

Collation of the Texts on the Bricks of Criminals in Later Han Dynasty

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Abstract—In the Later Han Dynasty, a large number of criminals with different accusations and years of imprisonment were transferred by governments from various places to the capital Luoyang and surrounding areas as forced labor. After their death, a brick will be buried in the tomb, on which the name of the deceased, the date of death and the county where the prison was located were written. This is the origin of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty. There are some records about this batch of bricks, but so far there is still a lack of centralized sorting of the explanation. In addition to introducing the unearthing, recording and research of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, based on the published pictures of the original texts on the bricks and the descriptions of the predecessors, this paper focuses on the texts on the bricks that were unearthed from the tomb of the Later Han Dynasty, in order to provide historical evidence for further language and other researches.

Keywords—Later Han Dynasty; texts on the bricks of criminals; collection of explanation

I. INTRODUCTION

Through the archaeological excavation, the texts on the bricks of criminals in Luoyang of the Later Han Dynasty, is a series of self-contained systems, whether in the Later Han Dynasty or throughout the ancient Chinese. At that time, a large number of criminals with different accusations and years of imprisonment were transferred by governments from various places to the capital Luoyang and surrounding areas for labor. After their death, the brick will be buried in the tomb, on which the name of the deceased, the date of death and the county where the prison was located were written. This is the origin of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty.

According to two archaeological excavations in 1958 and 1964, all the texts on the bricks of criminals were engraved on the broken bricks. There are usually two tomb bricks in each tomb: one is a relatively complete brick, the inscription on it is longer, engraved with "unskilled", "skilled", and the county where the prison was located before transferred to Luoyang, the name of the penalty, the name of the prison, the date of death, and the words "died here" and "pass away here" were added at the end. There are also many inscriptions that mark the date of death at the forefront. A longer inscription can be up to twenty words. The other brick is smaller, and the

inscription on it is simple. Only the name of the prison or sometimes the words "unskilled" or "skilled" before it was engraved. Although such tomb bricks are small, the inscriptions often have only two words, but they are not like pieces. The difference in the use of the two tomb bricks is still inconclusive in the academic world.

The earliest time for the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty to be discovered by the people is the fifth year of Yongping (AD 62), which is found in Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji. The latest is the first year of Xi Ping (AD 172).

The excavation of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, in addition to its important reference value for the history of Chinese calligraphy and the history of Chinese characters, is also of great value in studying the laws of the Later Han Dynasty in the history of Chinese law.

A. The Unearthing and Description of the Texts on the Bricks of Criminals in Later Han Dynasty

In 1907, the texts on the bricks of criminals were excavated. At that time, the collector Duan Fang collected more than one hundred and seventy papers and recorded 113 pieces of bricks in Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji. In addition to the explanation, he also verified the place name.

Subsequently, Mr. Luo Zhenyu drew 31 pieces of "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji" according to the sample, proofread the mistakes and omissions, and in 1915 published "Heng Nong Zhou Mu Yi Wen". The "Special Record of Hengnong"¹ published in 1917 recorded 231 pieces.

In 2005, "Selected Works of Research Materials of Inscription on Pottery in the Past Dynasties" included the "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji" of Duan Fang.

In 1958, the texts on the bricks of criminals were unearthed in the ancient city of Han-Wei in Yanshi County, Henan Province. The more complete tomb bricks were 9 pieces, and the inscription time was the second year of the Yuan Dynasty. The investigation was published in the 6th issue of the "Architectural Communication" in 1958, "Investigation Record of the Criminal Cemetery in Luoyang City of Han-Wei".

In 1964, the criminal cemetery in the southern suburbs of Luoyang discovered 522 tombs of criminals. There were more

¹ Hengnong is the ancient name of Lingbao.

than 820 pieces of bricks unearthed in the criminal cemetery. Parts of their pictures are published in the 4th issue of "Archaeology" in 1972, "Criminal Cemetery in the Southern Suburbs of Luoyang City in the Later Han Dynasty". Archaeological excavations allow us to see the true face of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty.

The "Chinese Ancient Bricks Texts" published in 1998 contains 10 articles of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty with an explanation.

The "Chinese Brick Inscription" (including the text fascicle and the stencil) edited by Mr. Yin Sun was published in 1998. It contains 78 pieces of transcription of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, and is the most complete collection and introduction so far. However, no explanation was attached.

B. *Research on the Texts on the Bricks of Criminals in Later Han Dynasty*

From the content of the inscription, the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty are not very complicated.

The "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji" in the Qing Dynasty was mainly about the interpretation of words and the interpretation of historical place names. For example, the interpretation of "漢隸鉗鑿碑" on the volume is "A certain day in February, 88 AD, and the burial of Chen Li is under..." The commentary of the explanation writer includes three aspects:

- Textual interpretation. There are many variants in ancient China. The former Han Shu · Criminal Law and the Shuo Wen Jie Zi have similar records.
- Interpret difficult words and explain individual words. The terms of the criminal law explained in "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji" are: kunqian, sikou.
- "History of Later Han Dynasty · Geography" points out the county to which the place name belongs in the brick. Such as: "History of Later Han Dynasty · County Records": Yangzhou Lujiang County has Juchao principality.

Most of the works of future generations focus on the value of this batch of materials in the history of Chinese calligraphy, the history of Chinese characters, and the history of Chinese law. In addition, the value of this batch of materials in calligraphy is more concerned. In the "Overview" of "Chinese Ancient Bricks Texts" and the "Analysis of Chinese Bricks in Past Dynasties" in the texts of the "Chinese Brick Inscription", the inscription's chirography, the characteristics of the calligraphy, and the evolution of the chirography are analyzed in detail. So far, there have been no books on the study of the texts on the bricks of criminals. Moreover, most of the previous works mainly show the photocopies of the texts on the bricks of criminals. At present, no one has concentrated on collecting the explanation of the texts on the bricks of criminals. To this end, this article will focus on the published texts on the bricks of criminals — literacy, interpretation, endorsement, dynasty, etc., in order to fully present the appearance of the texts on the bricks of criminals in the Later Han Dynasty, and accurately explain the inscriptions of the

brick's texts, to prepare for the study of Chinese history and related disciplines (history, folklore, law, etc.).

II. EXPLANATION OF THE TEXTS ON THE BRICKS OF CRIMINALS

"Chinese Brick Inscription" contains 78 pieces of transcription of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, which for the first time fully shows the true face of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, but no explanations were attached. In contrast to the transcription of the texts on the bricks of criminals in "Chinese Brick Inscription", with detailed review of "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji", "Special Record of Hengnong" and excavation reports in 1958 and 1964, the author collected a total of 119 texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, and made explanations and notes. Some of the explanation are listed in chronological order as follows, and are explained. For the similar content of the format, a representative description is given.

(1) The four-year criminal laborer from the Jangyuan County Prison in Shu Prefecture, who replaced a person, died on August 2nd of the fifth year of Yongping.

[Commentary] In the engravings of the Eastern Han Dynasty criminals' tomb bricks seen so far, this is the earliest piece, only recorded in "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji", but not recorded in "Special Record of Hengnong". In addition, the place names appearing in the bricks refer to the county where the prison was located, so they were translated as "from a certain prison".

(2) One day of the third year of Yuanhe, the four-year criminal laborer Shi Zhong from the Lushi Prison in Hongnong County died here.

(3) One day of the fourth year of Yuanhe, the three-year criminal laborer Licuo from Shuxian Prison died here.

(4) One day of the first year of Zhanghe, the five-year criminal laborer from Chang'an Zuozhang Prison died here.

(5) One day of the second year of Zhanghe, Chen Li, a five-year criminal laborer from Anchao Prison, died here.

(6) One day of the first year of Yongyuan, the five-year criminal laborer Bi Tong from the Wannian County Prison in Zuopingyi County died here.

(7) One day of the first year of Yongyuan, Wu Yan, a four-year criminal laborer from Chenliu County Prison, died here.

(8) November 8, the first year of Yongyuan, Liang Dong, a four-year criminal laborer from Yichun County Prison.

[Commentary] According to "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji", the brick is complete, and the content of the inscription is not the same as other bricks, there is no written word about death.

(9) September 7, the second year of Yongyuan, the two-year criminal laborer Ba from the Qichun County Prison died here.

(10) September 20, the second year of Yongyuan, the five-year criminal laborer Dongmen Dang from the Wuyang prison, died here.

(11) June 10, the third year of Yongyuan, the unskilled four-year criminal laborer Guibo from Weishi County Prison died.

(12) February 28, the fourth year of Yongyuan, Yan Zhong, an unskilled four-year criminal laborer from the prison in Luan County, died here.

(13) February 7, the fifth year of Yongyuan, Zhang Zhong, an unskilled three-year criminal laborer from the prison in Anlu County, died here.

[Commentary] In the engravings of all the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty, this is the only example of "died here". Other examples of the word "this" are seen in "died in this."

(14) Leap month 7, the sixth year of Yongyuan, Feng Ping, an unskilled five-year criminal laborer from the prison in Louyang County, died.

[Commentary] From the sixth year of Yongyuan, the format of the engravings of the texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty changed. The previous death time was at the beginning of the text, and the time since then was at the end of the text.

(15) December 14, the sixth year of Yongyuan, Zhang Hu, a four-year criminal laborer died here.

(16) One day of the sixth year of Yongyuan, the four-year criminal laborer Huang from Nanyang prison died.

(17) One day of the thirteenth year of Yongyuan, the unskilled four-year criminal laborer Zuo from a certain prison died.

[Commentary] Therefore, the word "pass away" is used here to mean death. "Hanshu · Suwu Biography": "In addition to those who have surrendered and died before, there are a total of nine people who came back together with Su Wu." Yan Shigu notes: "The meaning of 'pass away' is death, which means that it is the same as the ghost. In other words, there is no direct accusation of its mistakes, but it is said that all the things it takes are deceased. Therefore, 'pass away' is the meaning of 'death'."

This is the second change that has occurred since the sixth year of Yongyuan, that is, the word "pass away" is used in the inscription.

(18) May 4, the first year of Yongchu, Yin Xiao, an unskilled five-year criminal laborer from the central Roulu prison of the right department, died here.

[Commentary] The specialized agencies that manage labor servants are called "Departments" and are divided into "Left Department" and "Right Department". "History of Later Han Dynasty · Xiao Huan Period": "Edict in November of the third year of Janhe, if the criminals are sick in the left, should be treated with drugs; buried after death." "Left Department" and

"Right Department" are the "Left School" and "Right School" recorded in "Continuing Han Shu · Journal of officers".²

(19) May 12, the first year of Yongchu, Ren Ke, an impaired two-year criminal laborer from the Zhencheng prison in Jiying County of the right department, died here.

(20) June 25, the first year of Yongchu, Fan Yong, an impaired three-year criminal laborer from the Yingyin prison in Yingchuan County of the right department, died here.

(21) June 18, the first year of Yongchu, Feng Shao, a skilled five-year criminal laborer from the Quyang prison in Runan County of the right department, died here.

(22) June 26, the first year of Yongchu, in place of Hu Fei, the skilled five-year criminal laborer Cao Fu from the Xiayang prison in Xiapi County of the right department, died.

(23) ① May 21, the first year of Yongchu, Zhao Tang, an unskilled five-year criminal laborer from the Yuxian prison in Chenliu County of the right department, died here. ② an unskilled criminal laborer, Zhao Tang.

(24) ① May 25, the first year of Yongchu, Chen Bian, an unskilled five-year criminal laborer from the Wanxian prison in Nanyang County of the right department, died here. ② Chen Bian, from the Wanxian prison in Nanyang County.

(25) ① July 1, the first year of Yongchu, Xie Lang, an unskilled four-year criminal laborer from the E'xian prison in Jiangxia County of the right department, died here. ② an unskilled criminal laborer, Xie Lang.

[Commentary] In (23) (24) (25), ① ② indicated the inscription on the two bricks in the same tomb. In the archaeological excavation of the Tomb of the Later Han Dynasty in 1964, it was found that most of the tombs were filled with two tomb bricks. Generally, the size of the two bricks was different. The larger one of the tomb bricks has a long engraving, and it details the department (right, left), "unskilled" or "skilled", name of prison or county ("Chenliu, Yu" in example 24, "Nanyang, Wan" in example 25), prisoner's name, date, and conclusion "died here." The other brick is smaller (the researcher confirmed that the smaller brick is not broken), the engraving is short, or engraved with "unskilled / skilled + name", such as "unskilled Xie Lang"; or engraved "county name + name, such as "Nanyang, Wan, Chen Bian"; or "county name + criminal terms + name", such as "Xiayi of Liang, kunqian, Zhao Zhong". The longest part of the small tomb bricks is to write "unskilled / skilled + county name + criminal terms + name", such as "unskilled, in Henan Luoyang, kunqian, Jinling". However, in the tomb of a few criminals in the sixth years of Yuanchu, the inscriptions of the two tomb bricks were exactly the same.

The content of the two tomb bricks is slightly different, and the use should be different. Marking the location of the bones is conducive to moving the graveyard, which was an important

² Zhang Zhengxuan's "Architectural Materials of the Criminals of the Qin and Han Dynasties", "History Teaching", No. 1, 2001. "Left" and "Right" are "Left School" and "Right School".

purpose of setting up the epitaph.³ The simpler texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty may also be used to facilitate the recognition of the bones when moving the graveyard. Earlier in the "Tao Zhai Cang Zhuang Ji", there were a number of short inscriptions on the tomb bricks, such as "Nu Wen died" and "Mao Shao died".

(26) September 1, the fourth year of Yangguang, Xiahou Dang, an unskilled four-year criminal laborer from the Puyang prison in Dong County of the left department, died here.

(27) July 16, the first year of Jiangning, Yu Bian, an unskilled three-year criminal laborer from the Rencheng prison of the left department, died here.

(28) June 11, the first year of Yongchu, Zhou Juan, an unskilled two-year criminal laborer from the Zhuqiu prison of the right department, died here. Official was not responsible for funeral

(29) ① July 9, the first year of Yongchu, Juan Zu, an unskilled four-year criminal laborer from the Wuyin prison in Nanyang County, died here. ② An unskilled four-year criminal laborer Juan Zu died here, for whom official was not responsible for funeral and temporarily buried him here.

III. CONCLUSION

The texts on the bricks of criminals in Later Han Dynasty were named after the "criminal", and the criminals were prisoners. This refers to criminals who have been transferred from various prisons to the capitals of Luoyang and other places for labor. When these criminals died during service, the place names written on the tomb bricks were the county where the prisons were sentenced before they were transferred to Luoyang, not their birthplace. In addition, the tomb bricks are also engraved with information such as name, date of death, and prison term. If many criminals die at the same time, they may be buried in the same place. The tomb bricks may serve as a marker to facilitate the recognition of the bones when moving the graveyard. Through the words on the bricks of the criminal tomb, we can see some of the words used at the time, such as "sikou", "guixin", "wanchengdan", "kunqian" and other criminal terms. For another example, the words "died" and "pass away" are used to express the meaning of death. The common sentence of "died here" also shows the usage of the words of the times, that is, in the more popular corpus of texts on the bricks of criminals, the preposition of the introduction place is "in" rather than "to". Therefore, this corpus is not only an important material for historical research, but also provides an important reference for linguistic research.

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