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On the Presence of Non-Chinese at Anyang

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On the Presence of Non-Chinese at Anyang

Kim Hayes

It has now become clear that finds of chariot remains, metal knives and axes of northern provenance, and bronze mirrors of western provenance in the tombs of Anyang indicate that the Shang had at least indirect contact with people who were familiar with these things.¹ Who were these people? Where did they live? When did they arrive?

Following the discovery of the Tarim Mummies, we now know that the population of the earliest attested cultures of what is present-day Xinjiang were of northwestern or western derivation. According to the craniometric studies of Han Kangxin, these people can be divided into three distinct types.²

The first group to arrive are held to have come from the north because the cranial measurements of the surviving skulls of this type are affinal with the skulls of the Afanasevo culture in particular, which was located in the Sayan-Altai/North Mongolia area, and with the skull types of steppe people living much further to the west. This group is called “Proto-European” by Mair and Mallory,³ and it can be dated to have arrived in Xinjiang about 1800 B.C.E. or somewhat earlier.

It has been suggested that this group may have been a relatively small group of Afanasevo/Tocharian refugees fleeing to the south, away from Indo-Iranian expansion arriving from regions west and southwest of the Sayan-Altai.⁴

If we accept the refugee classification of these people, it helps us explain the geographical position in the southeast Tarim of the Qawrighul and Yanbulaq Proto-Europeans. It was as far away from everywhere as you could get—it was a safe place. This is important and may help us to understand much else that happened to these people prior to their arrival in Xinjiang, as well as what happened to them after this time.

For the period c. 2000–c. 1000 B.C.E.—which saw the emergence, development, expansion, and culmination of early Chinese civilization in the Erlitou, Erligang and related cultures, Anyang cultural continuum—there is no extant evidence of contact between the people of the eastern Tarim and the people of the emerging Chinese polity.

It is only from around c. 1000 B.C.E. that we have evidence for the arrival in Xinjiang of the two remaining types of caucasoid, the Pamir Ferghana and Indo-Afghan types. It is thought

that the Pamir Ferghana type entered northwestern Xinjiang from contiguous regions to the west of the Tian Shan c. 1000 B.C.E. The Indo-Afghans are thought to have entered southwestern Xinjiang from Bactria somewhat later.

A clear illustration of “the three types of human cranial variation according to Han Kang xin,” is provided on p. 238 of *The Tarim Mummies* and on p. 566 of *The Bronze Age*.

Given that there is no evidence to indicate interaction between the caucasoids of Xinjiang and their Han neighbors to the east, it is very unlikely that remains of any non-Chinese found at Anyang would have come from Xinjiang. This proposition is strengthened by the fact that the Pamir Ferghana and Indo-Afghan types are held to have entered Western Xinjiang around the time of the demise of the Shang, or after.

Heretofore, many scholars have suspected that there might have been a foreign contribution involved in the formative processes of the emerging Chinese polity, but beyond inferences and possibilities, no scholar has felt confident enough, or has been able to say, that there is material proof that this is possible.

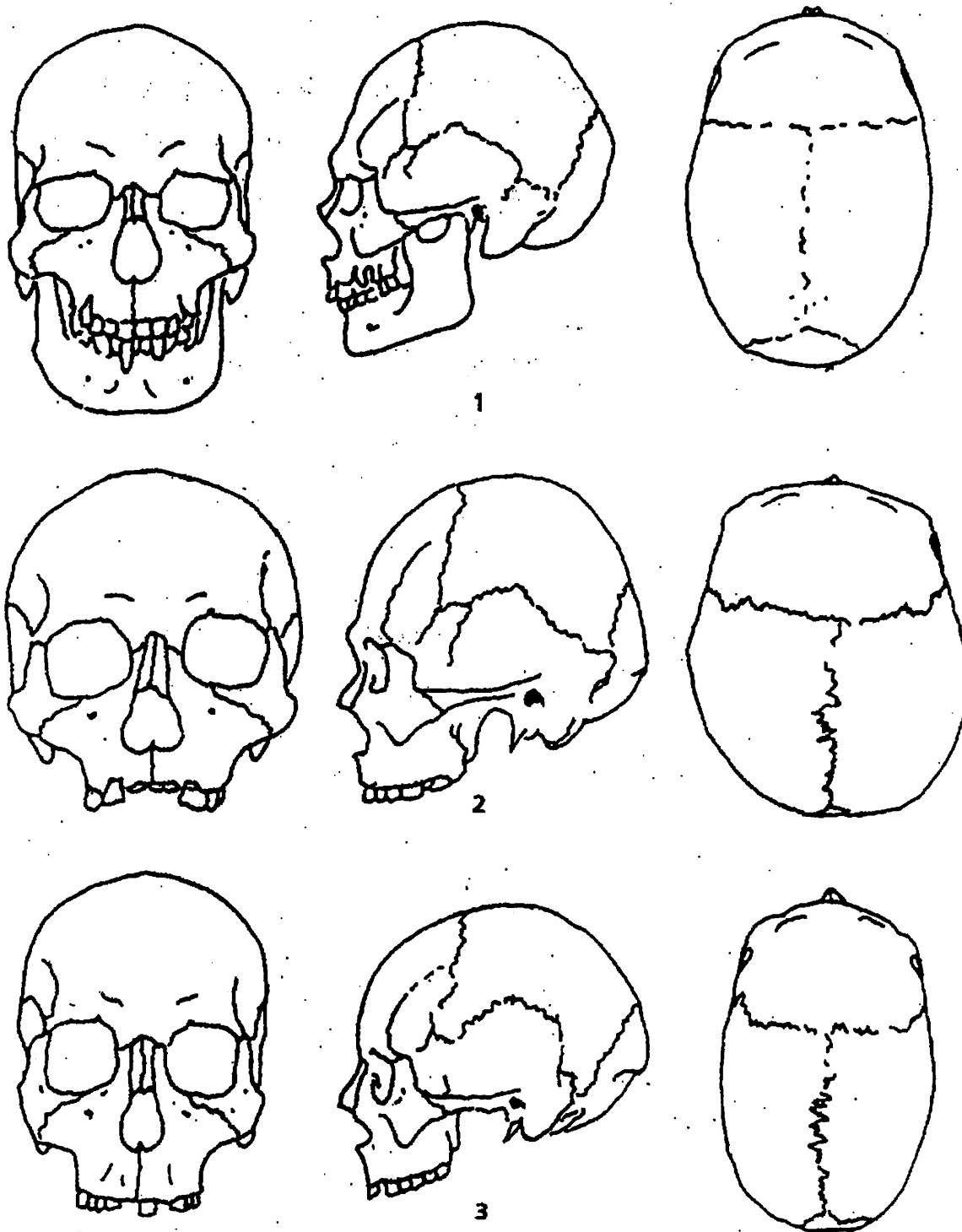
As Robert Bagley has said, “Li Ji was the fortunate choice to direct the excavations at Anyang when they began in 1928,” and “Li Chi’s Anyang provides a detailed history of the 1928-37 excavations.”⁶ It remains a valuable source, and we turn to its chapter “Notes on the Physical Anthropology of the Yin-Shang” with interest.

Here, on pp. 258-61 of Anyang, we find photographs of five types of crania excavated from sacrificial pits at Anyang. The bodies were buried in the ramps around the grave during the sacrificial process.⁷ Here it is important to note that the crania from the sacrificial pits are thought to be the remains of those who were captured in war and subsequently executed when ritually needed.⁸

According to Li Ji, there were nearly 400 crania available for study by 1938, of which some 152 were able to be categorized.⁹ They are described below.

Subgroup 1, numbering some 30 victims, is called “Classic Mongoloids” by Li Ji. They may have been cousins from the south with whom the Shang had had conflict. They may also be representative of people of low social status drawn from the population surrounding Anyang, whose ritual participation in the cult of the ancestors was thought necessary to its success.¹⁰

Fig. No. 1



The three types of human cranial variation in Xinjiang according to Han Kangxin.
1 = Proto-Europoid, 2 = Pamir-Ferghana and 3 = Indo-Afghan, from Mair and Mallory 2000, p. 238

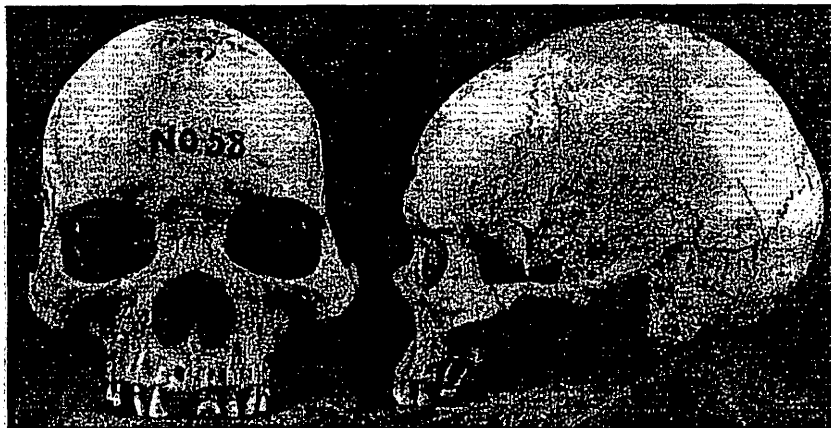
Figures 2–6, from Li Ji, 77; pp. 258-61

Fig. No. 2



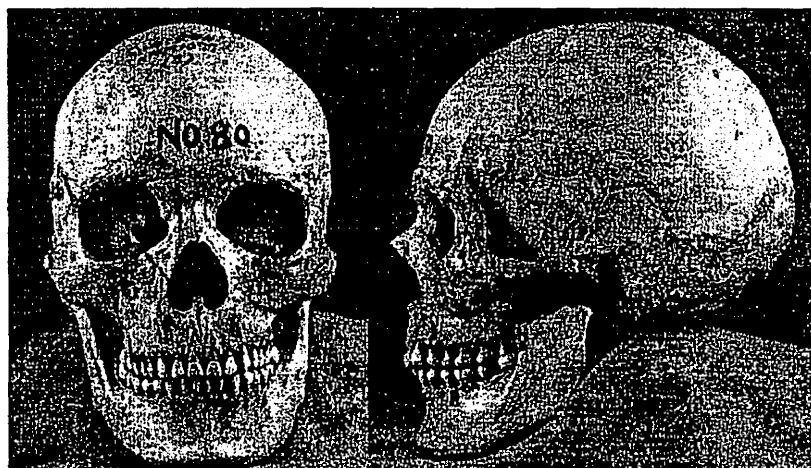
Classic Mongoloid type of human skull found in Hou-chia-chuang

Fig. No. 3



Oceanic Negroid type of human skull found in Hou-chia-chuang

Fig. No. 4



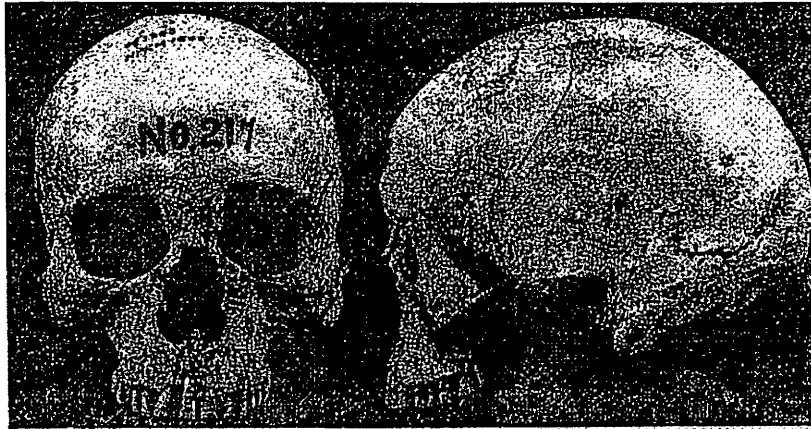
Caucasoid type of human skull found in Hou-chia-chuang

Fig. No. 5



Eskimoid type of human skull found in Hou-chia-chuang

Fig. No. 6



Representative of group of small skulls, unidentified

Subgroup 2, some 34 individuals, is called “Oceanic Negroid.” It would be more modern to regard them as representative of people who spoke an Austro-Asiatic language. The Dong Yi of Dong Zuobin would seem to be by far the most likely candidates.

Subgroup 3 contains only two individuals who are called “Caucasoid.” Though only two in number, the importance of these two crania would be difficult to overestimate. When these “Caucasoids” are compared with Han Kang xin’s “Proto European” type, we find the crania from Anyang and Xinjiang to be so similar, that it would be difficult not to conclude that the two are clearly related. Here we have evidence that people who in all probability spoke Tocharian, or an early variant of it, were at Anyang.

Subgroup 4 is the most represented group, with some fifty individuals. They are called “Eskimoid.” When these Eskimos are compared with Han’s Pamir Ferghana type, we again find a very strong similarity.

Subgroup 5 is also well represented, with some 38 individuals. Interestingly, these crania are notably smaller than the other four types and they remain unidentified by Li Ji. However, when the unknowns are compared with Han’s Indo-Afghan type, we find, again, that they belong to the same type.

Now that a foreign presence at Anyang has been incontrovertibly established, even if it was only to the extent of losing their heads, and before the implications of that presence are examined, it must be borne in mind that any comparison of the numbers of the five types of crania presented and examined in Anyang can have no meaningful statistical relationship if compared, as yet. This is because the crania from the 1928–1937 excavations have not been compared with the more numerous crania of post–1949 excavations. Nor have the post–1949 crania been subjected to a typological examination. Only when a more numerous sample is available for analysis—and one hopes this is still possible—will we be able to judge the relative numbers of the types of crania from the sacrificial pits with some degree of accuracy.

Furthermore, crania from higher status burials, those where the severed head was buried together with its body and those where the body was buried intact,¹¹ have not been compared with the crania from the sacrificial pits. Neither have the crania from the chariot burials been compared with those of the sacrificial pits, nor have the crania from Anyang been compared with those of Erligang. This must be borne in mind.

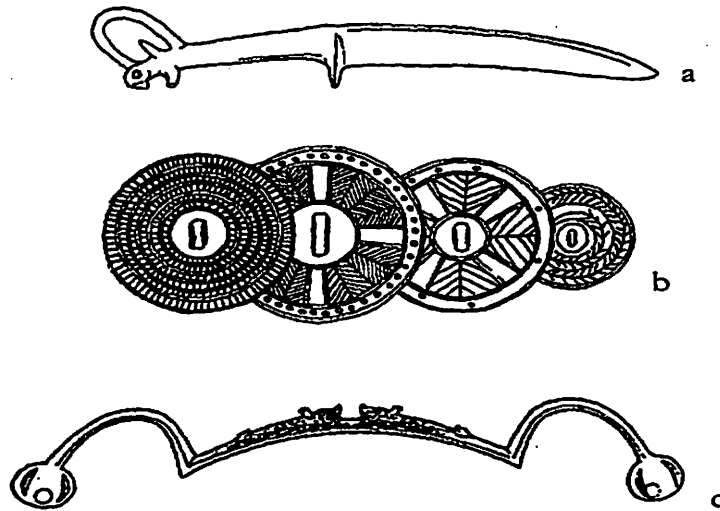
It is entirely possible that foreigners came to occupy and enjoy high-status positions in Anyang society such as that of shamans and diviners, metallurgists, chariot builders and drivers, musicians, astronomers and calendricalists, or linguists and translators. It is entirely possible that the King of Shang had a Pamir Ferghana Indo-Iranian-speaking chariot driver.

Further research will reveal more accurately the extent of foreign influence on the Shang not only of Anyang, but also of the earlier Erligang period, and, may it be said, on the people of even earlier date, the Xia of Erlitou.¹²

The Xia-Shang cultural continuum that represents the emerging Chinese polity had a multicultural dimension. It certainly engaged in international relations that were essentially, though probably not totally, of a hostile nature. This is proved by the crania of Anyang, by the

texts of the oracle bone inscriptions and by the presence in the tombs of Anyang of weapons of northern provenance, of chariot remains, and of mirrors of western provenance.

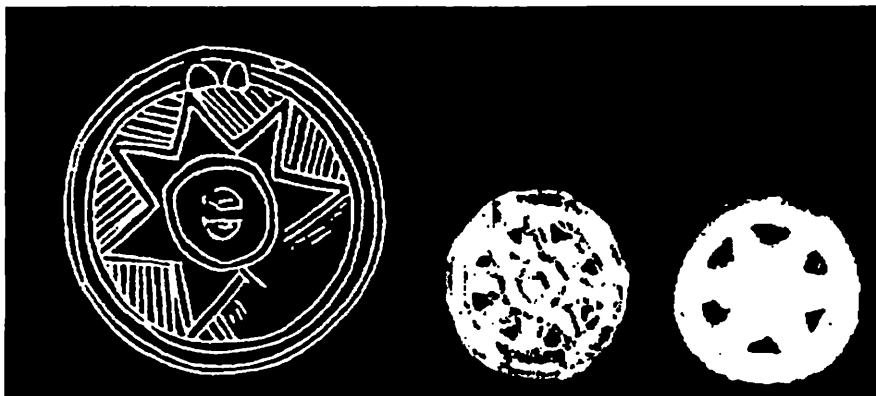
Fig. No. 7



From Bagley, 1999, p 198.

Bronzes of northern style, from Fu Hao's tomb. Not to scale. (a) Knife. Length 36.2cm. After Lin Yun, "A Reexamination of the Relationship Between Bronzes of the Shang Culture and of the Northern Zone," in *Studies of Shang Archaeology: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Shang Civilization*, ed. K. C. Chang (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 252. (b) Mirrors. Diameters from 12.5 to 7.1cm. After *ibid.* (c) Bow shaped object. Length 40.4 cm. After *Yinxu qing tong qi* (Beijing: Wenwu, 1985), fig. 31:3.

Fig. No. 8



From Fitzgerald-Huber, 1995, p. 53.

Bronze mirror. Diameter 9cm. From Gamatai, Guinan, Qinghai. After Lin Yun, "A Reexamination of the Relationship between Bronzes of the Shang Culture and of the Northern Zone," trans. David Goodrich, in *Studies of Shang Archaeology: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Shang Civilization*, ed. K. C. Chang (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1986), 252, fig. 51:9.

Bronze seal-amulets from Bactria. Diameters, 5cm. After V. I. Sarianidi, *Dreunie zemledeltsy Afghanistana* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), p. 95, fig. 49:1, 9 (stars).

We know that Shang Wu Ding campaigned extensively in the Ordos region and areas further to the east. Li Ji, citing Dong Zuobin, informs us, "During the reign of Wu Ding, who conducted a series of military expeditions against the invasion of enemies in the Ordos region, chiefly from northern Shansi and Shensi, the names of the enemies were definitely given as Gong Fang, Tu Fang and Xia Zhi. Wu Ding spent three years in this northwestern war (from the twenty-ninth to the thirty-second year of his reign) near the end of the thirteenth century B.C. In those three years he first conquered the Xia Zhi, which took him ten months, and then Tu Fang, which took him a much longer time, more than two years. Gong Fang was the furthest to the northwest. The oracle bones record that in the seventh and eighth months of the thirteenth year of Wu Ding, he conscripted successively almost ten times in two months, each time as many as three thousand men. The maximum may reach five thousand. Dong Zuo bin later compared all the records relating to this war and came to the conclusion that Gong Fang was another name for Gui Fang..."¹³

This represents a very considerable reaction to a very substantial, though less well organized power, on the Shang northern periphery. There is no evidence in the Ordos of this time for urbanization, which necessarily implies more complex social organization than that of mobile, agricultural pastoralists, which the Xia Zhi, Tu Fang, and Gong/Gui Fang most probably were. The force that the Shang were able to organize to repel their northern foes was very impressive,¹⁴ especially considering that the northerners possessed chariots as well as advanced bronze weapon technology that would seem to have something to do with a possible, though still unclear, transcultural metallurgical cultural continuum of the Afanasevo/Tocharian, Okunevo, Xia, Seima-Turbino, Shang, and Karasuk cultures.¹⁵

Given that we know Shang Wu Ding waged war to the north and that he captured prisoners and very probably chariots and arms, together with the fact that the extraneous crania of Anyang are Indo-European types of northern and western derivation, it can reasonably be concluded that the Xia Zhi, Tu Fang, and Gong Gui Fang represent the most easterly expansion of Indo-European speaking people yet known. This proposition, the consequences of which are yet to be fully analyzed, will help to explain the growing number of Indo-European loan words that are being found in early Chinese.¹⁶ They were neighbors, so to speak, even if they were not quite on speaking terms.

Notes

1. Bagley, 1999, p. 207-208
2. Han, 1998, p. 566
3. Mair and Mallory, 2000 p. 238. Here, the adoption of Mair and Mallory's classifications is thought to be more modern than the classifications of Li and Han.
4. Ibid, pp. 314, 318; Mair, 1998, p. 844
5. Han, 1998, p. 560-62; Mair and Mallory, 2000, p. 238
6. Bagley, 1999, p.127
7. Ibid, p. 191-92
8. Ibid, p. 194; Li Ji, 1977, p. 260
9. Li Ji, 1977, p. 256-59
10. Keightly, 1999, p. 286
11. Bagley, 1999, p. 192-94
12. Huber, 1995 p. 24; see also n. 13, p. 24
13. Li Ji, 1977, p. 261
14. Keightly, 1999, p. 282-88; see also n.122, p. 288
15. Chernykh, 1992, p. 228-33
16. Lubotsky, 1999, p. 379-90

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