ARCHAIC CHINESE BRONZES
OF THE SHANG, CHOU
AND HAN PERIODS

IN THE COLLECTIONS OF
MR. PARISH-WATSON

ACCOMPANIED BY NOTES OF
BERTHOLD LAUFER

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FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH the collection of archaic Chinese bronzes illustrated and briefly described on these pages is comparatively small, not exceeding ten in number, it easily takes the lead and foremost rank in quality among any gatherings of bronzes that have ever been permitted to pass the borders of China. The fundamental value of this collection, secured for Mr. Parish-Watson by Mr. H. A. E. Jaehne on his recent expedition to China, rests on the fact that here for the first time we are permitted to study at close range well-authenticated bronze relics of the Shang period (1783–1123 B.C.), which marks the climax in the development of the art of Chinese metal-casting. The collection includes five superb examples of this early art (Plates I–V), all rare and precious, and equally distinguished both by artistic merits and antiquarian interest, one of these (Plate III) being unique. The four specimens of Chou bronze art (Plates VI–IX) are no less beautiful and perfect, and here again we encounter a novel type not represented in any other collection of China or Japan, not to speak of Europe and America. There is one Chou vessel with cover (Plate IX) the exact date of which is authenticated by a lengthy inscription, and may be determined with certainty at 999 B.C. All of these features make this collection one of absorbing interest and paramount importance, and all lovers of Chinese antiquity are indebted to Mr. Parish-Watson for placing these extraordinary bronzes on permanent record.

Work in bronze may justly be regarded as the oldest of the national arts in ancient China, and as belonging to that province of art in which the national soul of the Chinese is most typically and felicitously crystallized. Art, I say advisedly, not artwork; the archaic bronzes virtually belong to the realm of art, and their makers were full-fledged artists, not artisans. Only the epigones of the T'ang, Sung, and more recent periods degraded the art of bronze to the level of an industrial process; theirs was the technique, yet not the spirit. It is the spirit which makes art and imbues it with life, and it is the peculiar spirit developed in the early religious concepts of the Chinese which created the admirable casts of those metal founders, almost at the threshold of civilization. This was the creative epoch of forms, types, designs, symbols, and expressions of religious sentiments.

[ III ]
Copper and bronze of various alloys were employed in casting from the earliest dawn of Chinese history, not only for sacrificial vessels inspired by the worship of ancestors and nature-gods, but also for every-day implements, such as swords, daggers, spears, axe-blades, knives, lamps, clepsydras, hooks, buckles, and so forth; for the smelting and forging of iron was as yet unknown. Like the nations of western Asia and the prehistoric peoples of Europe, the Chinese passed through a bronze age of long duration, while iron but gradually came into use from about 500 B.C. Implements were cast in copper or clay moulds, but the process of casting, as far as the large vessels are concerned, was that à cire perdue. It is amazing that vessels, many of them of great complexity, were in ancient times produced in a single cast, inclusive of the bottom and handle or handles. The bronze experts are inclined to look upon this point as a characteristic feature of an archaic bronze, and in their examination first inspect the bottom of a vessel; if it turns out that the latter is cast separately and soldered in, the piece must lose any claim to ranking in the San Tai (the three dynasties Hia, Shang, and Chou, as the archaic period is styled). In most of the Sung and later bronze vases and jars, bottom and even handles are moulded separately. A strikingly large variety of metal alloys was utilized, different alloys being employed for different classes of objects. A special investigation of the composition of Chinese bronze is prepared in the Field Museum of Chicago, where chemical analyses of the bronze of several hundred specimens have been made, the results of which promise to be very interesting.

The great stimulus to the development of early art was ancestor worship with all of the virtues resulting from it, including the unceasing care for the departed, who were constantly alive and awake in the minds of the people. This deep-rooted reverence for the dead culminated in a minutely developed ritualistic cult which required vessels for meat, grain, and wine offerings, and accordingly inspired the bronze-founders to supreme efforts.

Chinese archaeology is still in its incipient stages, and, as a matter of fact, we know little about the earliest bronzes. The scholars of China were chiefly interested in their inscriptions, and from the style and technique of the characters have drawn conclusions as to the chronological setting, and classified the material according to historical periods. The results, in general, are sound and acceptable.

The study of bronzes was inaugurated as late as the beginning of the twelfth century at the instigation of the art-loving emperor Hui Tsung of the Sung dynasty, but this was at a time when continuity of historical contact and tradition was broken up. The Chinese scholars struggled to correlate the numerous types of vessels with the succinct and sometimes enigmatic references in the ancient texts and to offer more or less plau-
sible interpretations of the bewildering variety of design displayed in the decorations.

In conformity with the impersonal, sacrosanct, and hierarchic character of this primitive art, all trace of naturalism or realism is conspicuously absent, but this subconscious art was strictly national, untouched by outside currents, and is refreshing in its groping for naïve expression of ideas. The human figure rarely appears in decorative art, all principal designs being of strictly geometric character, and receiving a symbolic interpretation evolved from the minds of agriculturists, who formed the bulwark of Chinese society. Being keenly interested in weather and wind and all natural phenomena exerting an influence on fields and crops, their attention turned toward the observation of the sky and stars, which resulted at an early date in a notable advance in the knowledge of astronomy. Hence, we encounter such interpretations as thunder and lightning, clouds, winds, and mountains, for purely geometric forms of design. Among animals we meet the tiger, always dreaded and revered as one of the great forces of nature, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the domesticated sheep and ox, fantastic birds, and a variety of reptiles. Of insects we find represented with predilection the cicada, whose wonderful life-history excited admiration, and which developed into an emblem of resurrection. The familiar dragon conception of later times is absent from early art, and makes its appearance only in the stone sculpture of the Han epoch; the alligator, however, is felicitously portrayed in the marvelous bone carvings of the Shang period. What is termed “dragon” in ancient bronzes by Chinese critics is a different species from an artistic viewpoint.

In many cases the surface of the vessels is covered with a diapering of frets, scrolls, and spirals, of very fine and delicate execution in good pieces, and this may serve as the background for a superimposed design in high or flat relief. In these relief pictures we frequently encounter anthropomorphic or zoömorph ic heads or faces, of extremely conventionalized character, sometimes grotesquely distorted or disintegrated into separate parts of geometric pattern. The nose is usually unmistakable, and the eye is always prominently accentuated in the shape of a boss with a slit in the center to indicate the pupil, sometimes inlaid with gold. It has been customary among Chinese scholars since the days of the Sung emperors to honor these monsters with the general appellation t’ao-t’ie, which designates a glutton, and which was the nickname of a greedy man who is said to have lived in the good old days of the legendary emperor Yao, and to have been banished by Shun. His portrayal on ancient bronze vessels, then, is pleasantly accounted for as a warning against gluttony and avarice. This rather banal explanation strongly savors of an afterthought which, in my estimation, was alien to the people of the Shang and Chou periods.
For want of something better, European books on Chinese art constantly treat us to t'ao-t'ie, “men-devouring ogres” (and such like vague nomenclature), which are easily detected everywhere. But whoever has taken the trouble to delve a little into the mythical and religious lore of the ancient Chinese cannot believe that their power of imagination could have been so dwarfish and arid. It has been a painless operation for me to cast the soulless t'ao-t'ie overboard and to reload the ship with better goods. I am disposed to regard all of these manifold variations of monstrous heads as manifestations of the mythological spirit, as the iconography of the pantheon of ancient Chinese religion. Here also are the gods, and through a close study of mythology, in combination with the ancient bronzes, we may hope, in the course of time, to unravel their characteristic traits and to restore to life what has been dormant and misunderstood so long under the cover of thoughtless phrases.

It has been observed that, “apart from their archaeological interest and from their beauty of form, Chinese bronzes have a quality of substance which no other bronzes exhibit. The beautiful green patina which we see on Greek and Roman statues, and the more elaborate colored patinas discovered by the ingenuity of the Japanese, are dull compared with the brilliant and jewel-like incrustation with which fine specimens of Chinese bronze are adorned.” In regard to patinas, we have many interesting and suggestive theories formulated by Chinese antiquarians, and a germ of truth is doubtless contained in them. But here we are in need of a thorough chemical investigation of all the diverse kinds of patina from bronzes of different periods to obtain a solid basis for the discussion of this problem. In this respect Mr. Parish-Watson’s remarkable collection is of utmost importance and utility, for on no other bronzes of antiquity have I ever seen finer and richer patinas. The reproductions of these objects, excellent as they may be, do not render justice to their striking beauty and exquisite coloring.
ARCHAIC
CHINESE BRONZES
1. Bronze Libation-Cup

Type tsio.  
Shang Period (1783–1123 B.C.).

Dimensions: 9\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches in height; opening, 9 inches in length, 4\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches in width.

This superb specimen excels in all of the essential characteristics associated with the tsio of the Shang dynasty. It may be confidently asserted that it is not a tsio of the Chou period. The Chou examples present somewhat debased forms, as they are much lower in height, and generally distorted in their proportions. They are also plain, or have merely a narrow band of spiral design around the waist. In the specimen here illustrated the proportions are evenly balanced, and in its bold outlines the vessel stands with the perfect majesty and convincing force of a masterpiece.

The three feet rise in elegant curves, and are slightly turned outward. The body is divided into four sections, formed by three projecting and denticulated ribs, or ridges, and the single loop-handle, that springs from a conventionalized zoëmorphic head. Both symmetry and a studied asymmetry, simultaneously applied, have always been the great principle underlying Chinese art. If we were to imagine another loop-handle attached opposite the present one, the impression would be decidedly unfavorable, while a fourth ridge in the place of the single handle would carry the principle of symmetry to an extreme, and the vessel would forfeit much of its present charm. The loop-handle unexpectedly breaks the symmetry of arrangement, adding a pleasing effect to the whole work; nor is it incidental that it has found its place just above one of the three legs. The designs are chased with wonderful clarity, being compositions of plain and convoluted spirals, the projecting eyes in the center hinting at some hidden anthropomorphic or mythological concept. To the artist of that archaic period, at any rate, the production of a sacred vase was a religious duty, and his creation was a reality imbued with the power of life and vision. The triangular patterns in the upper panel are interpreted by the Chinese archaeologists as mountains (compare Plate 7).

The type tsio is explained by Chinese archaeologists as being derived from an inverted helmet to which three feet are added; and, with some stretch of imagination, we might be disposed to argue that the hero of ancient days,
desirous of celebrating a victory, doffed his helmet on the battle-field, offering in it a libation to the gods, and that subsequently the helmet was chosen as the model for a libation-cup. On second thought, however, this explanation is hardly convincing; the Chinese never were so warlike that a military headgear would have commended itself as an emblem worthy of being introduced into the ritualistic cult, nor is the alleged coincidence perfect. Above all, the three slender feet are so organically connected with the vessel that the two form an inseparable unit. Another interpretation seems more probable. The character tsio, used for writing the name of this type of vessel, properly denotes "small birds, like sparrows," etc., and it is not unlikely that the form of this vessel has grown out of the figure of a bird, undergoing, of course, numerous stages of gradual conventionalization. This theory is confirmed by the fact that there are specimens provided with a cover terminating in an animal's head. Animalized forms in vessels are frequent in both ancient and mediæval China (compare, for instance, the cooking-kettles of the Han dynasty with dragon and serpent heads). The three feet indicate plainly that the vessel was put over a fire; and as it is repeatedly referred to as a wine-libation cup in the ancient texts, it is obvious that the rice-wine was heated in the vessel itself. As is well known, wine, in China, is usually taken hot. That part of the vessel forming the bird's head is chamfered into a spout. The two spikes surmounted by knobs (explained as chu, "posts, supports"), and set on the edges, were probably made for the purpose of lifting the hot cup from the charcoal fire. The Chinese also give a symbolic interpretation of these spikes, comparing them with the stalks of cereals—evidently in allusion to millet and other grain from which the sacrificial wine was prepared.

The service of this libration-cup was particularly required in the worship of the great cosmogonic deities, Heaven and Earth, the interaction of which was believed to have created all things in nature. During the Chou period, when, each spring, the Son of Heaven performed the ceremony of ploughing the fields, he was accompanied by the three great ministers of state, the nine other ministers, all princes present at court, and the grand prefects. The Son of Heaven, himself, ploughed three furrows, the great ministers, five, the other ministers and the princes, nine. Upon returning to the palace, the Son of Heaven assembled his companions in his chief apartment, and, taking the cup tsio, addressed them as follows: "I offer you this wine in compensation for your trouble." The tsio was also employed on ceremonial visits during the ceremonies held in ancestral temples, when the master of the house offered wine from this cup to the representative of the dead ancestor. The tsio contained one pint (sheng), and was regarded as more honorable and dignified than larger vessels containing three, four, and five pints. The tsio were also carved from jade.

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Under the Chou, the tsio were regarded as valuable presents exchanged by vassal kings. Under the T'ang (A.D. 618–906), they were still used by the emperors in solemn ceremonies addressed to the deities, Heaven and Earth, on the summit and foot of Mount T'ai in Shan-tung. Under the Ming (A.D. 1368–1643), the tsio was a favorite type, but was degraded into profane purposes; during the marital ceremony bride and groom alternately drank wine from a cup of this shape. I have also seen bronze tsio of the Ming period with date-marks inscribed on them. In the age of the Manchu, tsio were frequently imitated in plain and decorated porcelain, also in silver; partly for ornamental purposes, partly for the nuptial ceremony.
2. Bronze Libation-Goblet

Type kia $\frac{28}{\pi}$.

Shang Period (1783–1123 B.C.).

Dimensions: 20⅓ inches in height; diameter of opening, 9⅓ inches.

This type of vessel originated under the Shang dynasty, and subsequently it was ordained in the Book of Rites (Li ki, VII, II, 4) that this goblet should be exclusively owned and used by the princes of K'i, descendants of the house of Hia (2205–1784 B.C.), the princes of Sung, descendants of the house of Shang, and the princes of Lu in Shan-tung owing to their connection with Confucius, while any other prince or noble usurping this privilege was guilty of infringing the law.

This specimen is distinguished by its dimensions, which considerably exceed those adopted under the Chou; but, above all, surpasses the Chou examples in elegance and refinement. It served the same purposes as the tsio, and, like the latter, figured also in ceremonial drinking-bouts arranged by the kings. As to its composition, this type is constructed on the same plan as the tsio, save that, instead of the bird-shape of the cup, it is a drum-shaped vessel with flaring rim, and the bottom is flat, while that of the tsio is globular. The decoration is complete, covering the three spear-shaped legs, as well as the entire surface of the body and the two spikes surmounted by knobs. A deeply grooved band divides the surface into two horizontal panels, displaying the head of a mythical monster set out in high relief from a background of cloud designs in spiral form. The vigorous monster-head from which the single loop-handle springs is powerfully designed, and, like all these mythological motives, is calculated to impress and inspire the minds of those engaged in the performance of the ritual, and to inculcate the principles of right conduct.

This piece is said to have been excavated from a tomb situated at Lung-hu Shan ("Dragon and Tiger Hill") in the province of Kiang-si.
3. Square Bronze Goblet

**Type fung kia 鳳簋.**
Shang Period (1783–1123 B.C.).

*Dimensions:* 13 inches in height; opening, 10¾ inches in length, 5 inches in width.

This vessel, known as "phœnix goblet" (*fung kia*), is unique. It is probably the only one of its class in existence. Even the emperor K’ien-lung, in all his glory, did not possess a piece like this in his museum collection.

In its structure this goblet is a *tsio* "made square," the squaring-up process affecting not only the form of the vessel, but even extending to the spiral designs. As we have round *ting* with three feet and rectangular *ting* with four feet, so we are confronted here with four spear-shaped legs in conformity with the square form of the bowl. Likewise, each leg is quadrilateral, while in the *tsio* it is trilateral. The two external sides are ornamented with a conventionalized human or animal head dissolved into geometrical combinations of spirals of square shape. The eyes are plainly indicated by small strokes in quadrangular enclosures, and the nose is forcibly brought out. Toward the point, the artist was compelled to adapt his composition to a given space and to follow the outlines of the leg. Eight tooth-shaped ridges dissect the four surfaces of the vessel into eight panels. Each side is divided by a groove into an upper and lower section.

The elements of the decoration are based on what the Chinese archaeologists term the motive of the reclining or sleeping silkworm cocoon. These elemental forms, again, are so combined on each side as to form a face, which, if a conjecture is permitted, may represent the Silk Goddess. These designs, wrought in undercut relief, are set off from a background of delicately traced spirals, symbolic of thunder and atmospheric conditions.

On the exterior of the spout we encounter the strongly conventionalized figure of a phœnix (*fung*), "dancing in the clouds" (a well-known motive), the clouds being expressed by the spirals. The term "phœnix," it must be understood, is merely a convenient word used by us, but, as a matter of fact, bears no relation to the phœnix of the Occident.

What is the significance of this vessel? Neither form nor design nor composition is meaningless to the Chinese artist. Numbers play a conspicuous rôle in ancient cosmogony, and everything in the old rituals was
reduced to a fixed standard of numbers and categories reflected in celestial phenomena. It will be remembered that the deity Heaven was worshiped by the primeval Chinese under the emblem of a perforated jade disk, and that the deity Earth was revered and symbolized by a jade tube rounded in the interior but square on the outside, and provided with projecting teeth along the corners. I therefore venture to suggest that the circular tsio, as shown in Plate I, was in its origin employed for pouring out wine-offerings to the cosmic power of Heaven, and that, correspondingly, the square variation of this type, as represented by this unique and memorable bronze goblet, at the outset served for libations to the deity Earth, which was conceived to be square, and which was regarded next in importance to Heaven. In fact, the lower square section of the bowl, rising above the four legs, bears a most striking resemblance to the jade tubes tsung, which symbolize the deity Earth. As the perforated jade disk served as an emblem to the emperor, who was believed to receive his mandate from Heaven, and who ruled by his command as the Son of Heaven, so the jade tube, signifying female power, was the sovereign emblem of the empress. In the same manner, we meet, on this goblet, symbols alluding to silk and possibly even the Silk Goddess. Now, silk was looked upon as one of the precious gifts of Mother Earth, and the rearing of silkworms, as well as the spinning of silk, is ascribed by tradition to a woman's initiative. The empress took a profound interest in the welfare and promotion of the silk industry. When silk cocoons were offered to the empress, she used a jade image of Earth as a weight-stone, in order to weigh the quantity of silk. In the imperial worship performed by the Manchu emperors, silk was still offered in the sacrifice to Earth, being buried in the ground. Finally, the "phœnix dancing in the clouds" is an attribute of love and veneration, and occurs as such on the ancient jade girdle-ornaments worn by women and interred with them in the grave as a symbol of resurrection. All of these facts taken together prompt us to the conviction that this vessel had an extraordinary place assigned to it and a specific function in the rituals performed by the empress in her homage to Earth and Silk.

The beauty of this bronze is enhanced by a rich patina of the brown of autumn-leaves, interspersed with specks of malachite blue-green.
4. Bronze Beaker

Type *ku* 穴.
Shang Period (1783-1123 B.C.).

*Dimensions:* 10½ inches in height; diameter of opening, 6 inches; diameter of foot, 3½ inches.

It is recorded that this vase was discovered in an ancient well at Wu-ch'ang on the Yang-tse, capital of Hupeh Province. It is equally beautiful for its well-balanced proportions, its noble simplicity, its purity of form and design, and the exquisite quality of its patina. This type was first produced under the Shang, and was subsequently adopted by their successors, the Chou. Judging from a famous passage in the Confucian Analects (*Lun yù*, VI, 23), it appears that this vessel underwent some changes in the age of the great sage, but, nevertheless, retained its old name. Confucius denounced the government of his time, which indulged in high-sounding phrases without applying the wise principles of the ancients, and illustrates the folly of using words that do not express the reality underlying them by an allusion to the vessel *ku*, Confucius maintaining that the word *ku* meant essentially that which had corners, while the vessel so named had none. However, the four slightly projecting, dentated ribs around the stem and foot might be so considered in this example.

The spiral composition is chased with unequaled vigor and firmness, and the asymmetry in the arrangement of the designs is a noteworthy feature. The two raised knobs in the middle portion and on the foot are intended for eyes, hinting at the fact that the artist meant to bring out the head of some mythical creature in the seemingly arbitrary combination of these scroll designs. As the spirals symbolize clouds, and the peculiar lanceolate designs, in combinations of four or six, are explained as representing the winds, we shall not err in regarding this head as that of the Storm God moving over a clouded sky.

Some of these *ku* are entirely bare of ornamentation, while others are decorated from top to bottom. Others, again, like the specimen here illustrated, are ornamented in the middle and lower portions; a few, also, in the middle portion only. All, however, are built in three sections, plainly set off by grooved zones, and have the same slender, graceful body and
flaring trumpet-shaped opening. The specimen here illustrated is a production decidedly characteristic of the Shang period (compare the analogous Shang pieces illustrated in the Po ku t'u lu, Chapter XV, pp. 23, 32, 34, and one in the Catalogue of the Collection of the late Viceroy Tuan Fang, Vol. IX, p. 27).

No other nation can boast of having conceived a vase that could rival this type in grace and beauty of form and sense of pleasing proportions. In regard to its use, nothing definite is known beyond that it served as a wine-vessel. It does not seem to be mentioned in the ancient Rituals.

The entire specimen is coated with a very fine, lustrous, deep olive-green patina.
5. Sacrificial Bronze Jar

Type i 甲.
Shang Period (1783–1123 B.C.).

Dimensions: 7½ inches in height; diameter of opening, 9¾ inches.

A chapter of early mythology, the record of which is unfortunately lost, is pictographically embodied in this bronze. A fierce tiger-head, moulded in high relief, looks down from the center of the upper zone, and is repeated on the opposite side, being surrounded by four creatures of strongly conventionalized forms (possibly birds), the same being repeated in the lower zone along the foot. In the middle zone is vigorously traced the colossal face of some powerful deity, the eyes and nose being prominently delineated, the other parts being filled in by geometrical designs. There are four curious geometric ornaments to the right and left of the handles, which spring from a demon’s head,—very much like those connected with the creatures in the upper and lower zones. The style and content of the whole ornamentation are thoroughly characteristic of the Shang period. It is very instructive to compare this object with a similar one in the collection of the emperor K’ien-lung (illustrated in the Si ts‘ing ku kien, Chapter XIII, fol. 17), which, however, comes down from the Chou period, and which lacks the spontaneous force and direct expressiveness of the Shang production (compare also the fine Shang specimens in the Catalogue of the Collection of the late Viceroy Tuan Fang, Vol. I, pp. 47, et seq.). Special attention should also be called to the fine proportions of the vessel and the graceful curves of the loop-handles.

This specimen, it is reported, was exhumed from a grave at Wu-kang chou, in the province of Hu-nan. It is covered in the interior and exterior with thick layers of a patina brilliant with red, gold, blue, green, and brown tinges. The Chinese archaeologists term this a five-colored patina.
6. Bronze Bell


*Dimensions:* 16½ inches in height; shoulders, 9 inches in width; base, 11½ inches in length, 7½ inches in width.

Bells occupy a prominent place in Chinese antiquity, and belong to the noblest and most admirable achievements which the Chou artists have created in bronze. Elaborate rules for the making of bells are formulated in the *Chou li*, the old State Handbook of the Chou dynasty, which with minute detail sets forth the court ceremonial, the functions of the officers and regulations for their guidance, as well as the productions of the imperial workshops. Bells were invented in China independently of the Occident; the ancient Chinese bell is a type of its own, and also differs considerably from the spherical bell subsequently introduced with Buddhism from India. The independence of the Chinese type is demonstrated by its peculiar form and the absence of a clapper, the instrument being struck outside near the lower rim by a wooden mallet. It was chiefly used in the ancestral hall to summon the spirits of the departed, in order to partake of offerings of meat and wine. A bell was also suspended in front of the banquet hall, and was sounded to call the guests. It likewise had an orchestral function in accompaniment with other musical instruments, for music, as in Plato's republic, formed an integral part of Chinese education and ceremony. Most of the early bells have the two coats set with bosses, arranged according to a fixed scheme, in groups of three, distributed over three rows, three times three being enclosed in a rectangle, so that eighteen appear on each face, making a total of thirty-six. There are many bells, however, without any bosses, and a few have twenty-four of them. There has been much speculation among Chinese and other archaeologists as to the function of the bosses. Wang Fu, author of the *Po ku t'u lu*, published in A.D. 1107, has compared them with nipples, which he takes as an emblem of nutrition, arguing that nipples are represented on bells, because "the sound of music means nutrition to the ear." The simile with nipples, however, does not occur in any ancient text, above all, is absent in the *Chou li*, which speaks merely of knobs. It can hardly be
imagined that these bosses—of which, by the way, there is a large variety of different shapes, many of which show no resemblance whatever to nipples—should have served a purely ornamental or esthetic purpose. They were doubtless made with a practical end in view, and, as supposed by some Chinese authors on music, were originally used for regulating and harmonizing the sounds of bells, while later generations forgot this practice, and merely applied the bosses ornamentally (compare Po ku t'u lu, Chapter XXV, p. 31). This subject is deserving of a close investigation, for which, naturally, a number of ancient, authentic bells would be required to carry on practical experiments.

The bell here reproduced is remarkable for its imposing simplicity and grandeur of conception. It is a truly classical example of Chou art, inspiring a feeling of reverence and admiration, such as we receive from the lofty arches of an old Gothic cathedral. The Po ku t'u lu (Chapter XXIII, p. 14) illustrates a Chou bell very similar to our specimen, except that it is adorned with eight dragons (or perhaps lizards) instead of four, two being added on the right and left sides. The thirty-six nipple-shaped bosses (eighteen on each face) are perfectly modeled, and the five vertical lines of the central zone, as well as the raised meander bands, are delineated with unsurpassed precision and firmness. It is very much to the point that, as an Arabic writer wittily remarked, "Allah, when distributing his gifts among mankind, placed them in the heads of the Greeks, in the tongues of the Arabs, and in the hands of the Chinese." But the Chinese also had the right spirit and knew how to embody the spirit in their art.

The entire bell is coated with a beautiful blue-green patina speckled with gold and brown, which was produced by chemical action underground.

Acquired for the Miss L. M. Buckingham Collection,
The Art Institute of Chicago.
7. Square Bronze Vase

Type fung tsun 鳳鳴 (“Phœnix Tsun”).
Chou Period (1122–247 B.C.).

Dimensions: 13¾ inches in height; opening, 10¾ inches in width; shoulders, 8¾ inches in width; base, 6¾ inches in width.

This majestic piece is constructed in three sections clearly set off from one another, although the whole piece is cast in one mould. As in the case of the ku (Plate IV), the corners are provided with projecting ribs, and each of the four sides is divided into two panels by a similar rib running through the center. The composition of each zone, however, presents a unit, the same subject being repeated on each of the four sides. The upper panel is occupied by eight triangular fillets, which are intended to symbolize mountains (compare Plate I); for this reason, they always have their place on the neck of a vase, the point or summit reaching its edge. Being suggestive of a towering mountain scene, they lend the vase a feeling of loftiness and sublimity, and strike our imagination. As the triangular bands are filled in by cloud and thunder patterns, we have a symbolic representation of mountains overcast with clouds, ready to pour down fertilizing rain on the fields. Such was the wish of the farmer, and in this simple, impressionistic manner he conveyed his thought. In the lower segment of the upper zone we note a pair of conventionalized animals in strong relief, facing each other, their bodies being formed of spiral designs, the eyes being indicated by ovals. In the rectangles forming the base is brought out a pair of similar or identical creatures. The two birds confronting each other in the middle zone exhibit a certain tendency to realism, especially in the bold outlines of their tail-feathers, while again circles, half-circles, spirals, and curves are resorted to in order to make up the composition. It is possible that this bird is intended for the fabulous fung (so-called phœnix) for which this vase is named, but this remains a conjecture for the present.

The vase is finely incrusted with a deep greenish-brown olive patina on three sides, the fourth exhibiting a light green tinge.
8. Rectangular Bronze Vessel

Type shuang fu 雙簣 (“Double Fu”).
Chou Period (1122-247 B.C.).

Dimensions: 11\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches in length; between the handles, 13\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches;
8\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches in width; 7\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches in height.

This object is perfectly unique, and none like it is traceable in any Chinese catalogue of bronzes. It is composed of two equal parts, each in the shape of a rectangle, posed on a hollow base with sides slanting outward. Each single part would form a vessel in itself, and this type of vessel was frequently used in ancient times, being known under the name fu. In the origin, the fu was a basket, defined by the ancient dictionaries as “square outside and round inside, used to hold boiled millet in State worship.” To every student of basketry, baskets which consist of two equal halves, perfectly fitting one over the other (for instance, globular baskets composed of two hemispherical pieces), are well known; and the supposition seems to be well justified that the caster of this bronze derived his inspiration from such a double basket; hence I have proposed for this novel type the name shuang fu (“double basket”). The fu were also carved from wood or moulded from clay, and a few specimens of Han pottery fu have survived; but the favorite material for them was bronze. In the museum of the emperor K’ien-lung there were sixteen bronze fu, figured in the Si ts’ing ku kien (Chapter XXIX), but he had no double fu like this one.

Conventionalized animal-heads, cast in prominent relief on the narrow sides of the upper and lower vessels, take the place of handles, and six smaller zoömorphic faces (two on each long side and one on each narrow side) are so fitted as to hold the two parts closely together. The slanting sides of the upper and lower bases have gracefully cut-out arched openings, making four feet in the corners. The long, massive bands of meander patterns laid around the body in close combination are so delicately traced that the reproduction hardly renders them justice.

The patina which covers the entire object on the exterior and interior is very extraordinary in its delightful shades of light blue and green.

*Acquired for the Miss L. M. Buckingham Collection,*
*The Art Institute of Chicago.*
9. Honorific Bronze Jar

Type tui 酒.
Chou Period: Inscription yielding date 999 B.C.


This highly artistic bronze vessel has a lengthy, clear-cut inscription, consisting of 152 characters made in the cast, in the archaic script of the Chou period, so much at variance with the modern form of writing. The text of the inscription is given twice,—on the bottom of the vessel and on the inside of the cover. This inscription has been reproduced and transliterated in modern characters by the celebrated scholar Juan Yuan (1764-1849) in a work which contains an extensive collection of inscriptions to be found on ancient bronze objects. It is therefore reasonable to infer that the tui here in question once belonged to Juan Yuan's collection, or at any rate was well known to him (compare also a remarkable tui figured in the Kin shi so, Vol. I; and Si ts' ing ku kien, Chapter XXVII, pp.8 et seq.). To give a complete translation of this inscription would require a lengthy philological dissertation to be accompanied by numerous explanatory footnotes, and I hope to make it the subject of a special study in the near future, to be published elsewhere. The essential points of the story are that King Mu (1001-946 B.C.) of the Chou dynasty, when he dwelt in the ancestral temple of K'ang and Chao, accompanied by the chief minister Hung, ordered the annalist Kuo Sheng to issue a diploma in favor of a certain Sung, who was to receive the appointment to a new office; a black robe, a girdle with a buckle, jade ornaments, a standard with small bells, and bridles adorned with bells, were conferred upon him. Sung prostrated himself before the Son of Heaven, expressing his thanks and extolling the glory and benevolence of his majesty. On this occasion, he had this precious bronze vessel cast in commemoration of his venerable departed father, Kung-shu, and his venerable departed mother, Kung-se, in order to cultivate filial piety and to solicit their constant and powerful protection. The most important point is that the inscription opens with a date, "the sixth day of the fifth month of the third year"; and as it appears from the context that the mention is of King Mu, we are con-
fronted with the date 999 B.C. This must also be the date for the casting of the vessel, which thus looks back to the respectable age of 2922 years. The inscription shows also that this vessel was made to commemorate an important event in the life of a high official.

It rests on three low feet, each being surmounted by the head of a monster. The two massive handles spring from well-modeled elephant-heads, a motive not infrequently employed in the art of the Chou. The body is adorned with six deeply-grooved bands, and correspondingly we meet such bands on the top of the cover. The same composition is brought out in the zone laid around the rim of the vessel and along the border of the cover, the same motive being repeated eight times. Despite the purely geometric character of these spirals, the plastic eye in the center is suggestive of a watchful or all-seeing deity. The cover is surmounted by a bowl-shaped flange, on the bottom of which are engraved very exquisite designs.

The tui were originally carved from wood and served as receptacles for millet offered to the ancestral spirits. This was also the intention of Sung, whose thoughts, on the memorable day of his promotion, were first of all directed toward his parents, to whom he felt obliged to attribute his success, and whose blessings he invoked for himself and his descendants. Such vessels were naturally transmitted as an heirloom from father to son.
10. Gilt Bronze Vase

Type *hu* 半.
Han Period (206–22 B.C.).

*Dimensions:* 16½ inches in height; 13¾ inches in diameter.

This exquisite vase was exhumed from a grave located in the prefecture of Chang-te in the province of Ho-nan. As a type it is well known, and, wrought in bronze, goes back to the culture of the Chou period. It was subsequently adopted by the Han, and developed into one of the most favorite vases of that period, not only for every-day use, but also for the equipment of burial chambers. We have numerous specimens of bronze, pottery, and cast iron. The remarkable feature of the present specimen is its heavy coating of gold foil. This is the only gilt vase of this type that has ever come under my notice. It is partially covered with a thick green patina, which, in combination, or contrast, with the luster of the gold, produces an extraordinary effect. The interesting question arises here as to how this patina was produced. Gold making an air-tight coating, the copper under its surface could certainly not oxidize. It seems rather plausible that this vessel, while in the grave, came in close contact with plain copper or bronze objects the oxidation of which was gradually transplanted to it. This, however, like all other problems bearing on the development of patinas, merits a profound investigation to be supported by chemical analyses and other researches.

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