

A *Hsi Tsun* from the Avery Brundage Collection

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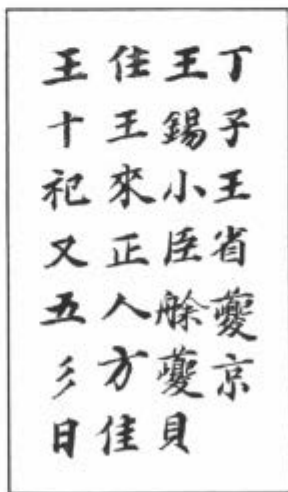
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SOME TIME AGO Mr. Avery Brundage of Chicago was kind enough to show the writer an extraordinary Chinese ceremonial bronze vessel of the type *hsi tsun** representing a rhinoceros (Frontispiece). It is done with quite remarkable fidelity to nature, even though it is somewhat globular in form. The surface of the vessel has a smooth dark metallic patina, over which are scattered incrustations of what appears to be a green corrosion product. In size this vessel measures 8½ inches high by 14½ inches long, while inside the bottom is a most interesting inscription of 27 characters. This bronze and its inscription are well known and references to one or both are to be found in a number of Chinese works.

The vessel appears to have been discovered by a man named Chung Chüan-t'ien^b of Chi-ning^c in Shantung province. He is said to have obtained it and six other bronzes, one *ting*,^d three *i*,^e one *huo*,^f and one *hsien*,^g at the foot of a hill named Liang-shan^h at a place called Shou-changⁱ in the same province. This statement occurs in the *Chi-chou-chin-shih-chih*,¹ where it is described as a recent discovery. Since the preface to that work is dated in correspondence with September 24, 1843, we may assume that the discovery was made sometime during 1843 or shortly before. This book also states that the bronze had already gone to the K'ung^j family in Ch'ü-fu^k (i.e. the lineal descendants of Confucius) at the time the author was writing. The vessel likewise seems to have belonged at one time to P'an Tsu-yin,¹ 1830-1890.⁸ It would seem that it came back into the possession of the K'ung family, since works published since P'an's death say it is owned by them.^{4, 11} However this may be, it seems evident that this bronze has been in Chinese collections from 1843 until it came to this country.

The inscription, which follows, has been the

subject of much debate since 1895. Some authorities believe the vessel to be early Chou and others believe it to be of Shang date. The language of the inscription itself has certain puzzling aspects.



The second character *tzü* is ordinarily used for *ssü*^m in cyclical dates on Shang time oracle bone inscriptions. The fifth character has been variously rendered as *k'uei* shown in the trans-

cription and *chün*.⁸ Both were names of Chou time states in modern Hupei and Hunan provinces respectively. The sixth character has been variously interpreted as *tsu*, *hsiang*, and *ching*, and perhaps the last interpretation is best. The seventeenth character is often used in early inscriptions for *chéng* "to subdue." The eighteenth character which is damaged has been read both *jên* "man," and *i*^o "barbarian." However, we find the term *jên fang* apparently used as a place name on the oracle bones, where on one occasion we have Chou Hsin going to Jên-fang in the 11th year of his reign, and again for a second time in the 15th year as recorded on this bronze. Tung notes that Jên-fang was located to the south east of the Shang capital near the Huai River.¹² The twenty-sixth character has been interpreted as both the numeral 5, and as several other characters having to do with ceremony since it always qualifies a ceremonial day. Here we simply translate it as "holiday." The fourteenth and twentieth characters are commonly used in bronze inscriptions for *wei*,⁹ which is simply an initial particle. While the general meaning of the inscription is clear enough precise translation is difficult. We cannot be sure of the exact grammar and punctuation intended, indeed the first authority cited believes that the text should be read beginning with the left hand column rather than from the right hand which is usual. Thus, keeping the above-mentioned authorities in mind, we might hazard the following translation.

"On the [cyclical] day *ting tzü* the King inspected the capital of K'uei, and the King bestowed upon the *Hsiao Ch'ên* Yü cowry shells from K'uei. Now the King has come and subdued Jên-fang. Now [this is on the occasion] of the holidays for the King's 15th Grand Sacrifice."

Aside from the identification of the fifth, twelfth and eighteenth characters, of which the latter is partly missing, the main difficulty has lain with the last sentence, that is, the interpretation of the characters *chi* and the second from the last character. As we have pointed out, the

meaning of the latter is not certain, but it is generally agreed that since it always seems to qualify a ceremonial day we may tentatively translate it and the character for "day" which follows as "holiday." The character *chi* seems in all Shang inscriptions to refer to an ancestral ceremonial or sacrifice. Now Tung Tso-pin¹³ has pretty well proven that although the character *nien*^a "year" does occur on the oracle bones in early Shang times, beginning with the reigns of the last two Shang kings the term *chi* becomes almost synonymous with the character *nien* meaning a year. Thus the fifteenth grand sacrifice of the king would correspond to the 15th year and Tung goes so far as to date this bronze from the use of the cyclical character for the day as being in the third moon of the fifteenth year of Ti Hsin^r the last Shang king. This date, according to Tung's revision of the Shang calendar, would correspond with 1160 B.C.¹³ or with 1140 B.C. if we follow the traditional chronology. (Or 1075 if you allow Tung's 63 years for the reign of Chou Hsin or 1074 if we follow the chronology of Dubs and Karlgren). Tung bases this finding by figuring from what he considered a known date on an oracle bone which gives the 14th of the first moon of the 15th year of Ti Hsin as a *ting ssü* day and then relates it to the following *ting ssü* day, i.e. 61 days later, when an oracle bone records a holiday for Wu Ting.⁸ Unfortunately, as Homer Dubs has pointed out, Tung Tso-pin's revision of the Shang calendar is based on a faulty computation of eclipses mentioned on Shang oracle bones, hence an eleventh century date in Ti Hsin's reign is more likely to be indicated.¹⁴ At any rate the language of the inscription certainly points to a Shang time date for this bronze, and the length of the inscription according to our present knowledge seems to indicate a time near the end of Shang. The date, according to Tung's findings, seems to fall at a time when the Chou revolt under Wên Wang^t had already been in progress for some eleven years. K'uei was the name of a small state known to exist in early

Chou times and this would indicate its existence in Shang times. *Hsiao Ch'ên* was evidently the title of a man named Yü. The title might be literally translated "Lesser Official."

The fact that the inscription mentions a second expedition to Jên-fang connects it with the oracle bones and thus seems to be an excellent

indication of a late Shang origin for this bronze. If this is true we have here an amazingly naturalistic example of Shang dynasty sculpture. It is, however, curious to note that in some thirteen¹⁻¹³ Chinese publications from 1843 to 1945, not once is the remarkable shape of this vessel mentioned. It is simply described as a *hsi tsun*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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4. *Ch'i ku chih chi wên shu*,^{ba} by Liu Hsin-yüan,^{bb} 1902, ch. 5, p. 12.
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6. *Yin wên ts'un*,^{be} comp. by Lo Chên-yü,^{bf} 1917, A, p. 26.
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12. *Chi chin wên lu*,^{bq} by Wu K'ai-shêng,^{br} n.d., ch. 4, p. 8.
13. *Yin li p'u*,^{bs} by Tung Tso-pin,^{bt} 1945, B, ch. 2, p. 31b; and A, ch. 3, p. 1a, p. 20a; A, ch. 4, p. 23b.
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CHINESE CHARACTERS

a 犧尊	l 潘祖蔭	x 吳式芬	bj 方濬益
b 鍾養田	m 己	y 憲齋集古錄	bk 三代吉金文存
c 濟寧	n 廉	z 吳大澂	bl 羅振玉
d 鼎	o 夷	ba 奇觚室吉文述	bm 山東金文集存
e 彝	p 唯	bb 劉心源	bn 曾毅公
f 盂	q 年	bc 周金文存	bo 商周彝器通考
g 甗	r 帝辛	bd 鄒安	bp 容庚
h 梁山	s 武丁	be 殷文存	bq 吉金文錄
i 壽張	t 文王	bf 羅振玉	br 吳闓生
j 孔	u 濟州金石志	bg 小校經閣金文	bs 殷曆譜
k 曲阜	v 徐中幹	bh 劉體智	bt 董作賓
	w 據古金文	bi 綴遺齋彝器攷釋	



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