and interpretation monograph in oracle bone science.^[1] It explains and illustrates the uses of oracle bone inscriptions and the general style of the text. The book first cites ancient texts to illustrate the contents of the oracle bones, and then uses the method of character comparison and partial analysis for interpretation, and reads more than 100 characters. However, due to the fact that the book is in its infancy, it is based on limited information and the author has not seen the actual text, so there are many errors in the interpretation.^[2]

In 1909, Luo Zhenyu visited Xiaotun and confirmed it as a land of oracle bones, and began to acquire oracle bones in large quantities. The number of oracle bone fragments included in Luo Zhenyu's three completed books on Yin Xu is 3,403. It can be assumed that this was selected by Luo Zhenyu from his collection of oracle bone fragments, which had been studied and interpreted over many years.

Between the discovery of the oracle bone script (1899) and its acknowledged introduction into writing practice by Luo Zhenyu (1921), there was a gap of nearly thirty years in oracle bone writing. For its time, the process of writing transformation was rapid, but the process of creation was slow, which seemed incongruous with the academic atmosphere of the time, which sought new materials for writing. The research and collection of oracle bones emerged in the following ways: (1) the expansion of the scope of antiquities. "The so-called jinshi of the Northern Song Dynasty could not accommodate these newly emerged ancient artifacts, and the scope of jinshi had actually developed into antiquarianism." (2) "the number and content of the rich." Since Ruan Yuan opened the collection of antiquities and the study of antiquities after the culture, many private individuals collect a large number of antiquities and collate and publish, the number far exceeds the number of antiquities recorded in the Song Dynasty. (3) Underground relics are linked to literary historiography. "^[3]Although scholars used inscriptions to solve the problems of the ritual system, they all lie in textual interpretation", and none of the attention is on writing, only from Luo Zhenyu began the era of creation of oracle bone calligraphy.

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Literature Review:

In terms of writing, Luo Zhenyu published his "Collection of Yin Market Script Pillar Posts" in 1921, which was the first collection of oracle bone calligraphy. Later, Ding Fuzhi published his collection of seven poems in oracle bone script, which is a collection of 30 poems. He was the first seal carver to introduce oracle bone characters into seals. In addition, Wang Xiang, Dong Zuobin and other oracle bone scholars have conducted in-depth research on oracle bone calligraphy and created works in different styles.

In 2002, Mr. Liu Xuezhi of Central China Normal University wrote a master's thesis entitled "Oracle Bone and Oracle Calligraphy", which reviewed the history and writings of oracle bone calligraphy over the past hundred years and first discussed the status and contributions of Luo Zhenyu, the founder of oracle bone studies, in the history of calligraphy. In 2008, Mr. Li Xiaolin of Northeast Normal University wrote his master's degree thesis, "A Brief Discussion of Luo Zhenyu's Contribution to Modern Scholarship," which focused on Luo Zhenyu's In 2012, Mr. Chi Xianping of Henan University wrote his master's thesis, "A Study of Modern Oracle Bone Calligraphy," arguing that Luo Zhenyu's so-called pioneering oracle bone calligraphy lies in his use of the brush to write oracle bone characters. In 2015, Mr. Lv Mingcress of Shaanxi Normal University wrote a master's thesis entitled "An Experimental Study of Luo Zhenyu's Oracle Bone Calligraphy", which provided a brief overview of Luo Zhenyu and his oracle bone calligraphy, as well as a systematic analysis of his oracle bone calligraphy style and calligraphic thought. However, from the above studies, it does not address the core issues of Luo Zhenyu's writing of oracle bone calligraphy.

In 2013, Mr. Wang Ke published "A Century of Scholars - Deep Love for Ink and Brush - Luo Zhenyu: Specializing in the Remains of Han and Ink" in Chinese Calligraphy, No. 7, which provides an appreciation of Luo Zhenyu's calligraphy in various styles and an examination of his calligraphic origins. By examining the influence of his academic background, he concludes that Luo Zhenyu used the most work in seal script and was a pioneering progenitor in the study and creation of oracle bone calligraphy. In his article "Luo Zhenyu and the Emergence of the Oracle Bone Calligraphy Style" published in Calligraphy, No. 10, 2014, Mr. Zheng Bowen mentioned that the discovery of newly unearthed cultural relics since the late Qing Dynasty, such as the oracle bones at Anyang Yin Market in Henan Province, opened up the horizons of calligraphy creation in the new era and introduced Luo Zhenyu's oracle bone calligraphy creation. Mr. Ji Xianping published an article on "The Contemporary Situation of Oracle Bone Calligraphy Creation" in Chinese Calligraphy No. 9 in 2016, arguing that oracle bone calligraphy officially entered the field of calligraphic creation with the publication of "Collected Yin Market Script Couplets", which was written and compiled by Luo Zhenyu in 1921 after he conducted oracle bone research and examination, and collected the deeds into couples. In 2017, Mr. Li Fangchong published an article "Study on the Creation of Oracle Bone Calligraphy in the Early Republic of China" in Chinese Calligraphy, No. 24, talking about Luo Zhenyu's full affirmation of the artistic value of oracle bone calligraphy and commenting on his creative practice. In his article "Luo Zhenyu's Practical Writing and Calligraphy - Centering on Cursive Calligraphy" published in Chinese Calligraphy No. 4 in 2018, Mr. Song Jiu'an analyzed the connection between Luo Zhenyu's realistic writing and his calligraphic works, concluding that Luo Zhenyu's realistic writing is a continuation of the ancient " He concludes that Luo Zhenyu's practical writing is a continuation of the ancient tradition of "manuscript cursive" and has an inherent identity with his calligraphic works.

Tool variations in oracle bone calligraphy:

The transition from knife carving to writing, the transformation from bone to paper carrier is of great significance for oracle bone calligraphy, mainly in the following three points: First, the difference in texture caused by the difference in friction. The knife carving of ancient oracle bones and the tortoise and animal bones were rough carriers, and the power of obstruction with the knife carving the bones was such that the main expression of oracle bones was to be written and then carved. The sense of knife carving has depth and ancient texture from the evolution of the script, the origin of seal script. The second is the artistic characteristics embodied in the material of the knife and brush tool itself. In modern oracle bone calligraphy, the use of brushes, a soft tool, makes it easier to write and more flexible, with more curves and gracefulness. The third is that by seeking the whole of Chinese calligraphy as a whole, all of the standardized script has been incorporated into the calligraphic system. The oracle bone script is a perfect writing system and the root of the evolution of all other calligraphic styles. By clarifying the flow of script, the practical experience of thousands of years of writing in other styles of calligraphy can be incorporated into the oracle bone writing system. The transformation of the carrier is a prerequisite for all oracle bone calligraphy creation.

Change of writing style:

Luo Zhenyu's innovation for oracle bone calligraphy is rooted in his early years, when he largely used the brushwork of the small seal script, with a predominantly mid-front line. The change in subject matter was also an opportunity for Luo Zhenyu to seek changes in oracle bone writing in his later years. In general, Luo Zhenyu used more and more purely the small seal script strokes in his writing works, especially in his later years. He was influenced by Wu Changshuo's seal script when he created the oracle bone script, and he used the small seal script to write the oracle bone script.^[4] The oracle bone script was the latest discovery at that time, so there was no way to start, so all we could do at that time was to use what we knew to extrapolate what we did not know.

Among all the calligraphic styles that Luo Zhenyu studied, he put the most effort into the seal script. He studied all the real, cursive, official and seal script and copied them frequently, so his writing was very simple. His oracle bone calligraphy, with its solidity and heaviness, is complemented by a slightly relaxed brush tone and subtle changes in the dryness and wetness of the ink, reflecting his ability to control the opposing factors of rigidity and softness.

From the point of view of calligraphy, Luo Zhenyu has created an ancient and heavy style of oracle bone calligraphy, which is also inseparable from Luo's years of study of the small seal script. In the process of writing the oracle bones, Luo Zhenyu maintained the uniform spacing and vertical shape of the characters in the Small Seal Script, and did not choose to change the character style freely with the shape of the bones, but maintained the uniform spacing, size and interval of the characters, which gave people an elegant and neutral atmosphere. He did not restore the original style of oracle bones and did not write the true flavor of oracle bones. However, from another point of view, this is also a choice of Luo Zhenyu, because the oracle bones are originally small characters, however, when the small characters are enlarged, there is a need for some changes in the writing style, ^[5]if the oracle bones are still written according to their original appearance, it will look a bit weak.

Composition change:

The original composition of the oracle bone script was rather scattered, with no particular fixed form, and the writing was smaller and more random. The emergence of Luo Zhenyu, who wrote oracle bones in the form of couplets, made the oracle bones, which could be read with a small number of characters, more flexible and versatile in their creation. Most of Luo Zhenyu's calligraphic works used for socializing and entertaining are in oracle bone script. ^[6]Since most of the works are superscribed with only the name of the person to whom they were given and not the time, it is difficult to make a determination of the date. In the case of Luo Zhenyu's oracle bone writing, if the work is a fan, it is faithfully written in the style of the original oracle bone piece; if the work is a couplet, the brushwork is completely different. Luo Zhenyu's study of oracle bones has two meanings in the history of calligraphy: one is that he first learned calligraphy from the status of the oracle bones as a legal post, and the second meaning is to show that he is truly a calligrapher's attitude to the writing of oracle bones, in accordance with the inherent laws of calligraphy in learning.

Since Luo Zhenyu was doing couplets at the beginning, he wrote mostly large characters, not small pieces of small characters. The oracle bone script, on the other hand, is a small character engraved on tortoise and animal bones. Transforming from engraved characters to written characters, and from small characters to large characters, all require a certain amount of practice and skill to make the oracle bone script fit well into this writing process. The oracle bone script belongs to a bygone era, however, calligraphers and writing are epochal, we cannot go back completely to the past and express ourselves in the way our predecessors did, but we can conform to the era we are in and express ourselves to the existing era, and we can also have the existing perception to push and feel the ancient times. The architecture of our time has changed, the houses are no longer the two or three story buildings that the ancients used to have, or the single story buildings that were very low, and our galleries today can hold larger exhibits, which means we can write and create larger works. And when we then create large works it is different from small works, and we need to add the steleological stuff. Luo Zhenyu also responded to the aesthetic trend of the time when couplets were flourishing and pursued the beauty of steleological firmness and strength, and changed the writing of oracle bones from small characters to the current large characters of seal script couplets.

There are certain difficulties in writing small characters in large size. The starting and closing strokes of small characters are weak when used in large characters, and cannot support the whole work. In writing large characters, we need to simplify the process by removing unnecessary details, which is exactly the case with small seal script. Although there is not much variation in the thickness of the lines in small seal script, the lines are very strong and suitable for large characters. The starting and closing strokes are changed from the pointed strokes of the oracle bone script to the round strokes, making the large characters written with subtlety and bookishness, and also more stable. The oracle bone pieces have a single blade and a double blade, and a sharp edge is aggressive. Taking a single blade with a side-sharp edge cannot complete the transformation of the character form on the structure again, and using the brush with its sharp edge is good for maintaining the degree of stability when the lines are walking and the consistency of thickness within a stroke; if different thicknesses of lines are used, the regularity of the orthographic structure will be lost. The use of the brush changes from pointed to rounded, adding visual heft and preparing the brush for enlarged writing. The layout of the chapters is in accordance with the original oracle bones of the tortoise and cow bone pattern, and there is no fixed blank, central axis and writing order and other chapters of the layout, so the font size is not consistent. Luo's writing is basically consistent from beginning to end, with consistent spacing, and no character formation, and is arranged on a central axis, giving a strong sense of order, clean and simple, without the superfluous strokes of the oracle bone inscriptions.

Although Luo did not break through the traditional seal script style when writing on oracle bones, his works are rich in form, and he explores various forms of writing on oracle bones by creating not only couplets, but also vertical panels and fans. For example, the form of oracle bone couplets has become one of his classics, and most of the oracle bone couplets written in future generations are from Luo Zhenyu's collection.

In Luo Zhenyu's oracle bone calligraphy, we have compared by practice and experimentation, as well as by making a control group of written and engraved works, and found that the engraved content, which is more childish, shows a

sense of vicissitude, and the straight lines make the picture appear hard and strong, while the writing group, which is the control, is more flexible and has a sense of fluidity in its brushwork. Such a control experiment effectively presents the different performance of oracle bone calligraphy in different materials. In terms of the presentation of writing techniques, Luo Zhenhe used the seal script writing style, which is later than the oracle bone script. By analyzing the images of the starting and closing strokes, it was observed that the starting strokes of the seal script are more rounded, while the starting strokes of the oracle bone script, due to the use of hard objects carved into the bones, appear sharper and the text is more conflicting and confrontational, and then when enlarged to large calligraphy, it gives a sense of tension due to the sharpness and too many diamond corners. The brushwork of the seal script, with its rounded starting strokes, alleviates this situation well and is a good reference for later writing of oracle bone characters. In terms of composition, Luo Zhenyu's oracle bone calligraphy is mainly written in the framework of three forms of work: couplets, whole sheets, and fans. Among the surviving works of Luo Zhenyu that have been compiled, there are the most works in couplet form, which shows that 1. couplets are more practical and ornamental, and are often used for social purposes. 2. the small number of words in couplets provides convenience for oracle bone texts, which are not very readable. 3. couplets are better for The size of the characters is better controlled, and the use of lines is more conducive to the use of seal script in oracle bone calligraphy.

Conclusion:

The emergence of Luo Zhenyu opened up more possibilities for the art of oracle bone calligraphy, in terms of tools, making the transition from the carving knife to the brush. In terms of technique, the addition of the seal script changed the character structure of oracle bone calligraphy, making it more suitable for writing large characters, resulting in the creation of a large number of couplets in later oracle bone calligraphy, which is related to the shape of the character structure and the method of expression. With his explorations, Luo was a pioneer of oracle bone calligraphy. However, the study of oracle bone calligraphy is far from over, and I believe that later scholars will have more ideas, from the material level, from the technical level, from the composition level, and other aspects to improve, and perhaps we can also write with more materials other than brushes and Xuan paper, so let's try it gradually.

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