



Fig. 1—Inked-squeeze of the inscription. Actual size.

## A DATABLE SHANG-YIN INSCRIPTION

by W. PERCEVAL YETTS

Among the bronzes reported to have been found recently at the famous site near An-yang is a wine vessel of the *yu* 卣 class which bears on its base the inscription discussed in this article. It has also two shorter inscriptions, alike except in size, one inside the cover and the other inside the body. The owner is Mr. Su T'i-jên 蘇體仁. Photographs of the vessel and the ink-squeezes taken from the inscriptions have been published in two Chinese books (10, 上 32; 24, pl. 12)\*. Competent Chinese critics have examined the vessel without doubting the genuineness of either it or the inscriptions, so I am assured by Prof. G. Ecke of Peking, to whom I am much indebted for information. The long inscription looks to me as if it may have been engraved, so far as can be judged from the ink-squeezes published in the two books and the one, reproduced here, kindly lent to me by Mr. Huang Chün 黃濬. But inked-squeezes often prove deceptive. Even had the long inscription been engraved, that need not condemn it, since it might have been added soon after the casting.

### DECIPHERMENT

The inscription comprises thirty-four characters, counting as one each of the four combined characters (*ho wên* 合文), which are the second in the fourth column, the second and fifth in the fifth column, and the one at the end. In current script the following version has thirty-seven characters besides the unidentified one:—

丙辰，王令切 / 其況 齋殷 / 于逢田。□ 儻 /  
 貝五朋。在正月。遘 / 于妣丙彤日，大乙爽。 /  
 佳王二祀，既 / 夙于上帝。

\* Here and afterwards the numerals in bold type refer to items in the Bibliography at the end.

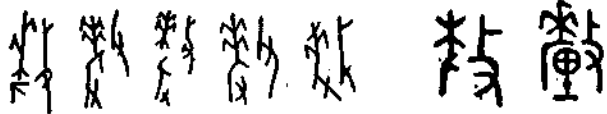
## NOTES ON THE DECIPHERMENT AND MORPHOLOGY

So far as I know, only three decipherments of our inscription have been published: two simultaneously in 1940 and the last in 1945. Li T'ai-fên allows free play to his imagination when he reads 鹿及父丁 in the second column following 兄, in the third column 于降社妣日祭寶, and 燾 at the top of the seventh column. He omits the next character and reads 上下帝 at the end (24, note on pl. 12). Yü Hsing-wu gives a decipherment in the course of studying the character 爽. It differs from mine in that he leaves the second column blank after 兄 (52, 41). Tung Tso-pin writes 畝 for the name at the foot of the first column; for the problematic character, third in the second column, he writes 𦉳 (in current script 麓), and the next character he leaves undeciphered. The copy of the inscription accompanying his decipherment may have been made from a faulty inked-squeeze. The three inked-squeezes already mentioned seem to indicate that this undeciphered character must surely be 般. For the fourth character in the third column, left blank by me, he writes 漚, which provides a perfectly good equation if one ignores the circle with the line in it. The combined character at the end he takes as equivalent to 上下帝 (45, 17).

For the sake of brevity the somewhat fanciful readings of Li T'ai-fên must be passed by. Let us take first the two characters concerning which I venture to differ from Tung Tso-pin. The third character in the second column is, in my opinion, the main crux of the inscription. Tung's equation with the archaic form of 𦉳 shows that he recognizes at the top a pair of wheat or barley stalks, and to that extent we agree. The wheat or barley stalk is, of course, a very common form among the Oracular Sentences and on the bronzes, because it is borrowed to write the homophone *lai*, "to come". Three typical examples from each of these sources are copied below:



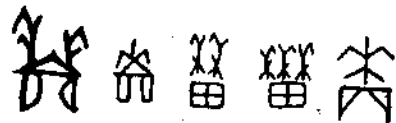
Some show the awn, all show roots and the characteristically drooping leaves. From the same sources the following examples of 𦉳 are the closest I can find to the character in our inscription. Provenance may be traced through the two repertoires, 39, III 9, and 12, III 34; XIII 12.



Two facts will be observed: no example has the lower elements joined to resemble the lower part of our problematic character (though they nearly join in the first example); in none does the element on the right look like

a wheat or barley stalk; indeed, it clearly depicts a hand holding something, except in the first example which is an aberrant form.

But archaic forms of 畷 do present a much closer match as may be seen from these examples from the Oracular Sentences, respectively, 15, No. 2; 28, I 29, IV 41; 29, II 7; 46, 在疑 32. In the *Shuo wên* the



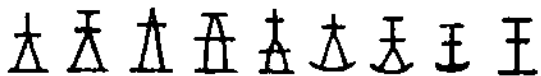
character 畷 is Radical 195, where it is described as composed with 來 (Radical 196) and 畷 (Radical 194)—a stalk of wheat or barley upon a granary, both pictograms. The pictogram for "field" substituted for "granary", of which we have seen examples from the bones, is represented in the *Shuo wên* by a *ku wên* 古文 form. The author manifests acquaintance with duplication of the grain stalk; for he includes under 籒 the two *chou wên* 籒文 forms 𦉳, no longer accurately copied as may be judged by comparison with examples on bronzes. He explains 畷 as composed with 入 for *ju* "to enter" and 同, the latter depicting a building with a door. Examples from the bones, and perhaps also our problematic character, prove he was mistaken and that his supposed 入 was really the roof. The granary depicted thus 畷 on the *Ta Yü Ting* 大盂鼎 may give the clue to the swollen sides of three among our examples from the bones. It has a roof with supporting walls and within these is apparently a double door; indeed, the latter form is almost identical with the archaic character for *mên*, "door". Our problematic character may be an instance of simplification by omitting the doors, but this is only a guess. Observe a minor point of resemblance not yet mentioned, the grain stalks in both the problematic character and in the granary series lack roots. A useful study of 畷 and cognate characters may be found in one of Sun I-jang's treatises (40, 上 21, 22).

As to the last character in the inscription, why should it not be equated with Shang-ti 上帝? In the Oracular Sentences the combination of 上 with 下 occurs fairly frequently and always in the form 𠄎. Never, so far as I know, is it found with 帝. Among the bronzes the combination occurs separately on the *Ta K'ê Ting* 大克鼎 and *Mao Kung Ting* 毛公鼎, where it is written 𠄎, and precedes 帝 on the *Chou Kung Kuei* 周公錫, where it is written 𠄎. Evidently its proper form is that of two long lines with a short line above and below. But in our inscription there are only three horizontal lines at the top; therefore the equation should surely not be with 上 and 下. Moreover, here the lowest of the three lines may be regarded as part of the character 帝, which on both bones and bronzes is found either with or without a single horizontal line at the top. The fact that the form with the line occurs on a *yu* belonging to the same set as the

one under discussion supports the present argument (v. Fig. 5). According to which of these two forms is used, the combined character for 上帝 has either two lines of unequal length or one long between two short lines. An example of the two lines is 𠄎 which occurs on the *Ta Feng Kuei* 大豐簋, probably the earliest of known inscribed bronzes of the Chou period. An example of the three lines, and a close parallel to the character under discussion, is 𠄎 on the *Tsung-chou Chung* 宗周鐘. The context clearly precludes a reading such as 上帝 "upper and lower gods", since to mention the "spirit host" 百神 in addition would be redundant. Apparently the Supreme Being and the rest of the spirit world are meant. Accordingly we read: 佳皇上帝百神保余小子 "The august Shang-ti and the spirit host protected me, a mere child". The inscription on this bell contains an indistinct character which some recognise as Chao 昭, the name of the fourth Chou king (v. 17, 51-53). Among the Oracular Sentences there is 𠄎, but unfortunately the bone is too fragmentary to provide a context (29, 上 28).

Notes on the structure of the other characters must be limited if this article is to be kept within bounds. Those that are anthropomorphic are chosen, because they are unusually varied and numerous for an inscription of this length.

王 *wang*. The assertion has been made that the earliest forms of this character represent the frontal view of a man, boldly erect, with proprietary stance upon the ground of his realm—an explanation somewhat like that given later here for the character for *ta*, "great". This character occurs very often among the Oracular Sentences, whence the following representative types are copied to show how the anthropomorphic notion arose.



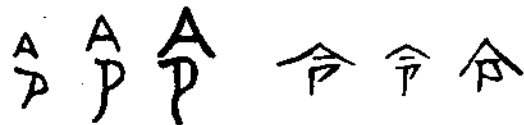
On some early bronzes, as on our *yu*, the lowest stroke is rounded, presenting a form like the archaic mode of writing *huo* 火 "fire". This encouraged Wu Ta-ch'êng to elaborate a somewhat fanciful theory about fire and abundance (48, I 2). Lo Chên-yü follows in the same vein (31, 中 19). Kuo Mo-jo, however, argues that this, like the characters 且, 士 and 土, portrays a phallus, extra horizontal strokes being added to later forms for decency in order to disguise the primitive emblem (19, 16). A philosophical view is taken in the *Shuo wên* where, as Radical 5, 王 is explained as being constructed with three strokes linked down the middle, the three symbolizing Heaven, Earth and Man, potencies blended by a king in his own person. The author fortifies the theory by citing as authority Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒, the famous Confucianist of the second century B.C. He quotes also a dictum attributed to Confucius himself: "One threads three to make 王".

令 *ling*. The archaic form has two elements, an upper, shaped like our letter A, and a lower, depicting a kneeling or squatting man. We will return to the latter presently. The upper element appears in the *Shuo wên* independently as Radical 181, and there it is described as composed with *ju* 入, "to enter", and *i* 一, "one", depicting a triad, and to be read in the sense of *chi* 集, "to assemble". Some texts have 人 substituted. At the end of the entry a note is interpolated by Hsü Hsüan 徐鉉 and other members of the imperial commission who, in A.D. 986, finished their task of revising the *Shuo wên* text. The note says: "We suspect this to be a simple pictogram, not one composed with 入 and 一". That corrects the apparent intention of the author to place Radical 181 in the category of "associated ideas", *hui i* 會意. Notwithstanding that often the structure of a character seems explicable under more than one of the Six Scripts, the rule in the *Shuo wên* is to assign a single category. Taken as a pictogram, Radical 181 shows three lines or sticks joined in triangular fashion. A recognized device in archaic script is to triplicate a thing to signify plurality. So here is the simplest means of picturing numerous separate units brought together. An alternate, but less simple mode exists of writing *chi*, "to assemble". It is the character for *chi* already cited; one bird (to signify many) perched upon a tree.

There have been other attempts to account for this upper element in the character for *ling*, "to command". Ting Fo-yen sees in it the gable of the hall at a royal court in which edicts or marks of favour were received with becoming respect, typified by the kneeling man (42, IX 3). Karlgren suggests it might be "a drawing of a bell", adding that "there are various early texts to show that the bell was used for signals of command" (16, No. 823).

As to the lower element in the character for *ling*, here in our inscription is the oldest type of the kneeling or squatting man, his arms straight and hands on thighs, seen from the side. It is summarized with utmost linear economy except for the slight thickening at the head, a thickening absent from some examples. Later the scribes wrote it in a careless or perfunctory manner, shortening it to a form little like the original vivid figure. Extreme examples of this contraction may be found among the early Chou inscriptions, such as those on the *Ch'ung Yu* 鬲, *Shên Tzu Kuei* 沈子盥 and *Ta Yu Ting* 大盂鼎.

One from each of these bronzes in the above order is copied here, and



beside them for comparison are three other examples from Han bronzes, dated respectively 109, 65 and 11 B.C.

Though these two groups are separated by some eight or nine centuries, they are much alike. Intermediate stages in the shortening process could also be matched from the same two periods. The later examples may be found documented in Jung Kêng's post-Chou repertory (11, IX 2). Evidently the character for *ling* underwent no decisive change at the time when the script was simplified and standardized in the third century B.C. Therefore Lo Chên-yü's assumption that the author of the *Shuo wên* was ignorant of the anthropomorphic origin of this lower element seems hardly justified (v. 31, 中 54). Hsü Shên may have failed to find any example of the fully realistic type. We know archaic bronzes disappeared after the Ch'in conquest; Hsü Shên himself complains of their scarcity. Yet he must have been familiar with the less realistic and intermediate types. At all events, he enters the character *ling* under his Radical 338, currently written 𠄎 or 𠄏, which he describes as depicting a *chieh*, or token of trust. According to him the lower element in the character for *ling* is to be identified with such a token.

The *chieh* (generally of bronze) was made in halves which tallied or fitted together exactly. When the halves were taken apart, a column of characters, inscribed on both, became divided vertically—a device for checking authenticity such as in some form or other has existed all over the world. One half was given to an official as his credentials, while the other was retained for testing any tally suspected of being counterfeit. The complete token took various shapes. Some of the earliest that have been found are in the form of a bird or a tiger. So far as I know, none can be proved older than the Ch'in period. It is difficult to reconcile known remains with the statement that 𠄎 or 𠄏 depicts a *chieh*.

The original entry under *ling* in the *Shuo wên* is: "To command. Composed with 𠄎 and 𠄏". Its brevity may have prompted the note added by Hsü Ch'ieh 徐錯, younger brother of the man who presided over the commission to revise the text in the tenth century, and himself a member. He says that the notion conveyed by the two components is that orders can be given to the multitude 𠄎 on the authority of the token 𠄏. That implies the *hui i* category. The character for *ming* 命 is a later variant of the character under discussion, it being expanded by the addition of a "mouth" to signify the usual mode of issuing orders. The two characters are used interchangeably on the bronzes.

𠄎 The next character in the inscription is thus transcribed to be in keeping with current usage. It is not in the *Shuo wên*. On the right is a repetition of the kneeling or squatting man. The element beside him calls for study. In the *Shuo wên* it appears under Radical 447. The entry reads: "A stake. Pictogram of a broken tree with a bent splinter of branch visible. Composed with 𠄎 representing something hung on it." A clue to the truth is forthcoming from the *Shuo wên* itself in the entry of the character for

𠄎 𠄎 under Radical 109. It says: "To shoot a dart with cord (*cho* 織) at flying birds. Composed with 隹 and 弋 as phonetic." But the 弋 may be there primarily for its semantic function. It is a pictogram, probably of a cross-bow, as will be explained later. Three quotations are apposite. One from *The Songs* is: 如彼飛蟲, 時亦弋獲 "Like those birds on the wing that perchance are shot at and caught." (v. 22, IV 526). One from *Mencius* is: 一心以爲有鴻鵠將至, 思撥弓繳而射之 "His mind being centred on a swan, which he thinks is approaching, he wishes to draw the string of his bow to him and adjust the dart with cord to shoot at it" (v. 22, II 410). The third quotation is the famous line about Confucius' sportsmanlike restraint (*Analects*, VII 26): 弋不射宿 which in the light of the present argument may be rendered "when shooting with his crossbow he did not aim at roosting birds". Tradition associates the word written 弋 with the use of a dart, called *tsêng* 矰, to which the cord, called *cho*, was attached. Among the Oracular Sentences are pictograms of the dart with cord in characters equated with 弋, 弗, 雉 and 隄, respectively: 𠄎 隄 隄 隄, and the combination occurs, too, in a number of unidentified characters, e.g., 𠄎 𠄎. There are many examples from the bronzes of this type 𠄎, the provenance of which may be traced through Jung Kêng's repertory (12, VIII 6).

The dart with cord may have been discharged from a cross-bow, and surely there was some sort of weight at that end of the cord which was not attached to the dart. It takes the form of a barbed terminal in the foregoing characters. On a bowl in the Freer Gallery, formerly inlaid, a lively scene is portrayed of men shooting at cranes with cross-bow and dart having a cord attached (Fig. 2). Here the terminal seems to be a ball. A dart aimed



FIG. 2.—Detail of design on bronze bowl. Drawn from photograph by courtesy of the Freer Gallery.

ahead of a flying bird might entangle it with the trailing cord, and so bring it down, perhaps alive. There is the story of a retainer who got into trouble for liberating birds thus caught by his master (v. 22, IV *Proleg.*, 24). This

method of catching birds throws light on the word in the passage from *The Songs* quoted above.

There are three recorded examples of 𠄎 in archaic script: two among the Oracular Sentences (46, 正編 56) and the third on the *Nung Yu* 農畝, a later First Phase piece, if judged by the style of its inscription. Here are copies in that order: 𠄎 𠄎 𠄎. The archaic form occurs, too, as a component in several characters: 𠄎 𠄎 必 叔. Corresponding examples from the bronzes are: 𠄎 𠄎 必 叔. Their provenance and also other examples may be found on turning to Jung Kêng's repertory (12, XII 14; VI 1; II 4; III 23).

When writing the foregoing I have profited from Hsü Chung-shu's enterprising article on matters to do with archery (7). His theory is that 𠄎 is a pictogram of a cross-bow, the vertical line being its "arm" (*pei* 臂), the transverse line the bow, and the short lateral line a side view of the square sighting-frame called *shih* 式 or *tu* 度. He says the straight type, closest to the cross-bow shape, is the oldest, while the curved type resulted from changes caused by error on the part of scribes. If this be true, the deterioration must have started early, since it is manifest in our inscription, where, moreover, it is combined with the primitive presentment of the squatting man.

Perhaps the supposition that the fowlers in Fig. 2 are using cross-bows may be questioned. Certainly a dart or rod with attached cord could be discharged from an ordinary bow. It is a practice illustrated among the hunting scenes in low-relief upon a bronze vase (*hu*) in the Pillsbury Collection, where kneeling archers with queer head-dresses are shooting at flying birds (Fig. 3).



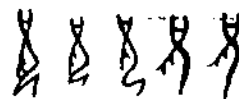
FIG. 3.—Detail of design on bronze vase. Drawn from photograph by courtesy of Mr. A. F. Pillsbury.

𠄎 The next anthropomorphic character in our inscription is the second in the second column. To be more precise, it is the lower part that is certainly anthropomorphic. This is 𠄎 the archaic mode of writing *jên*, "man", here truncated to leave room above it for the element to which I shall return presently. It is the most telling way of depicting a man with

utmost economy. He is viewed from the side, standing bowed from the hips, with knees slightly bent and arms hanging limply from the shoulders. The scribes could have devised no simpler means of drawing expressively, with two strokes, a passive human figure. The posture might appear indicative of humility, but to assume that to have been the scribes' intention would be as gratuitous as to take the squatting figure, previously considered, to signify subservience or worship. Standing thus and squatting were the normal alternative postures of ordinary man neither in action nor asleep. Indeed, examples of this character among the Oracular Sentences are about equally divided between the two types 𠄎 𠄎.

Someone (whose name I cannot recall) has advanced the theory that 𠄎 is merely the lateral half of the frontal type that appears in the fifth column of our inscription as an upstanding man, his arms tense and his legs planted confidently apart. This imposing figure was aptly chosen to write the word *ta*, "great", a word less often used than *jên* and therefore fit for a less simple pictogram, and besides the figure has an air of power and purposefulness.

How are the two projections from the arm of the pictogram in the second column to be explained? They are vestiges of a hand, recognisable as such when compared with the following series taken from the Oracular Sentences (38, Nos. 257, 266, 426, 518).



In the *Shuo wên* 𠄎 is entered as Radical 312, and is described as composed with 儿 "man" and 口 "mouth". In later dictionaries it appears under 儿. The status of 儿 as a separate character is a legacy from Hsü Shên who chose to duplicate thus the character for *jên*, "man", presumably for convenience in classification. Doubtless he had been misled by Lesser Seal and *li shu* forms. This duplication seems artificial; for in archaic script the arm and the leg side by side, lopped from an absent trunk, never appear either independently or in combination. When used as the lower element in a character, "man" is merely truncated to give room for what is placed above. So Hsü Shên is mistaken when he describes the Lesser Seal form 𠄎 as an abnormal *ku wên* character for "man" 古文奇字.

The upper element in 𠄎 Hsü Shên calls a "mouth", and he is justified to the extent that it resembles the pictogram for *k'ou*, "mouth", which occurs with semantic purpose in many characters. Acceptance of this explanation has prompted the favourite, but too facile, saying (not in the *Shuo wên*) that 𠄎 signifies the man whose seniority entitles him to dictate to his younger brothers. Appearance may be as deceptive here as in the examples of a mouth-like form providing the lower element in twenty-two

characters to which Lo Chên-yü points, identifying it as a bowl (32, 24, 25). My guess is that in the character under discussion the so-called "mouth" depicts some head-dress, a mark of superiority. Support for this comes from analogy with 皇 to which I shall return later.

殷 *yin*, last in the second column, now claims our attention. On the left is the ordinary pictogram for *jén*, "man", but with a marked thickening on the position of the belly. This may signify corpulency or some other cause. At all events, the bulge is put there for the figure to typify the human bodily person, distinct from a unit of humanity. In some early types the leg has an addition of doubtful significance. It is elaborated in the Lesser Seal form. Here are archaic examples of *yin* taken from bronzes which may be found named in Jung Kêng's repertory (12, VIII 11).

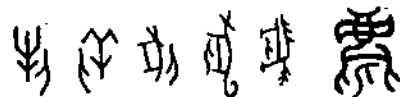


The right half of this character is the picture of a hand holding some object.

Let us consult the *Shuo wên* where *yin* is the sole entry under 𠂇, Radical 299. Apparently Hsü Shên included this radical partly for the purpose of classifying *yin* and partly as complement to the foregoing Radical 298, the character for *shên* 身, "the human person". The two match, except for turning in opposite directions. No example of No. 299 is known either in bronze inscriptions, or, it seems, in literature. Max Loehr mentions a single example on a bone fragment, but the book to which he refers is not available to me (35, 73). Hsü Shên defines the meaning as *kuei* 歸 "to revert to", etc., and describes its form as "a turned-about *shên*" without hinting at the philosophical sense such as Hsü Ch'ieh suggests in an interpolated note, and such as 反身 conveys in *Mencius*, for instance. All this has a bearing on Hsü Shên's definition of *yin* when he says: "A full musical performance is termed *yin* 作樂之盛稱殷". I venture to differ from Loehr's rendering "Die Klangfülle bei Musikvorführungen wird *yin* genannt" (35, 74). For Hsü Shên expands his definition with this quotation from the second appendix to the *Book of Changes*: "grandly presenting it before Shang-ti 殷薦之上帝", the "it" being the musical ceremonial ordained by the ancient kings (v. 23, 287, 288). According to tradition there would have been posturing dancers as well as musicians and singers. One has to take into account Hsü Shên's entries as a whole. The gyrations of posturing dancers might well be represented by the figure turned about, and the object held in the hand might be not only a musician's instrument such as a drum-stick, but alternatively a weapon such as the dancers are said to have brandished. There is, too, the associated idea of the discipline and systematic planning needed for an elaborate ceremonial. Surely 盤 should

be read as referring to the completeness of a diversified performance rather than to the full volume of sound.

妣 *pi*. Limitations of space for bidmore than a brief study of 匕, highly interesting though it is, either alone or as an element in other characters. Here it is combined with 丙 in a *ho wên*, second in the fifth column of our inscription. The *Shuo wên* entry about it as Radical 289 provides a useful starting point. It runs: 相與比斂也从反人匕亦所以用比取一名柄。Perhaps this means: "A reciprocal element in the 'comparison' series. Composed with 人 turned about. *Pi* is also that which is used in pairs and serves to hold food. Another name for the latter is *shü*". The "comparison" series, as I take it, is exemplified in the Lesser Seal forms 𠂇, 𠂈 and 𠂉 (currently written 比, 从 and 北), each of which derives significance from the mutual relationship of its two "man" elements. If my interpretation be right, Hsü Shên regards 匕 as a pictogram for both "man" and "spoon". He lays stress on the direction faced by the "man". For instance, he describes the form of 匕 as "人 turned about", because "man" usually is drawn to face the opposite direction. Direction is the key to characters in the "comparison" series. Since spoons (*pi*) were used in pairs, like chopsticks, the "spoon" pictogram might be appropriately identified with the "man" pictogram which appears in mutually dependent couples. This train of thought may seem queer, but in the *Shuo wên* there are others just as tortuous. Perhaps all that Hsü Shên had in mind was that the "man" and "spoon" pictograms looked too much alike to be differentiated. Certainly the form in our inscription might be one or the other. The adequacy of the "man" scription having been appraised already, the question is now about the "spoon". The latter does perfectly represent a spoon seen from the side, especially if imagined in longitudinal section. The long, gracefully curved handle is a feature of many archaic bronze spoons and ladles that have come to light. Had the Oracular Sentences been available to Hsü Shên, the fact could not have escaped him that "spoon" was used as a sign of sex. He would have found a number of animals depicted each with such a sign beside it. From the Sentences come these characters for "cow", "ewe", "sow", "bitch", and "mare", and at the end of the row is one for "hind" from the Stone Drums.



Male complements to the first three and the last are known, each marked with the sign 上. Survivals of "cow" and "bull" appear in the current characters 牝 and 牡 for the words *p'in* (or *pi*) and *mu* denoting, respectively, females and males in the animal world. Kuo Mo-jo sees in these two sex

signs the "symbols of parentage", as L. C. Hopkins delicately terms them in a summary (6) of Kuo's remarkable article. Kuo's identification of a phallus is more easily followed than the other, though there is much force in his argument that a spoon suggests the female external genitals by reason of the bowl's lentoid shape and its recipient function (v. 19, 10).

As an independent character and also combined with a name, 匕 occurs often in the Oracular Sentences and on several of the earlier bronzes. On at least four of the later bronzes it enters into the composition of a character in which 女 is the other element, and on one Third Phase *kuei* 簋 there is the form now written 妣 (v. 12, XII 14). The *Shuo wên* gives both 妣 and 妣, the former being described as a *chou wên* 籀文 and a contraction of the latter which, in its turn, is described as composed with 比 as the phonetic. Clearly Hsü Shên had no idea of sex signification by 匕.

爽 *shuang*. At the end of the fifth column the frontal view of a human figure, the usual scription for *ta* "great", is repeated with the arms slightly raised and under each two pairs of parallel lines cross-hatched. It is obviously like the scription for *shuang* which is entered in the *Shuo wên* under Radical 97. Here it is said to mean "bright" 明, and to be composed with 發 and 大. Hsü Ch'ieh adds: "Within the interstices beside the central axis of 大 are brilliant rays". According to commentators, the primary significance of luminosity is extended to the corollary that sources of light are liable to fail, hence the notion of variability. The word thus written means "defect" or "fault" when used in *The Songs*, for instance (22, IV 99, 274). It conveys this sense, too, on the famous *San Shih P'an* 散氏盤 where the character matches the one in our inscription.

Here, however, beyond doubt it stands for a well-sounding epithet customarily applied to the consorts of bygone Shang-Yin kings. Perhaps "Shining" is nearly equivalent. That accords with the habit of calling spirits and things to do with them "bright" or "glorious." Among the Oracular Sentences the word is written with a number of variants about which epigraphists have written at length, each giving a different explanation. Their arguments cannot be studied here, and the following references must suffice: 19, 14, 15; 20, I 15-17; 31, 中 51; 41, 36-39; 50, I 15-17; 53, 41, 42.

既 *chi*, the last character in the sixth column, is self-explanatory. A squatting man turns his head away from a food vessel in front of him; he has finished his meal. Here is the natural sequel and, in a sense, antithesis to 𠄎, the squatting man who faces the same vessel (but full of food) when about to begin his meal. Using the two pictograms, 𠄎 𠄎, the scribes aptly chose the commonest of human acts to illustrate such abstractions as the future and the past, approach and outcome, purpose and fulfilment. These are the respective implications of the words written in current script 即 and 既, travesties of their archaic forerunners. No doubt misled by

Lesser Seal forms, Hsü Shên goes wrong over these two characters. The left half of each he equates with his Radical 178, written 𠄎 in Lesser Seal, which he analyzes as depicting an ear of grain (or perhaps a single grain) above, and a spoon to hold the grain below. It is, in reality, the summary drawing of a round vessel with cover and hollow base. The hollow base helps the heating of the contents over a fire, the cover keeps them warm—factors of primary concern to a people whose staple diet, then as now, was cooked grain. The word *kuei* (currently written 簋) for this type of vessel was anciently written with the same summary drawing, and beside it a hand holding a spoon or a ladle, 𠄎, thus signifying a vessel from which the contents, grain, had to be ladled, not picked out by the fingers as might be done with meat and certain other foods. I mention this to stress the scribes' practical sense in choosing the most familiar things for their pictograms. As to the right halves of these two complementary characters, Hsü Shên says they serve a phonetic function. Each is, on the contrary, an integral part of the picture. We have noticed how he erred about 卩; to explain his views on 无 would involve too long a digression.

𠄎 *hua*. Under Radical 74 this character is entered in the *Shuo wên* with little information except to say the word means 擊, "to smite". But there is no aggressiveness about this squatting man fingering a dagger-axe 𠄎 戈. Those familiar with archaic script know it to be a dagger-axe because this is the conventional mode of representing it. Elsewhere I have tried, at some length, to reconcile the scription with the actual object (51, 95-104). But the last word on this has yet to be said. Observe, for instance, that this dagger-axe differs from the supposed cross-bow at the bottom of the first column only to the extent of an extra transverse stroke.

All the obviously anthropomorphic characters have now been commented on except the one last in the third column, which would claim too much space. But before structural topics are left, an unusual feature presented by the three 于 must be noted. Anciently, the character often had, as it has here, a bow-like addition on the right. Here the addition has, at the top, an extra angular turn to which I can find only one exact parallel, and that is on a bone (v. 28, VIII 1).

#### INTERPRETATION AND DATE

Li T'ai-fên seems to be the only one to have attempted an explanation of this inscription. His views are not examined here in detail, since they are based on the questionable readings already noted. He concludes that Ta Ch'ia 大甲, the fourth Shang-Yin king, was the man who caused the bronze to be cast, dedicating it to his father and predecessor on the throne, Ta Ting 大丁. Yü Hsing-wu's comments are restricted to the single character. From Tung Tso-pin's indication that he takes 兄 in the sense of 祝, one gathers he believes Yi's mission was religious.

No finality is claimed for the following translation of the whole inscription. It is merely tentative and offered for criticism, like everything else in this article.

"On the *ping ch'ên* day the King ordered Yi to increase husbandry while regulating affairs in the Fêng Lands. X received him with an offering of five strings of cowries. It was in the first month. The *kou* ceremonial for Ancestress Ping was then performed during the *yung* rites, she having been the consort of Ta I. It was when for the second time in the King's reign the periodic sacrifices to royal ancestors occurred, and the *hua* rites to Shang-ti had been completed."

"Yi" seems a likely pronunciation for the name of the man who evidently had the bronze cast to commemorate both the honour of being sent on a royal mission and his gratification at the reward. A song in the *Shih ching* mentions a noble lady whom it calls the "beautiful eldest Yi 美孟弋" (22, IV 79). There is reason to connect this surname Yi with the surname Ssü 姒 in view of the following evidence of phonetic affinity. Both the *Ch'un ch'iu* and the *Tso chuan* relating to 569 B.C. mention a princess of Lu, surnamed Ssü 姒, but it is written 弋 in the corresponding *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* texts of the *Ch'un ch'iu* (v. 22, V 421-423). Tradition assigns the surname Ssü to Yü 禹 of the Hsia dynasty, the name Hsia being derived from his fief in the region of K'ai-fêng in Ho-nan (4, I 93, 94, 162, 170). At the Chou conquest King Wu is said to have enfeoffed the representative descendants of former kings; to those of Yü he apportioned territory in the same K'ai-fêng region to be the principality of Ch'i 杞 (4, I 239). The ruling family of Ch'i bore the surname Ssü. My guess seems reasonable that the man named on this bronze may have belonged to the family afterwards enfeoffed with Ch'i, or to one of the eleven other noble families reputed to have been descended from Yü (v. 4, I 171).

The second and third columns of this inscription present the real crux. If I am right, the rest merely elaborates the dating of the event. So I propose to concentrate on interpreting the last three characters in column two.

兄 is taken in the sense of *k'uang* 况 (or 況) "to augment, aggrandize". Thus it occurs in the *Shih ching*: 亂况斯削 "Disorder grows and proportionately your power lessens" (v. 22, IV 522). Wu Ta-ch'êng has written an interesting note in which he remarks that 兄 and 况 were interchanged in ancient times. Also he points to certain affinities between 兄, 况 and 皇 (49, 26). The suggestion has been made above that the problematic element at the top of 兄 may be the relic of a distinguishing head-dress. If that be true, the presence of a head-dress may be another point of similarity with 皇, accepting for the latter Hsü Chung-shu's theory of a three-pointed crown (8, 442).

The next character has been rendered above with the somewhat vague term "husbandry", as if it were 穡 "to reap and garner grain". But

it might here mean the more specific storage of tribute grain in granaries, a matter of practical concern to a king who might find expedient the dispatch of an envoy to safeguard his interests. Anciently, 耨 and 穡 were interchanged. In the *Shu ching* there is the term 稼穡 for "sowing and reaping", and the term 穡夫 for "farmer"; in the *Tso chuan* 農穡 is used for "husbandry" (22, III 326, 374, 464, 465, 468; V 437, 440). In the *Li chi* probably 先耨 means "Father of Husbandry" and 司耨 "overseers of husbandry" (v. 5, I 595). The *Shu ching* has the term 耨夫 which, according to the *Shuo wên*, is synonymous with 田夫 "farmer", though Legge accepts commentators' opinion that it means petty officials, as it did in the Han period (9, V 下 6; 22, III 165).

The meaning of *yin* 殷 is a problem. I have taken it here as equivalent to *chéng* 正, "to regularize", "to set in order". It seems to be used thus in the *Shu ching* in the sentence 九江孔殷, which Legge translates, "The nine Kêang were brought to complete order", while he notes other possible interpretations (22, III 113). A passage about astronomical observations contains the word twice in the sense "to determine exactly", again manifesting the notion of "correctness" (22, III 19, 20). Implications of "largeness", "abundance", as well as "disciplined order", have been deduced above from the structure of the character, and are confirmed by literary usage of the word. So far as I know, the character is not to be found among recorded Oracular Sentences, so we must depend upon the bronzes for archaic examples.

Of those copied above (p. 84) from the nine different inscriptions listed by Jung Kêng, seven stand for a name. The two exceptions are on the *T'uan Yu* 鬲 卣 and *Ch'uan Yu* 傳 卣; otherwise called *Shih T'ien Fu Tsun* 師 田 父 尊. Besides there is the inscription, repeated on three pieces (*ho, yu* and *tsun*) of the Ch'ên Ch'ên group, which has 殷, generally regarded as an aberrant form. In these three inscriptions (counting the Ch'ên Ch'ên lot as one), the *yin* is followed by the name Ch'êng-chou 成 周, and the impression gathered from the contexts is that probably it means the same in all. This meaning, such as I take it to be, seems to provide the clue to our inscription, a view I shall try to justify presently.

First let us examine possible alternative meanings. They are: (1) "To return"; (2) Royal audience of feudatories; (3) Name of a sacrifice. Jung Kêng chooses (1) in a note on the *Ch'ên Ch'ên Ho* 臣 辰 盃, where he reads this meaning also in the two other inscriptions which have *yin* followed by "Ch'êng-chou" (13, Text, 29). Without comment, he simply equates *yin* with *kuei* 歸, presumably on the authority of the *Shuo wên* entry under Radical 299. But, as noticed above, Hsü Shên apparently inserts this dubious radical, artificially defining it as *kuei*, in order to round off his plan of classification with a neat contrast to the preceding radical (v. *sup.*, p. 84). Unless literary support can be found for it, the equation of *yin* with



*kuei* seems unwarranted. Loehr evidently has some misgivings when he decides to adopt it in his interpretation of the inscriptions on the *Ch'ên Ch'ên Ho* and *T'uan Yu* (35, 48, 73, 74).

As to the second alternative, it is based on the *Chou li* where *yin* is used for assemblies of vassals received in audience, either at the royal court or elsewhere when the king made a tour of inspection or journeyed about for other reasons (I, XVIII 12, 13; XXXVII 10, 11, 20, 22). Perhaps the king would delegate someone to act for him at a place such as Ch'êng-chou. Before this theory might reasonably be advanced to solve our problem, the validity of the *Chou li* would have to be accepted as an index to actual procedure many centuries before its time. Apart from that, the *Chou li* is regarded by most as a theoretical code. It is, in short, an insecure basis. This interpretation is adopted by Kuo Mo-jo (17, 10, 32) and Kuo T'ing-t'ang (21, 1741), and apparently also by the authors of the admirable Freer Gallery catalogue when they translate "to convene at Ch'êng-chou" (34, 49).

As the name for a sacrifice, *yin* appears no earlier than the latter part of the Chou period. Perhaps the first mention of it is in the *Tso chuan* relating to 551 B.C. (22, V 493, 495). For arguments that equate it with *i* 衣, and for other light on this questionable alternative, the reader should turn to Loehr's able summary (35, 74-79). Both Wu Ch'i-ch'ang and Yü Hsing-wu read *yin* to mean a sacrifice (47, II 13, 14, 19, 20; 52, 下, III 13).

This coupling of *yin* with Ch'êng-chou seems to give the clue we need. Ch'êng-chou was at first a satellite of the secondary capital, Lo-i 洛邑, and stood within ten miles to the east of it. The point that concerns us now is that the Chou conquerors set up there one of their concentration camps for former Shang-Yin subjects who proved recalcitrant. Two passages relating to King Ch'êng's reign in the *Shu ching Preface* infer as much. They are: "When Ch'êng-chou had been completed, the obstinate people of Yin were removed to it", and "After the death of Chou Kung, Chün-ch'ên was commissioned with the special charge of regulating Ch'êng-chou in the eastern outskirts 命尹陳分正東郊成周" (Cf. 22, III 10, 12). Chou rule remained insecure for many years, as we know from allusions in classical writings and inscriptions on bronzes. The deduction is surely plausible that those named on the aforesaid group of early Chou bronzes as charged with duties at Ch'êng-chou were sent there, like Chün-ch'ên, to keep it in order (正), presumably by controlling refractory internees. I would not go so far as to suggest that Yi, in our inscription, had an exactly analogous task, but he might have gone to the Fêng Lands to adjust irregularities, at any rate, to raise the target for tribute grain.

The Fêng Lands may be a principality. In the *Tso chuan* someone recalls to a prince of Ch'i 齊 those who had ruled over his territory in the distant past, and among them he names Ling, Earl of Fêng 澤伯陵. A prince 公 of Fêng is mentioned elsewhere in the same text as if he were of

local fame (22, V 679, 684, 627, 629). The Tu 杜 commentary assigns the Fêng princes to the Shang-Yin period, and says their surname was Chiang 姜. The name Fêng 逢 occurs in the Oracular Sentences, apparently as that of a place visited by the kings (v. 29, 上 10, 11). There is a bronze colander of early First Phase style which bears a short legend saying the Earl of Fêng caused it to be made, and the "Fêng" is written as in our inscription (25, No. 3, 33). Centuries must separate the colander from a *p'an* 盤 and an *i* 匱 inscribed alike with the name Fêng Shu 夆叔 (26, X 30, 42; 25, No. 9, 43, 44). The *p'an* and *i* are mentioned here because of a possible link between descendants and the locality, suggested by the fact that these bronzes were unearthed in T'êng 滕 Hsien, Shan-tung, which place, though outside ancient Ch'i, was not more than some 60 miles south of it. The present Fêng Shan 逢山, a few miles west of Lin-ch'ü 臨朐 Hsien in Shan-tung, probably manifests in its name a vestige of the ancient principality. It lies about 230 miles east of An-yang. In short, identification of Fêng in our inscription with the Fêng in the Oracular Sentences and with the traditional principality, seems plausible enough to warrant the reading 逢. There are instances of the 辵 being omitted from other names on bronzes. Perhaps "Lands" is a mistranslation. The 卩 may stand for *tien* 甸, "ruler" or "chieftain", as it does on the *Ta Yü Ting* 大盂鼎, in a passage accusing of drunkenness "the Yin border barons 殷邊戾甸" (v. 17, 34).

Surely Yi, as royal commissioner, was suitably received by the chief dignitary of the place, and probably it was the latter whose name is written with the character no longer current, like many other characters for proper names in archaic inscriptions. At a formal reception the custom was for the host to make a gift. There is ample evidence of that in the inscriptions. A notable example is the one on the *Ta Kuei* 大盞, the cover of which alone remains, recording three ceremonial presentations by hosts to their guests. This inscription is among others studied in a brilliant article by Henri Maspero, whose death we mourn (36, 298, 299). The gift to Yi introduces a subject deserving more notice than is possible here. Cowries were valued doubtless for their rarity, durability, uniform size and good appearance, probably also as fertility emblems—qualities that fitted them to serve as trinkets and tokens of wealth. They were rare because of their remote source, almost certainly beyond the shores of China, and the consequent short supply limited by barter at many stages along an extended route. Numbers have come to light among Shang-Yin remains at An-yang, and also copies of their shape in bone, ivory, bronze and jade, none of which could have been intended to deceive as counterfeits. Does the presence of these copies point to substitution because of rarity, or only to an urge to multiply a vital symbol? According to the inscriptions cowries seem to have been rare, though perhaps there is not enough evidence to warrant such a

generalisation. One repertory of characters from the Oracular Sentences lists seven examples of the form depicting a double string of cowries, forerunner of the character 期, such as occurs in our inscription. Of these only one presents an indication of plurality, and it has the numeral "ten" (39, IV 18, 合文 18). On the bronzes are recorded 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 13, 20, 30, 50 and 100 double strings (12, VI 18). Certainly, small numbers occur on the earliest vessels. On both bones and bronzes the pictogram of a single cowry occurs without numerical signification. Perhaps instead of "double strings" a better term would be "necklace". The theory seems plausible that at first cowries served for personal adornment, and only later, when more plentiful, they came into use as currency (v. 18). Many of the cowries found near An-yang are perforated for threading. Of course, they might have been strung for convenience in carrying like the cash of later times.

The nature of the rites named *kou* 遯, *yung* 彤 and *hua* 夙 is a subject that awaits fuller investigation by specialists in the Oracular Sentences. Shang-ti (possibly a deified ancestor), also must be passed by, since the name raises too many complex questions. Notions concerning Shang-ti, manifested in classical literature, have been studied by Schindler (37, 333-364). More than 2000 years ago it was a commonplace that *ssü* 祀, like *nien* 年, meant "year" under the Shang-Yin and Chou, respectively (2, VI 7). But we know from inscriptions that the term was not changed from one to the other abruptly at the Chou conquest. Nor is it enough simply to define *ssü* as "year"; for the term had ancient implications. A hint of these has already been conveyed in the rendering of our inscription (p. 88) by the words: "when for the second time in the King's reign the periodic sacrifices to royal ancestors occurred". Appropriate here is Britton's summary of recent opinion (3, 21, 22). "The *ssu* 祀 sacrifices are believed to have been grand royal ritual services, holiday occasions, signalling the completion of cycles of sacrifices made in rotation to the royal ancestors individually in their order of succession and according to their name-days. *Ssu* numbers are present in many inscriptions, on Shang bronzes as well as on divination bone. Such inscriptions have varying month numbers, indicating that the *ssu* holidays occurred at different times of the year. It has been suggested that, towards the end of Shang, because of the lengthened ancestral list, the *ssu* cycles spanned a year's time and the *ssu* occasions consequently recurred annually; whence the significance of *ssu* as an annual sacrificial observance."

The Ancestress Ping 妣丙 written with the combined character in the fifth column, was a consort of the Ta I 大乙 who also is named in this column. He was the first Shang-Yin king, called in classical literature T'ien I 天乙, T'ang 湯, or Ch'êng T'ang 成湯. Confusion between 大 and 天 occurred because in archaic script the two looked much alike, some

forms of the latter having only a thickening for the head to differentiate them. The *ping ch'ên* day on which Yi received the royal command was evidently that of the *kou* ceremonial in honour of Ancestress Ping. From the Oracular Sentences there is proof that a ritual act for any ancestor was performed on the respective name-day, that is, on one of the six days in the cycle of sixty which are named by a couple with the same "stem" as that chosen to designate the ancestor. For instance, three divination enquiries whether a certain day would be propitious in regard to Ancestress Ping, consort of Ta I, were made on *ping-yin* 寅, *ping-shên* 申, and *ping-wu* 午 days, respectively (28, I 3; 29, 上 1, 下 41). Yi's honour came on the anniversary of the first queen of the dynasty; he elaborated a fact that fed his vanity, just as we might about some personal distinction that fell on a royal festival or a saint's day. A striking parallel to our inscription is found on the *Mou-ch'ên* Kuei 戊辰簋, which may have been cast in the same reign (33, 上 19). The maker likewise expatiates on the synchronization of his honour with the commemoration of a queen. A tentative translation is: "On the *mou-ch'ên* day the Director Pi gave I a flagon of spiced wine and some cowries. Whereupon [the latter] made for Fu I this precious, sacral vessel. It was the eleventh month, when, at the time of the *lieh* 魯 ceremonial during the twentieth annual sacrifices in the King's reign, *kou* 遯 rites were performed for Ancestress Mou 妣戊, consort of Wu I 武乙..." There is, of course, the possibility that such gifts were rewards for participation in the rites.

Our inscription is dated, beyond doubt, to the reign of Ti Hsin 帝辛, the last Shang-Yin king, by the fact that his two immediate predecessors on the throne are named on a companion *yu*. According to that inscription the King ordered sacrifices in honour of Wên Wu [Ting] 文武 [丁] and Ti I 帝乙, and therefore he can be no other than Ti Hsin. Rough copies of both this inscription and one on another *yu* are published by Tung Tso-pin (45, 17, 18). In several respects these copies do not tally with the inked-squeezes which Prof. Ecke obligingly got in Peking for this article, and which are here reproduced for the first time in Figs. 5 and 6. The discrepancy that most concerns us now is the round form of 丁, substituted in the copy for the horizontal line at the top of 帝. That the horizontal line is actually present as part of the latter character is testified by the inked-squeeze in Fig. 5, by a second inked-squeeze, and by a direct photograph of the inscribed base of the *yu*, kindly taken on my behalf by the Rev. Martin. Perhaps Tung Tso-pin was misled by a defective inked-squeeze when making his copy. The three pieces of evidence just mentioned show no trace of the "Ting" in the name which in full presumably should be "Wên Wu Ting". "Ting" seems to have been omitted, like another name character by the same scribe. Heading the fourth column there is 乙 without a companion character to designate the particular ancestor. Tung Tso-pin

assumes the missing character to be 大, the complete name being Ta I, that of the first Shang-Yin king.

These three bronzes must belong to the same set because the inscriptions on all glorify Yi 弋卩 by name, and they are written in the same style. Moreover, all three bear the same shorter inscription (Fig. 4), with the



FIG. 4.—Shorter inscription on the Yu. Half actual size.

minor exception that one lacks the dedication to Fu Ting 父丁 below the dog complex surrounded by the so-called *ya hsing*. Instead, there is a dedication to Ancestor Kuei 祖癸 in the body of the inscription (Fig. 6). Note should be made that the same dog complex is known to be shared by at least eleven other bronzes: three *ting* (including a pair), one *tou*, one *ho*, one *chih*, one *tsun*, one *ku*, one *chia*, and a pair of *chio*. No more need be said about it now, because this group is the subject of a separate study soon to appear. Of the aforementioned *yu*, one is dated in the fourth and the other in the sixth year, or rather the fourth and sixth time, respectively, in the King's reign that the periodic royal sacrifices occurred.

According to the conventional chronology, such as is usual in books of reference, Ti Hsin reigned from 1154 to 1122 B.C. These dates are certainly wrong because the system that provides them has a wrong basis. About a century later seems nearer the truth, but a justification of that would lead into a maze beyond the scope of this article. We have, at least, reached a very definite relative date, if not an absolute one. It is probably the surest date yet found on a Shang-Yin bronze.

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NOTE. The paper of the inked-squeezes reproduced in Figs. 1 and 5 has some extraneous yellowish-brown stains which photography would have rendered too dark if left untouched. The author has used sparingly a thin light-grey wash to restore the original tone in those spots. No other pigment has been used.

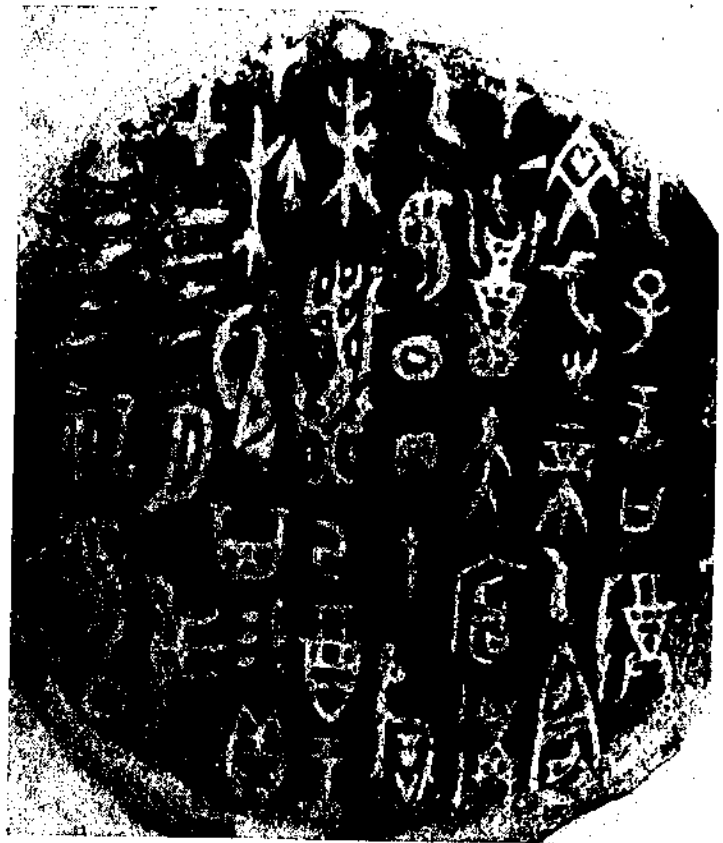


Fig. 5.—From base of a *yu*. Dated King's fourth year, and naming Wen Wu [Ting] and Ti I. Actual width  $4\frac{1}{4}$ " (10.3 cm.)

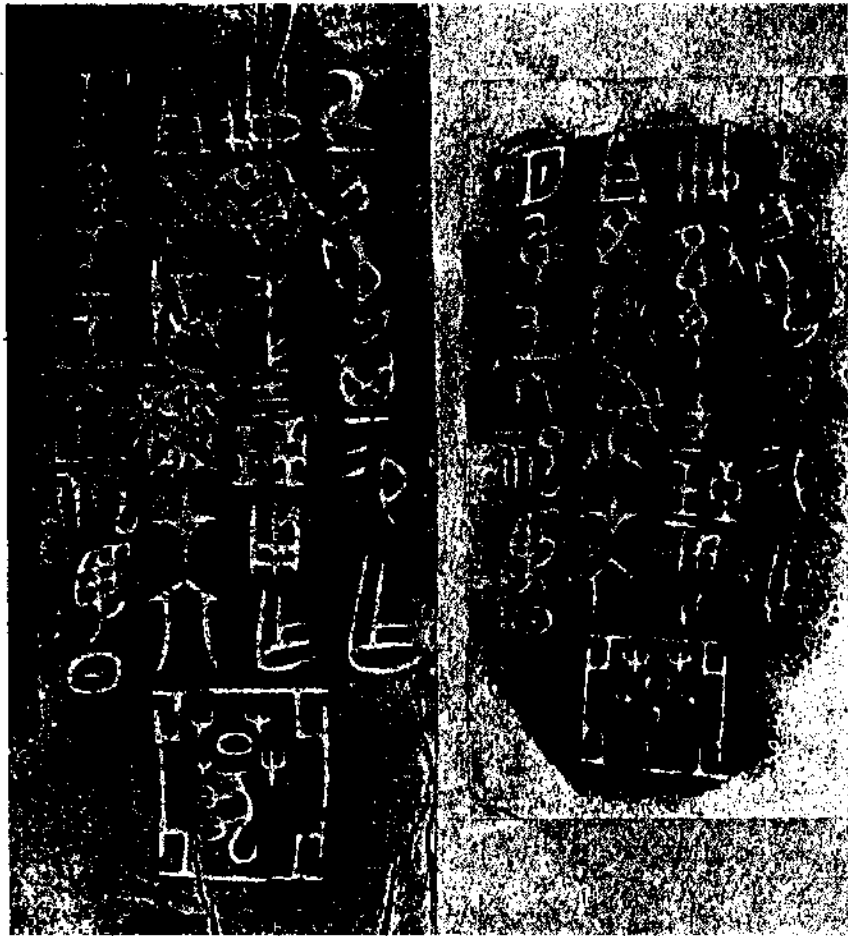


Fig. 6—From cover and body of a *yu*. Dated King's sixth year.  
Actual width  $4\frac{1}{4}$ " (10.3 cm.)

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