



Trinity Saint David

Student Name: Estienne Ren	
Module Code: SICH5007 Module title: Sinological English II	Student number: 206032
For completion by marker: Comments:	
Marker's signature:	Date:
Provisional mark: NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

Presentation of Bernhard Karlgren

Good morning, Professor Honey, and fellow students. The subject of my talk today is a short presentation by Bernhard Karlgren. I'm going to divide my presentation into three parts: a brief introduction of Bernhard Karlgren's bibliography, followed by an explanation of his research methods and achievements, and finally a conclusion.

I- Introduction

Bernhard Karlgren was a Swedish sinologist and linguist of the 20th century, who is studying in the area of Chinese historical phonology. His Chinese name as we know is 高本漢. Since he was little, he has always been curious about studying dialects, firstly about Swedish dialects and then he turns to the analysis of Chinese and its dialects. So on the base of his interests, he has been guided to the University of Uppsala, where he met his mentor Professor Johan August Lundell, a Slavic linguist, and dialectologist. Professor Lundell's personality and academic thinking had a great influence on Bernhard Karlgren. After completing his bachelor's degree in 1909, he went to St. Petersburg and studied basic Chinese with Professor A.I. Ivanov for two months. Later, he received a scholarship and set off for China in 1910, where he stayed for two years.

During his stay in China, Bernhard Karlgren listed a detailed survey questionnaire and began collecting and examining dialect data. He worked hard to collect materials and was able to conduct record investigations of 33 dialects in China. The most important part of his life is that in 1915, at the age of twenty-five, he received his doctoral degree, in which his thesis, written in French, was about 中國音韻學研究, it can be translated into English by "Studies in Chinese Phonology".

II- Bernhard Karlgren's research methods and achievements

So, after his Ph.D. thesis, he continued to research in the same area, extending his thesis. So until 1926 he finally finished his research and published the book in French version about 中國音韻學研究. This is a masterpiece of Bernhard Karlgren, work on the construction of Middle Chinese Phonology, and was extremely influential, marking the beginning of the history of

modern Chinese phonology. This book is a historical phonology of the Chinese language based on Middle Chinese Phonology, in which Bernhard Karlgren makes comprehensive use of modern dialectal data to prove the Middle Chinese phonological system, and then deduces the Old Chinese phonology system from the Middle Chinese phonology system and completes the two phonetics constructions respectively.

In the “Studies in Chinese Phonology”, we can see in the table of contents that Bernhard Karlgren separates his work into four parts: the first part is about Ancient Chinese, the second about descriptive phonetics of modern dialects, followed by historical studies and finally a glossary of dialects characters. As a reference of his study, on one hand, he refers to the **rhyme /ram/** tables of the Song Dynasty and later dynasties, and on the other hand, according to the Fanqie of the Guangyun, in which he arranged more than 3100 Chinese characters into a table. He compared the pronunciation of these characters in various modern dialects, constructed their phonetics values, and by inserting these known values into the table so that he was able to determine **archaic /ɑ : 'kei.ɪk/** phonological categories and the archaic pronunciations of each character more accurately than was previously possible.

Additionally, he said in his studies that “the 33 dialects listed are those I have studied in detail. In addition, I occasionally give some scattered materials about many other dialects. In Guangzhou, Shanghai, Kaifeng, and Taiyuan, those big cities do not use completely internally consistent pronunciation. So, I used the common method among linguists. I chose a person who grew up and was educated in the place I want to study, and I had to think carefully before deciding that he could represent the pronunciation of the place. I wrote down his pronunciation in detail so that I can express the outline of his local dialect.”¹

So, in the glossary of dialects characters, there were two things to do. One thing is to check how the finals in modern dialects match with the finals of Ancient Chinese; another thing is to compile the 3125 characters into a vocabulary so that we can check the pronunciation of any word in any recorded dialect. It is only necessary to arrange the characters in such a way as to give at a glance a general idea of the relationship between dialect and Ancient Chinese when compiling the vocabulary.²

¹ Zhao Yuanren, Luo Changpei, Li Fanggui, *Zhongguo Yinyunxue Yanjiu* (Beijing : Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2003), p. 144.

² Zhao Yuanren, Luo Changpei, Li Fanggui, *Zhongguo Yinyunxue Yanjiu*, p. 538.

III- Conclusion

In conclusion, Bernhard Karlgren was the first scientist to apply the scientific principles developed in Europe for comparative linguistics to study Chinese. He was also the first to reconstruct the sounds of what is now called Middle Chinese, then Old Chinese, notably from the different Mandarin dialects. Before Karlgren's work, Chinese scientists were content to reconstruct the "rhyming categories" of Middle and Old Chinese, in particular from rhyming dictionaries, for example, phonological properties, and not phonetic properties.

As a foundational work to reconstruct the phonology system of ancient Chinese, "Studies in Chinese Phonology" is highly praised by the international Sinology circle. This work was translated and published in Chinese by Chinese linguists 羅常培、趙元任 and 李方桂 between the 1930s and 1940s. During the translation, the three scholars added notes and revisions.

Many scholars have been inspired by it, for example, Zhao Yuanren created China's first Roman alphabet scheme. And Luo Changpei is highly praised for his contribution to Chinese Linguistics Studies. Therefore, for the results obtained by Bernhard Karlgren, on one hand, we must recognize that he was constructed using reliable scientific methods, and at the same time, we must admit that the pronunciation of this construction is of great help to the study of histography of Chinese Linguistics Studies.