The Structure of Western Chou Dynasty and the Significance of “Ch’eng”: Why “Ch’eng Chou” Was Called “Ch’eng Chou”?

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After the Chou conquest of the Shang by King Wu 武, the “possessor of the four quarters (ssu-fang 四方)”, they followed the will of King Wu to establish a bureaucratic center of the four quarters, referred to as “Ch’eng Chou 成周” or “Chung-kuo 中國”. What did the word “ch’eng” mean to the contemporary when it was used in the name “Ch’eng Chou”? This article attempts to answer this question not by analyzing the inherent meaning of the word ch’eng itself but by its actual uses in the Western Chou bronze inscriptions. It has been found that in terms of broad categorization there are following two usages: (1) the word ch’eng appears in the inscriptions dealing with the appeasement of “international” strifes among the “four quarters” and (2) it appears used in the inscriptions dealing with law suit and contract. The present article suggests that in the case of (1) above the Chou administered the “four quarters” by accomplishing to appease the conflicts among the barbarians which had occurred within the territories of the “four quarters”, so that the meaning of ch’eng in Ch’eng Chou was to rule the “four quarters” from the bureaucratic center created under the name of “Chung-kuo”. The establishment of the dynasty was thus based on such controls of the four quarters. These “four quarters” were located “outside” of the Chung-kuo. And the fact that they were so geographically seems to present an enormous difference between the situation in the succeeding dynasties of Ch’in 秦 and Han 漢 whose direct target area of administration were confined to the “inside” of the “Chung-kuo”. The significance of ch’eng in “Ch’eng Chou”, used to refer to the “Chung-kuo” created by the will of King Wu, may be considered to reflect such analysis as attempted in this article.