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[Transcriber's Note: The following text contains numerous non-English words containing diacritical marks not contained in the ASCII character set. Characters accented by those marks, and the corresponding text representations are as follows (where x represents the character being accented). All such symbols in this text above the character being accented:

breve (u-shaped symbol): [˘x] caron (v-shaped symbol): [ˇx] macron (straight line): [=x] acute (égu) accent: ['x]

Additionally, the author has spelled certain words inconsistently. Those have been adjusted to be consistent where possible. Examples of such adjustments are as follows:

From To Northwestern North-western Southwards Southward Programme Program re-introduced reintroduced practise practice Lotos Lotus Ju-Chên Juchên cooperate co-operate life-time lifetime man-power manpower favor favour etc.

In general such changes are made to be consistent with the predominate usage in the text, or if there was not a predominate spelling, to the more modern.]

A HISTORY OF CHINA

by

WOLFRAM EBERHARD

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INTRODUCTION

There are indeed enough Histories of China already: why yet another one? Because the time has come for new departures; because we need to clear away the false notions with which the general public is constantly being fed by one author after another; because from time to time syntheses become necessary for the presentation of the stage reached by research.

Histories of China fall, with few exceptions, into one or the other of two groups, pro-Chinese and anti-Chinese: the latter used to predominate, but today the former type is much more frequently found. We have no desire to show that China's history is the most glorious or her civilization the oldest in the world. A claim to the longest history does not establish the greatness of a civilization; the importance of a civilization becomes apparent in its achievements. A thousand years ago China's civilization towered over those of the peoples of Europe. Today the West is leading; tomorrow China may lead again. We need to realize how China became what she is, and to note the paths pursued by the Chinese in human thought and action. The lives of emperors, the great battles, this or the other famous deed, matter less to us than the discovery of the great forces that underlie these features and govern the human element. Only when we have knowledge of those forces and counter-forces can we realize the significance of the great personalities who have emerged in China; and only then will the history of China become intelligible even to those who have little knowledge of the Far East and can make nothing of a mere enumeration of dynasties and campaigns.

Views on China's history have radically changed in recent years. Until about thirty years ago our knowledge of the earliest times in China depended entirely on Chinese documents of much later date; now we are able to rely on many excavations which enable us to check the written sources. Ethnological, anthropological, and sociological research has begun for China and her neighbours; thus we are in a position to write with some confidence about the making of China, and about her ethnical development, where formerly we could only grope in the dark. The claim that "the Chinese race" produced the high Chinese civilization entirely by its own efforts, thanks to its special gifts, has become just as untenable as the other theory that immigrants from the West, some conceivably from Europe, carried civilization to the Far East. We know now that in early times there was no "Chinese race", there were not even "Chinese", just as there were no "French" and no "Swiss" two thousand years ago. The "Chinese" resulted from the amalgamation of many separate peoples of different races in an enormously complicated and long-drawn-out process, as with all the other high civilizations of the world.

The picture of ancient and medieval China has also been entirely changed since it has been realized that the sources on which reliance has always been placed were not objective, but deliberately and emphatically represented a particular philosophy. The reports on the emperors and ministers of the earliest period are not historical at all, but served as examples of ideas of social policy or as glorifications of particular noble families. Myths such as we find to this day among China's neighbours were made into history; gods were made men and linked together by long family trees. We have been able to touch on all these things only briefly, and have had to dispense with any account of the complicated processes that have taken place here.

The official dynastic histories apply to the course of Chinese history the criterion of Confucian ethics; for them history is a textbook of ethics, designed to show by means of examples how the man of high character should behave or not behave. We have to go deeper, and try to extract the historic truth from these records. Many specialized studies by Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholars on problems of Chinese history are now available and of assistance in this task. However, some Chinese writers still imagine that they are serving their country by yet again dishing up the old fables for the foreigner as history; and some Europeans, knowing no

better or aiming at setting alongside the unedifying history of Europe the shining example of the conventional story of China, continue in the old groove. To this day, of course, we are far from having really worked through every period of Chinese history; there are long periods on which scarcely any work has yet been done. Thus the picture we are able to give today has no finality about it and will need many modifications. But the time has come for a new synthesis, so that criticism may proceed along the broadest possible front and push our knowledge further forward.

The present work is intended for the general reader and not for the specialist, who will devote his attention to particular studies and to the original texts. In view of the wide scope of the work, I have had to confine myself to placing certain lines of thought in the foreground and paying less attention to others. I have devoted myself mainly to showing the main lines of China's social and cultural development down to the present day. But I have also been concerned not to leave out of account China's relations with her neighbours. Now that we have a better knowledge of China's neighbours, the Turks, Mongols, Tibetans, Tunguses, Tai, not confined to the narratives of Chinese, who always speak only of "barbarians", we are better able to realize how closely China has been associated with her neighbours from the first day of her history to the present time; how greatly she is indebted to them, and how much she has given them. We no longer see China as a great civilization surrounded by barbarians, but we study the Chinese coming to terms with their neighbours, who had civilizations of quite different types but nevertheless developed ones.

It is usual to split up Chinese history under the various dynasties that have ruled China or parts thereof. The beginning or end of a dynasty does not always indicate the beginning or the end of a definite period of China's social or cultural development. We have tried to break China's history down into the three large periods—"Antiquity", "The Middle Ages", and "Modern Times". This does not mean that we compare these periods with periods of the same name in Western history although, naturally, we find some similarities with the development of society and culture in the West. Every attempt towards periodization is to some degree arbitrary: the beginning and end of the Middle Ages, for instance, cannot be fixed to a year, because development is a continuous process. To some degree any periodization is a matter of convenience, and it should be accepted as such.

The account of Chinese history here given is based on a study of the original documents and excavations, and on a study of recent research done by Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars, including my own research. In many cases, these recent studies produced new data or arranged new data in a new way without an attempt to draw general conclusions. By putting such studies together, by fitting them into the pattern that already existed, new insights into social and cultural processes have been gained. The specialist in the field will, I hope, easily recognize the sources, primary or secondary, on which such new insights represented in this book are based. Brief notes are appended for each chapter; they indicate the most important works in English and provide the general reader with an opportunity of finding further information on the problems touched on. For the specialist brief hints to international research are given, mainly in cases in which different interpretations have been proposed.

Chinese words are transcribed according to the Wade-Giles system with the exception of names for which already a popular way of transcription exists (such as Peking). Place names are written without hyphen, if they remain readable.

THE EARLIEST TIMES

Chapter One

PREHISTORY

1 *Sources for the earliest history*

Until recently we were dependent for the beginnings of Chinese history on the written Chinese tradition. According to these sources China's history began either about 4000 B.C. or about 2700 B.C. with a succession of wise emperors who "invented" the elements of a civilization, such as clothing, the preparation of food, marriage, and a state system; they instructed their people in these things, and so brought China, as early as in the third millennium B.C., to an astonishingly high cultural level. However, all we know of the origin of civilizations makes this of itself entirely improbable; no other civilization in the world originated in any such way. As time went on, Chinese historians found more and more to say about primeval times. All these narratives were collected in the great imperial history that appeared at the beginning of the Manchu epoch. That book was translated into French, and all the works written in Western languages until recent years on Chinese history and civilization have been based in the last resort on that translation.

Modern research has not only demonstrated that all these accounts are inventions of a much later period, but has also shown *why* such narratives were composed. The older historical sources make no mention of any rulers before 2200 B.C., no mention even of their names. The names of earlier rulers first appear in documents of about 400 B.C.; the deeds attributed to them and the dates assigned to them often do not appear until much later. Secondly, it was shown that the traditional chronology is wrong and another must be adopted, reducing all the dates for the more ancient history, before 900 B.C. Finally, all narratives and reports from China's earliest period have been dealt a mortal blow by modern archaeology, with the excavations of recent years. There was no trace of any high civilization in the third millennium B.C., and, indeed, we can only speak of a real "Chinese civilization" from 1300 B.C. onward. The peoples of the China of that time had come from the most varied sources; from 1300 B.C. they underwent a common process of development that welded them into a new unity. In this sense and emphasizing the cultural aspects, we are justified in using from then on a new name, "Chinese", for the peoples of China. Those sections, however, of their ancestral populations who played no part in the subsequent cultural and racial fusion, we may fairly call "non-Chinese". This distinction answers the question that continually crops up, whether the Chinese are "autochthonons". They are autochthonons in the sense that they formed a unit in the Far East, in the geographical region of the present China, and were not immigrants from the Middle East.

2 *The Peking Man*

Man makes his appearance in the Far East at a time when remains in other parts of the world are very rare and are disputed. He appears as the so-called "Peking Man", whose bones were found in caves of Chou-k'ou-tien south of Peking. The Peking Man is vastly different from the men of today, and forms a special branch of the human race, closely allied to the Pithecanthropus of Java. The formation of later races of mankind from these types has not yet been traced, if it occurred at all. Some anthropologists consider, however, that the Peking Man

possessed already certain characteristics peculiar to the yellow race.

The Peking Man lived in caves; no doubt he was a hunter, already in possession of very simple stone implements and also of the art of making fire. As none of the skeletons so far found are complete, it is assumed that he buried certain bones of the dead in different places from the rest. This burial custom, which is found among primitive peoples in other parts of the world, suggests the conclusion that the Peking Man already had religious notions. We have no knowledge yet of the length of time the Peking Man may have inhabited the Far East. His first traces are attributed to a million years ago, and he may have flourished in 500,000 B.C.

3 The Palaeolithic Age

After the period of the Peking Man there comes a great gap in our knowledge. All that we know indicates that at the time of the Peking Man there must have been a warmer and especially a damper climate in North China and Inner Mongolia than today. Great areas of the Ordos region, now dry steppe, were traversed in that epoch by small rivers and lakes beside which men could live. There were elephants, rhinoceroses, extinct species of stag and bull, even tapirs and other wild animals. About 50,000 B.C. there lived by these lakes a hunting people whose stone implements (and a few of bone) have been found in many places. The implements are comparable in type with the palaeolithic implements of Europe (Mousterian type, and more rarely Aurignacian or even Magdalenian). They are not, however, exactly like the European implements, but have a character of their own. We do not yet know what the men of these communities looked like, because as yet no indisputable human remains have been found. All the stone implements have been found on the surface, where they have been brought to light by the wind as it swept away the loess. These stone-age communities seem to have lasted a considerable time and to have been spread not only over North China but over Mongolia and Manchuria. It must not be assumed that the stone age came to an end at the same time everywhere. Historical accounts have recorded, for instance, that stone implements were still in use in Manchuria and eastern Mongolia at a time when metal was known and used in western Mongolia and northern China. Our knowledge about the palaeolithic period of Central and South China is still extremely limited; we have to wait for more excavations before anything can be said. Certainly, many implements in this area were made of wood or more probably bamboo, such as we still find among the non-Chinese tribes of the south-west and of South-East Asia. Such implements, naturally, could not last until today.

About 25,000 B.C. there appears in North China a new human type, found in upper layers in the same caves that sheltered Peking Man. This type is beyond doubt not Mongoloid, and may have been allied to the Ainu, a non-Mongol race still living in northern Japan. These, too, were a palaeolithic people, though some of their implements show technical advance. Later they disappear, probably because they were absorbed into various populations of central and northern Asia. Remains of them have been found in badly explored graves in northern Korea.

4 The Neolithic age

In the period that now followed, northern China must have gradually become arid, and the formation of loess seems to have steadily advanced. There is once more a great gap in our knowledge until, about 4000 B.C., we can trace in North China a purely Mongoloid people with a neolithic culture. In place of hunters we find cattle breeders, who are even to some extent agriculturists as well. This may seem an astonishing statement for so early an age. It is a fact, however, that pure pastoral nomadism is exceptional, that normal pastoral nomads have always added a little farming to their cattle-breeding, in order to secure the needed additional food and above all fodder, for the winter.

At this time, about 4000 B.C., the other parts of China come into view. The neolithic implements of the various regions of the Far East are far from being uniform; there are various separate cultures. In the north-west of China there is a system of cattle-breeding combined with agriculture, a distinguishing feature being the possession of finely polished axes of rectangular section, with a cutting edge. Farther east, in the north and reaching far to the south, is found a culture with axes of round or oval section. In the south and in the coastal region from Nanking to Tonking, Yünnan to Fukien, and reaching as far as the coasts of Korea and Japan, is a culture with so-called shoulder-axes. Szechwan and Yünnan represented a further independent culture.

All these cultures were at first independent. Later the shoulder-axe culture penetrated as far as eastern India. Its people are known to philological research as Austroasiatics, who formed the original stock of the Australian aborigines; they survived in India as the Munda tribes, in Indo-China as the Mon-Khmer, and also remained in pockets on the islands of Indonesia and especially Melanesia. All these peoples had migrated from southern China. The peoples with the oval-axe culture are the so-called Papuan peoples in Melanesia; they, too, migrated from southern China, probably before the others. Both groups influenced the ancient Japanese culture. The rectangular-axe culture of north-west China spread widely, and moved southward, where the Austronesian peoples (from whom the Malays are descended) were its principal constituents, spreading that culture also to Japan.

Thus we see here, in this period around 4000 B.C., an extensive mutual penetration of the various cultures all over the Far East, including Japan, which in the palaeolithic age was apparently without or almost without settlers.

5 The eight principal prehistoric cultures

In the period roughly around 2500 B.C. the general historical view becomes much clearer. Thanks to a special method of working, making use of the ethnological sources available from later times together with the archaeological sources, much new knowledge has been gained in recent years. At this time there is still no trace of a Chinese realm; we find instead on Chinese soil a considerable number of separate local cultures, each developing on its own lines. The chief of these cultures, acquaintance with which is essential to a knowledge of the whole later development of the Far East, are as follows:

(a) *The north-east culture*, centred in the present provinces of Hopei (in which Peking lies), Shantung, and southern Manchuria. The people of this culture were ancestors of the Tunguses, probably mixed with an element that is contained in the present-day Paleo-Siberian tribes. These men were mainly hunters, but probably soon developed a little primitive agriculture and made coarse, thick pottery with certain basic forms which were long preserved in subsequent Chinese pottery (for instance, a type of the so-called tripods). Later, pig-breeding became typical of this culture.

(b) *The northern culture* existed to the west of that culture, in the region of the present Chinese province of Shansi and in the province of Jehol in Inner Mongolia. These people had been hunters, but then became pastoral nomads, depending mainly on cattle. The people of this culture were the tribes later known as Mongols, the so-called proto-Mongols. Anthropologically they belonged, like the Tunguses, to the Mongol race.

(c) The people of the culture farther west, the *north-west culture*, were not Mongols. They, too, were originally hunters, and later became a pastoral people, with a not inconsiderable agriculture (especially growing wheat and millet). The typical animal of this group soon became the horse. The horse seems to be the last of the great animals to be domesticated, and the date of its first occurrence in domesticated form in the Far East is not yet

determined, but we can assume that by 2500 B.C. this group was already in the possession of horses. The horse has always been a "luxury", a valuable animal which needed special care. For their economic needs, these tribes depended on other animals, probably sheep, goats, and cattle. The centre of this culture, so far as can be ascertained from Chinese sources, were the present provinces of Shensi and Kansu, but mainly only the plains. The people of this culture were most probably ancestors of the later Turkish peoples. It is not suggested, of course, that the original home of the Turks lay in the region of the Chinese provinces of Shensi and Kansu; one gains the impression, however, that this was a border region of the Turkish expansion; the Chinese documents concerning that period do not suffice to establish the centre of the Turkish territory.

(d) In the *west*, in the present provinces of Szechwan and in all the mountain regions of the provinces of Kansu and Shensi, lived the ancestors of the Tibetan peoples as another separate culture. They were shepherds, generally wandering with their flocks of sheep and goats on the mountain heights.

(e) In the *south* we meet with four further cultures. One is very primitive, the Liao culture, the peoples of which are the Austroasiatics already mentioned. These are peoples who never developed beyond the stage of primitive hunters, some of whom were not even acquainted with the bow and arrow. Farther east is the Yao culture, an early Austronesian culture, the people of which also lived in the mountains, some as collectors and hunters, some going over to a simple type of agriculture (denshiring). They mingled later with the last great culture of the south, the Tai culture, distinguished by agriculture. The people lived in the valleys and mainly cultivated rice.

The origin of rice is not yet known; according to some scholars, rice was first cultivated in the area of present Burma and was perhaps at first a perennial plant. Apart from the typical rice which needs much water, there were also some strains of dry rice which, however, did not gain much importance. The centre of this Tai culture may have been in the present provinces of Kuangtung and Kuanghsi. Today, their descendants form the principal components of the Tai in Thailand, the Shan in Burma and the Lao in Laos. Their immigration into the areas of the Shan States of Burma and into Thailand took place only in quite recent historical periods, probably not much earlier than A.D. 1000.

Finally there arose from the mixture of the Yao with the Tai culture, at a rather later time, the Yüeh culture, another early Austronesian culture, which then spread over wide regions of Indonesia, and of which the axe of rectangular section, mentioned above, became typical.

Thus, to sum up, we may say that, quite roughly, in the middle of the third millennium we meet in the *north* and west of present-day China with a number of herdsmen cultures. In the *south* there were a number of agrarian cultures, of which the Tai was the most powerful, becoming of most importance to the later China. We must assume that these cultures were as yet undifferentiated in their social composition, that is to say that as yet there was no distinct social stratification, but at most beginnings of class-formation, especially among the nomad herdsmen.

[Illustration: Map 1. Regions of the principal local cultures in prehistoric times. *Local cultures of minor importance have not been shown.*]

6 The Yang-shao culture

The various cultures here described gradually penetrated one another, especially at points where they met. Such a process does not yield a simple total of the cultural elements involved; any new combination produces entirely different conditions with corresponding new results which, in turn, represent the characteristics of the culture that

supervenes. We can no longer follow this process of penetration in detail; it need not by any means have been always warlike. Conquest of one group by another was only one way of mutual cultural penetration. In other cases, a group which occupied the higher altitudes and practiced hunting or slash-and-burn agriculture came into closer contacts with another group in the valleys which practiced some form of higher agriculture; frequently, such contacts resulted in particular forms of division of labour in a unified and often stratified new form of society. Recent and present developments in South-East Asia present a number of examples for such changes. Increase of population is certainly one of the most important elements which lead to these developments. The result, as a rule, was a stratified society being made up of at least one privileged and one ruled stratum. Thus there came into existence around 2000 B.C. some new cultures, which are well known archaeologically. The most important of these are the Yang-shao culture in the west and the Lung-shan culture in the east. Our knowledge of both these cultures is of quite recent date and there are many enigmas still to be cleared up.

The *Yang-shao culture* takes its name from a prehistoric settlement in the west of the present province of Honan, where Swedish investigators discovered it. Typical of this culture is its wonderfully fine pottery, apparently used as gifts to the dead. It is painted in three colours, white, red, and black. The patterns are all stylized, designs copied from nature being rare. We are now able to divide this painted pottery into several sub-types of specific distribution, and we know that this style existed from *c.* 2200 B.C. on. In general, it tends to disappear as does painted pottery in other parts of the world with the beginning of urban civilization and the invention of writing. The typical Yang-shao culture seems to have come to an end around 1600 or 1500 B.C. It continued in some more remote areas, especially of Kansu, perhaps to about 700 B.C. Remnants of this painted pottery have been found over a wide area from Southern Manchuria, Hopei, Shansi, Honan, Shensi to Kansu; some pieces have also been discovered in Sinkiang. Thus far, it seems that it occurred mainly in the mountainous parts of North and North-West China. The people of this culture lived in villages near to the rivers and creeks. They had various forms of houses, including underground dwellings and animal enclosures. They practiced some agriculture; some authors believe that rice was already known to them. They also had domesticated animals. Their implements were of stone with rare specimens of bone. The axes were of the rectangular type. Metal was as yet unknown, but seems to have been introduced towards the end of the period. They buried their dead on the higher elevations, and here the painted pottery was found. For their daily life, they used predominantly a coarse grey pottery.

After the discovery of this culture, its pottery was compared with the painted pottery of the West, and a number of resemblances were found, especially with the pottery of the Lower Danube basin and that of Anau, in Turkestan. Some authors claim that such resemblances are fortuitous and believe that the older layers of this culture are to be found in the eastern part of its distribution and only the later layers in the west. It is, they say, these later stages which show the strongest resemblances with the West. Other authors believe that the painted pottery came from the West where it occurs definitely earlier than in the Far East; some investigators went so far as to regard the Indo-Europeans as the parents of that civilization. As we find people who spoke an Indo-European language in the Far East in a later period, they tend to connect the spread of painted pottery with the spread of Indo-European-speaking groups. As most findings of painted pottery in the Far East do not stem from scientific excavations it is difficult to make any decision at this moment. We will have to wait for more and modern excavations.

From our knowledge of primeval settlement in West and North-West China we know, however, that Tibetan groups, probably mixed with Turkish elements, must have been the main inhabitants of the whole region in which this painted pottery existed. Whatever the origin of the painted pottery may be, it seems that people of these two groups were the main users of it. Most of the shapes of their pottery are not found in later Chinese pottery.

7 *The Lung-shan culture*

While the Yang-shao culture flourished in the mountain regions of northern and western China around 2000 B.C., there came into existence in the plains of eastern China another culture, which is called the Lung-shan culture, from the scene of the principal discoveries. Lung-shan is in the province of Shantung, near Chinan-fu. This culture, discovered only about twenty-five years ago, is distinguished by a black pottery of exceptionally fine quality and by a similar absence of metal. The pottery has a polished appearance on the exterior; it is never painted, and mostly without decoration; at most it may have incised geometrical patterns. The forms of the vessels are the same as have remained typical of Chinese pottery, and of Far Eastern pottery in general. To that extent the Lung-shan culture may be described as one of the direct predecessors of the later Chinese civilization.

As in the West, we find in Lung-shan much grey pottery out of which vessels for everyday use were produced. This simple corded or matted ware seems to be in connection with Tunguse people who lived in the north-east. The people of the Lung-shan culture lived on mounds produced by repeated building on the ruins of earlier settlements, as did the inhabitants of the "Tells" in the Near East. They were therefore a long-settled population of agriculturists. Their houses were of mud, and their villages were surrounded with mud walls. There are signs that their society was stratified. So far as is known at present, this culture was spread over the present provinces of Shantung, Kiangsu, Chekiang, and Anhui, and some specimens of its pottery went as far as Honan and Shansi, into the region of the painted pottery. This culture lasted in the east until about 1600 B.C., with clear evidence of rather longer duration only in the south. As black pottery of a similar character occurs also in the Near East, some authors believe that it has been introduced into the Far East by another migration (Pontic migration) following that migration which supposedly brought the painted pottery. This theory has not been generally accepted because of the fact that typical black pottery is limited to the plains of East China; if it had been brought in from the West, we should expect to find it in considerable amounts also in West China. Ordinary black pottery can be simply the result of a special temperature in the pottery kiln; such pottery can be found almost everywhere. The typical thin, fine black pottery of Lung-shan, however, is in the Far East an eastern element, and migrants would have had to pass through the area of the painted pottery people without leaving many traces and without pushing their predecessors to the East. On the basis of our present knowledge we assume that the peoples of the Lung-shan culture were probably of Tai and Yao stocks together with some Tunguses.

Recently, a culture of mound-dwellers in Eastern China has been discovered, and a southern Chinese culture of people with impressed or stamped pottery. This latter seems to be connected with the Yüeh tribes. As yet, no further details are known.

8 *The first petty States in Shansi*

At the time in which, according to archaeological research, the painted pottery flourished in West China, Chinese historical tradition has it that the semi-historical rulers, Yao and Shun, and the first official dynasty, the Hsia dynasty ruled over parts of China with a centre in southern Shansi. While we dismiss as political myths the Confucianist stories representing Yao and Shun as models of virtuous rulers, it may be that a small state existed in south-western Shansi under a chieftain Yao, and farther to the east another small state under a chieftain Shun, and that these states warred against each other until Yao's state was destroyed. These first small states may have existed around 2000 B.C.

On the cultural scene we first find an important element of progress: bronze, in traces in the middle layers of the Yang-shao culture, about 1800 B.C.; that element had become very widespread by 1400 B.C. The forms of the

oldest weapons and their ornamentation show similarities with weapons from Siberia; and both mythology and other indications suggest that the bronze came into China from the north and was not produced in China proper. Thus, from the present state of our knowledge, it seems most correct to say that the bronze was brought to the Far East through the agency of peoples living north of China, such as the Turkish tribes who in historical times were China's northern neighbours (or perhaps only individual families or clans, the so-called smith families with whom we meet later in Turkish tradition), reaching the Chinese either through these people themselves or through the further agency of Mongols. At first the forms of the weapons were left unaltered. The bronze vessels, however, which made their appearance about 1450 B.C. are entirely different from anything produced in other parts of Asia; their ornamentation shows, on the one hand, elements of the so-called "animal style" which is typical of the steppe people of the Ordos area and of Central Asia. But most of the other elements, especially the "filling" between stylized designs, is recognizably southern (probably of the Tai culture), no doubt first applied to wooden vessels and vessels made from gourds, and then transferred to bronze. This implies that the art of casting bronze very soon spread from North China, where it was first practiced by Turkish peoples, to the east and south, which quickly developed bronze industries of their own. There are few deposits of copper and tin in North China, while in South China both metals are plentiful and easily extracted, so that a trade in bronze from south to north soon set in.

The origin of the Hsia state may have been a consequence of the progress due to bronze. The Chinese tradition speaks of the Hsia *dynasty*, but can say scarcely anything about it. The excavations, too, yield no clear conclusions, so that we can only say that it flourished at the time and in the area in which the painted pottery occurred, with a centre in south-west Shansi. We date this dynasty now somewhere between 2000 and 1600 B.C. and believe that it was an agrarian culture with bronze weapons and pottery vessels but without the knowledge of the art of writing.

Chapter Two

THE SHANG DYNASTY (c. 1600-1028 B.C.)

1 *Period, origin, material culture*

About 1600 B.C. we come at last into the realm of history. Of the Shang dynasty, which now followed, we have knowledge both from later texts and from excavations and the documents they have brought to light. The Shang civilization, an evident off-shoot of the Lung-shan culture (Tai, Yao, and Tunguses), but also with elements of the Hsia culture (with Tibetan and Mongol and/or Turkish elements), was beyond doubt a high civilization. Of the origin of the Shang *State* we have no details, nor do we know how the Hsia culture passed into the Shang culture.

The central territory of the Shang realm lay in north-western Honan, alongside the Shansi mountains and extending into the plains. It was a peasant civilization with towns. One of these towns has been excavated. It adjoined the site of the present town of Anyang, in the province of Honan. The town, the Shang capital from c. 1300 to 1028 B.C., was probably surrounded by a mud wall, as were the settlements of the Lung-shan people. In the centre was what evidently was the ruler's palace. Round this were houses probably inhabited by artisans; for the artisans formed a sort of intermediate class, as dependents of the ruling class. From inscriptions we know that the Shang had, in addition to their capital, at least two other large cities and many smaller town-like

settlements and villages. The rectangular houses were built in a style still found in Chinese houses, except that their front did not always face south as is now the general rule. The Shang buried their kings in large, subterranean, cross-shaped tombs outside the city, and many implements, animals and human sacrifices were buried together with them. The custom of large burial mounds, which later became typical of the Chou dynasty, did not yet exist.

The Shang had sculptures in stone, an art which later more or less completely disappeared and which was resuscitated only in post-Christian times under the influence of Indian Buddhism. Yet, Shang culture cannot well be called a "megalithic" culture. Bronze implements and especially bronze vessels were cast in the town. We even know the trade marks of some famous bronze founders. The bronze weapons are still similar to those from Siberia, and are often ornamented in the so-called "animal style", which was used among all the nomad peoples between the Ordos region and Siberia until the beginning of the Christian era. On the other hand, the famous bronze vessels are more of southern type, and reveal an advanced technique that has scarcely been excelled since. There can be no doubt that the bronze vessels were used for religious service and not for everyday life. For everyday use there were earthenware vessels. Even in the middle of the first millennium B.C., bronze was exceedingly dear, as we know from the records of prices. China has always suffered from scarcity of metal. For that reason metal was accumulated as capital, entailing a further rise in prices; when prices had reached a sufficient height, the stocks were thrown on the market and prices fell again. Later, when there was a metal coinage, this cycle of inflation and deflation became still clearer. The metal coinage was of its full nominal value, so that it was possible to coin money by melting down bronze implements. As the money in circulation was increased in this way, the value of the currency fell. Then it paid to turn coin into metal implements. This once more reduced the money in circulation and increased the value of the remaining coinage. Thus through the whole course of Chinese history the scarcity of metal and insufficiency of production of metal continually produced extensive fluctuations of the stocks and the value of metal, amounting virtually to an economic law in China. Consequently metal implements were never universally in use, and vessels were always of earthenware, with the further result of the early invention of porcelain. Porcelain vessels have many of the qualities of metal ones, but are cheaper.

The earthenware vessels used in this period are in many cases already very near to porcelain: there was a pottery of a brilliant white, lacking only the glaze which would have made it into porcelain. Patterns were stamped on the surface, often resembling the patterns on bronze articles. This ware was used only for formal, ceremonial purposes. For daily use there was also a perfectly simple grey pottery.

Silk was already in use at this time. The invention of sericulture must therefore have dated from very ancient times in China. It undoubtedly originated in the south of China, and at first not only the threads spun by the silkworm but those made by other caterpillars were also used. The remains of silk fabrics that have been found show already an advanced weaving technique. In addition to silk, various plant fibres, such as hemp, were in use. Woollen fabrics do not seem to have been yet used.

The Shang were agriculturists, but their implements were still rather primitive. There was no real plough yet; hoes and hoe-like implements were used, and the grain, mainly different kinds of millet and some wheat, was harvested with sickles. The materials, from which these implements were made, were mainly wood and stone; bronze was still too expensive to be utilized by the ordinary farmer. As a great number of vessels for wine in many different forms have been excavated, we can assume that wine, made from special kinds of millet, was a popular drink.

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