

The Animal in Shang and Chou Bronze Art

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TWENTY years ago, in an essay entitled "Changing Relationships of Man and Animal in Shang and Chou Myths and Art," I made the following suggestion about the meaning of the animal in Shang and Chou bronze art:

In the earlier period [of Shang and Chou], the mythological animal served as a link between the world of man and the world of the ancestors and the gods. . . . Divination in ancient China—that is, communication with ancestors—was made through the bones of animals. Ritual bronzes were used in connection with ancestor rites and buried with dead lords who went to join their ancestors. It is then completely fitting that these objects were decorated with mythological animals, which served as agents between the world of man and the world of gods and ancestors.¹

The use of mythological animals as agents of communication in decorations on ritual bronzes may be completely fitting, but this phenomenon still requires a more thorough discussion than was possible in that short essay. In the years since its appearance, numerous articles have appeared in which Shang and Chou animal art is discussed, but they furnish scant evidence that my hypothesis has received much attention. In a recent book on Shang civilization

¹ *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica*, 16 (1963), 130–31.

I mentioned the same thesis in passing,² but so far it has provoked only an unenthusiastic response.³ In the present paper I will attempt to give the thesis a more detailed treatment, since I am convinced that it is capable of unlocking the secret of the animal design of the Shang and Chou bronzes, and that this "secret"—if that is what it was—holds the key to some important features of Shang and Chou institutions and thought. David N. Keightley talks about the *t'ao-t'ieh* 饕餮 in this way, perhaps half in jest:

A colleague once asked me if I knew the significance of the *t'ao-t'ieh* "monster mask" found on so many Shang bronzes. I did not. "If you don't understand the *t'ao-t'ieh*," I was told, "you cannot understand the Shang." I still do not understand the *t'ao-t'ieh*; it is one of the numerous enigmas which the inscriptions have not solved. Let the *t'ao-t'ieh* serve as a salutary reminder of our ignorance and the need for caution.⁴

I would not go as far as Keightley's colleague: we *can* understand the Shang without understanding the *t'ao-t'ieh*. But I also think that we *have* understood the *t'ao-t'ieh* for some time, insofar as ancient iconography can ever be understood, and that this understanding serves to strengthen and amplify our knowledge about the Shang in general. In fact, the *t'ao-t'ieh* and the oracle bones are two important links of the same chain.

ANIMAL DESIGNS IN SHANG AND CHOU BRONZE ART

That the decorative art of Shang and Early Western Chou bronzes is characterized by animal design is a fact commonly acknowledged among students of Shang and Chou bronze art.⁵ Developed forms

² *Shang Civilization* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), p. 209.

³ Max Loehr, "The Question of Content in the Decoration of Shang and Chou Bronzes," a paper presented at the Symposium on The Great Bronze Age of China, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, June 2, 1980.

⁴ *Sources of Shang History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 137.

⁵ Cheng Te-k'un, "Animals in Prehistoric and Shang China," *BMFEA*, 35 (1963), 129-38; Li Chi, "Hunting Records, Faunistic Remains, and Decorative Patterns from the Archaeological Site of Anyang," *Kuo-li T'ai-wan Ta-hsüeh k'ao-ku jen-lei hsüeh k'an* (*Bulletin of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, National Taiwan University*), Nos. 9-10 (1957), pp. 10-20.

of the animal design reached their height during the An-yang 安陽 phase of the Shang, but an earlier form of the animal mask, at least the eyes and a facial outline, is already apparent on Middle Shang bronzes, and it may even be related to some of the much earlier decorative designs on black pottery and on jades in prehistoric cultures of the eastern coast.⁶ By Late Shang (An-yang) and early Western Chou times, the animal design had become highly complex and varied; the animal designs listed by Jung Keng 容庚 in his *Shang-Chou yi-ch'i t'ung-k'ao* 商周彝器通考 include: the *t'ao-t'ieh* design, the *t'ao-t'ieh* design composed of banana leaves, the *k'uei* 夔 design, double-headed *k'uei*, triangular *k'uei*, dragon with two tails, curling dragon, dragon, *ch'iu* 虯, rhinoceros, owl, hare, cicada, silkworm, turtle, fish, bird, phoenix, elephant, deer, curling *k'uei*, *k'uei* in a leaf, frog and algae design, and so on.⁷ Among the common animals seen on An-yang bronzes, there are, in addition, the following: ox, water buffalo, sheep, tiger, bear, horse, and boar (Li Chi, pp. 12-15).

From the names of the animals enumerated above, one sees clearly two kinds of animals in these designs. One consists of those whose identity with real-world animals is apparent; these include the rhinoceros, owl, hare, cicada, silkworm, turtle, fish, bird, elephant, tiger, deer, frog, ox, water buffalo, sheep, bear, horse, and boar. The other kind includes those whose real-world identity is not apparent; these must be referred to by the mythological names found in ancient texts. The following are particularly prominent (Figure 1):

A. *T'ao-t'ieh*. The third-century B.C. book *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 呂氏春秋 (in the chapter entitled "Hsien-shih lan 先識覽") refers to "the *t'ao-t'ieh*, conspicuous on Chou [or Hsia, in another version] dynasty *ting* 鼎 (-tripods), which has a head but is bodiless. It tries to devour a man but before it can swallow him his own body is destroyed. [This image was used] to illustrate the principle of just

⁶ Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫, "Chūgoku kodai no jūmemmon o megutte 中國古代の獸面紋をめぐって," *Myūjiamu* (Museum), No. 301 (1976), pp. 17-28; Hayashi Minao, "Sen Inshiki no gyokki bunka 先殷式の玉器文化," *Myūjiamu*, No. 334 (1979), pp. 4-16; Wu Hung 巫鴻, "Yi-tsu tsao-ch'i te yü-shih tiao-k'o 一組早期的玉石雕刻," *Meishu yanjiu* 美術研究, 1 (1979), 64-70; Jessica Rawson, *Ancient China: Art and Archaeology* (London: The British Museum, 1980), p. 78.

⁷ *YCHP* Monograph No. 17 (Peking: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1941).

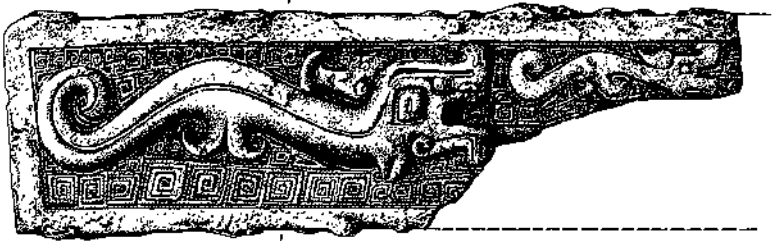
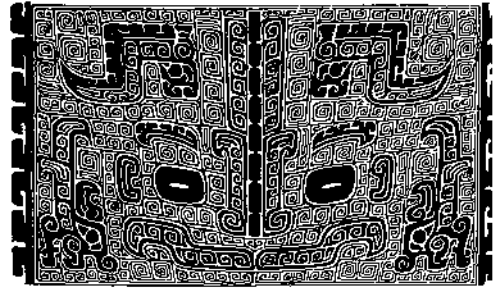
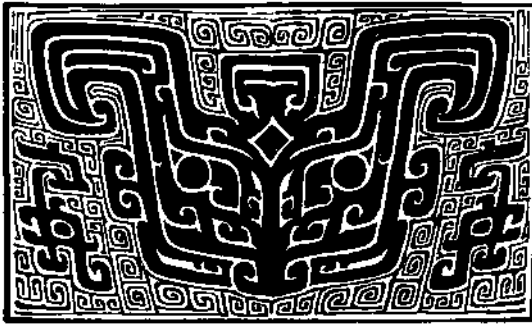


Fig. 1: Mythological animals in Shang bronze decorative designs. *Top row: t'ao t'ieh; second row: fei-yi; third row: k'uei; bottom row: lung* (from Li Chi, see nn. 9 and 47).

deserts."⁸ Basing themselves on this description, traditional Chinese antiquarians since the Northern Sung Dynasty (twelfth century) have identified the mythicized animal mask commonly encountered on Shang and Chou bronzes with the *t'ao-t'ieh*. Under the category of *t'ao-t'ieh*, Jung Keng in his *Shang-Chou yi-ch'i t'ung-k'ao* mentioned above listed the following categories of animal designs: animal head with nose, eyes, open mouth, and heavy eyebrows; animal with body curling downward tail-like and feet next to the mouth; animal with upright eyebrows; animal without body; animal with eyebrows, nose, and mouth formed by square spirals; animal with knife forms on the sides; animal with downward curling eyebrows; animal with upward curling eyebrows; animal with square eyebrows, nose, and a mouth filled with square spirals; animal without nose and with square spirals between eyebrows and eyes; animal with body split into two halves from head to tail, with the lower half curling upwards; animal composed of three rows of square spirals; animal composed of two rows of square spirals below and a third row of knife forms on top; animal with a body in the shape of a knife in the upper half and a row of hooks in the lower half; animal with torso and a single leg together with upward curling tail.

B. *Fei-yi* 肥遺. As stated above, *t'ao-t'ieh* has been the name given by antiquarians to animal designs whether or not the body of the animal is also depicted. The *Shan-hai ching* 山海經 (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas*) (compiled during the first millennium B.C.), in its "Pei-shan ching 北山經" chapter, describes "a snake with one head but two bodies, which is called *fei-yi* and which when seen causes drought in the land." Li Chi 李濟 suggests the use of the name *fei-yi* for the animal design on bronzes that consists of an animal head at the center in full face with two elongated bodies each extending to one side.⁹

C. *K'uei*. According to *Shuo-wen* 說文 (compiled A.D. 100) *k'uei* is the name of a kind of "divine spirit, looking like a dragon with a single foot." This beast is described in *Shan-hai ching* ("Ta-huang

⁸ (Hangchow: Che-chiang shu-chü, 1901), 16, "Hsien-shih lan," p. 3.

⁹ *Yin-hsiü ch'u-t'u ch'ing-t'ung chia-hsing ch'i chih yen-chiu* 殷虛出土青銅斝形器之研究, *Ku-ch'i-wu yen-chiu chuan-k'an* No. 3, *Archaeologia Sinica*, NS, (Nankang: Academia Sinica, 1968), pp. 69-70.

tung ching 大荒東經”) as “looking like a bull, black, hornless, with a single foot. When it enters into and emerges from the water, there will be a windstorm. It shines like the sun and moon and its voice sounds like thunder. . . . The Yellow Emperor had captured one. He used its skin to make a drum and beat the drum with the bone of a thunder beast. The sound could be heard beyond five hundred li.” In *Chuang Tzu* 莊子 (c.300 B.C.), in the “Ch’iu shui 秋水” chapter a *k’uei* is quoted as talking to a *hsüan* 蚺, another divine animal, perhaps a millipede, about his own jumping around with “a single foot.” Traditionally, antiquarians use the name *k’uei* to refer to the animal design that is the side profile of a mythological (i.e., unidentifiable) animal with only a single visible leg, foot, or claw. (The same design with two or more legs, feet, or claws would be called a *lung* 龍.)

D. *Lung*. The most common mythical animal mentioned in ancient texts is *lung*, or “dragon,” but precise description of its morphology is lacking. *Shuo-wen* describes it as “at the head of scaled reptiles. It is sometimes dark, sometimes bright; sometimes small, sometimes big; sometimes short, sometimes long. It ascends to heaven at the spring solstice, and dives into the water at the autumn solstice.” Wen I-to 聞一多, in a treatise discussing such concepts as “the intertwined *lung*” or “the pair of *lung*,” gives the following description:

the *lung* resembles a horse, so that the horse is sometimes referred to as the *lung*. Sometimes the *lung* resembles a dog, which is thus also called *lung*. . . . In addition, a kind of *lung* with scales resembles the fish, a kind with wings resembles the bird, and a kind with horns resembles the deer. As to the various kinds of reptiles that are often confused with the *lung*, they need not even be mentioned.¹⁰

Since the form of the *lung* is so flexible and varied, the antiquarians have used the term very flexibly also: all animals on bronze designs that cannot be identified with real-world animals, and also cannot be referred to by the names of any of the other mythological creatures (such as *t’ao-t’ieh*, *fei-yi*, or *k’uei*) are, thus, *lung* or dragons.

E. *Ch’iu*. The *ch’iu* is apparently a special kind of *lung*. It is a *lung* with horns according to *Shuo-wen* but it is a *lung* without horns

¹⁰ “Fu hsi k’ao 伏羲考,” in *Shen-hua yü shih* 神話與詩 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1956), p. 25.

according to the commentary of Wang Yi 王逸 (early second century) on "Li sao 離騷."

These (and other) names for mythical animals are found in ancient texts, and modern scholars have adopted them to label specific animal designs on Shang and Chou bronzes. Have they applied the names correctly? If a Shang or Chou man were to read our antiquarian works would they have recognized these names and approved their usage? These are unanswerable questions.

But the following facts are firm as far as the animal designs on Shang and Chou bronze art are concerned. One, these designs occur in large numbers and constitute the majority of decorative designs in Shang and early Western Chou bronze art. Two, they include a large variety of animals, both those that can be identified with real world animals and those that can only be described with names of mythological animals in ancient texts. In addition, two other characteristics must be mentioned in connection with the Shang and early Western Chou animal art:

1. The animal designs on Shang and Chou bronzes often—though far from always—occur in pairs and are placed on the surface of the object in a symmetrical arrangement. The basic component of a bronze decor is a band of animal designs that circles the vessel. The band is divided into units by flanges, each unit being filled with an animal in profile. When the head of the animal profile is pointed toward the left, the animal profile in the adjoining unit on the left is often pointed toward the right, resulting in the joining together of two side views of the animal head separated by the flange at the center. Viewed from the center line, the two animal profiles may be described either as a single animal split into two halves each spreading sideways or as two animals joined together along the median line of the face. Thus, the *t'ao-t'ieh* and the *fei-yi* can both be looked at either as two animals joined together or as a single animal split apart. This point will be discussed later.

2. On a small number of Shang and possibly early Western Chou bronzes both human and animal figures occur together. The best known of these are the pair of *yu* 卣 in the Sumitomo¹¹ and the Musée

¹¹ Umehara Sueji 梅原末治, *Shinshū sen'oku seishō* 新修泉屋清賞 (*The Collection of Old Bronzes of Sumitomo*), 2 vols., rev. ed. (Kyoto: Sen'oku Museum, 1971), pp. 62-65.

Cernuschi¹² collections. A little man is depicted on the *yu* as hugging a tiger-like animal, and his head is placed under the open mouth of the animal. In addition, the man-beast theme is seen on a bronze *kuang* 觥¹³ and a bronze knife in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.;¹⁴ on the handle of a square-*ting* found in the 1930s in the eastern sector of the Shang royal cemetery in An-yang;¹⁵ on the face of a bronze ax in the tomb of Shang's Lady Hao 婦好 at Hsiao-t'un 小屯, An-yang, excavated in 1976;¹⁶ and on the surface of a bronze *tsun* 尊 unearthed in Fu-nan 阜南, Anhwei, in 1957.¹⁷ Other than the fact that man and beast occur together, these bronze artifacts share other features in their decor: the animals' mouths are open and the human head is below or close to the mouth; the human head or body is perpendicular to the axis of the animal head or body; and the animal designs all appear to be depictions of the tiger. Important variations also occur. A single animal is shown with the man in the Kyoto, Paris, and Washington pieces, and the three other pieces all feature two animal profiles facing each other, with the human head sandwiched between their open jaws; on some pieces for the human only a head is shown, whereas on the other pieces the human figure is complete with a body; on the *yu* pieces the human and the animal embrace, but on all other pieces they are separate (Figure 2).

Any interpretive theory aiming to account for the meaning of the animal design on Shang and Chou bronzes should explain all of the above characteristics and not just some of them. In other words, the issue of the animal design involves not a single question but a series of questions: Why did the bronze makers of Shang and Chou use animal designs on their decorations? What functions did these designs serve in Shang ideology? Why was there such a variety?

¹² Vadime Elisséeff, *Bronzes archaïques chinois au Musée Cernuschi*, 1 (Paris: L'Asiatheque, 1977), 120-31.

¹³ John A. Pope, et al, *Freer Chinese Bronzes*, 1 (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1967), No. 45.

¹⁴ According to photographs taken by the author.

¹⁵ Ch'en Meng-chia 陳夢家, "Yin tai t'ung-ch'i 殷代銅器," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報, No. 7 (1954), pp. 15-59.

¹⁶ "An-yang Yin-hsü wu-hao mu ti fa-chueh 安陽殷墟五號墓的發掘," *Kaogu xuebo* (1977), No. 2, Pl. 13: 2.

¹⁷ Ko Chieh-p'ing 葛介屏, "Anhwei Fu-nan fa-hsien Yin-Shang shih-tai te ch'ing-t'ung-ch'i 安徽阜南發現殷商時代的青銅器," *WW* (1959), No. 1, inside cover.

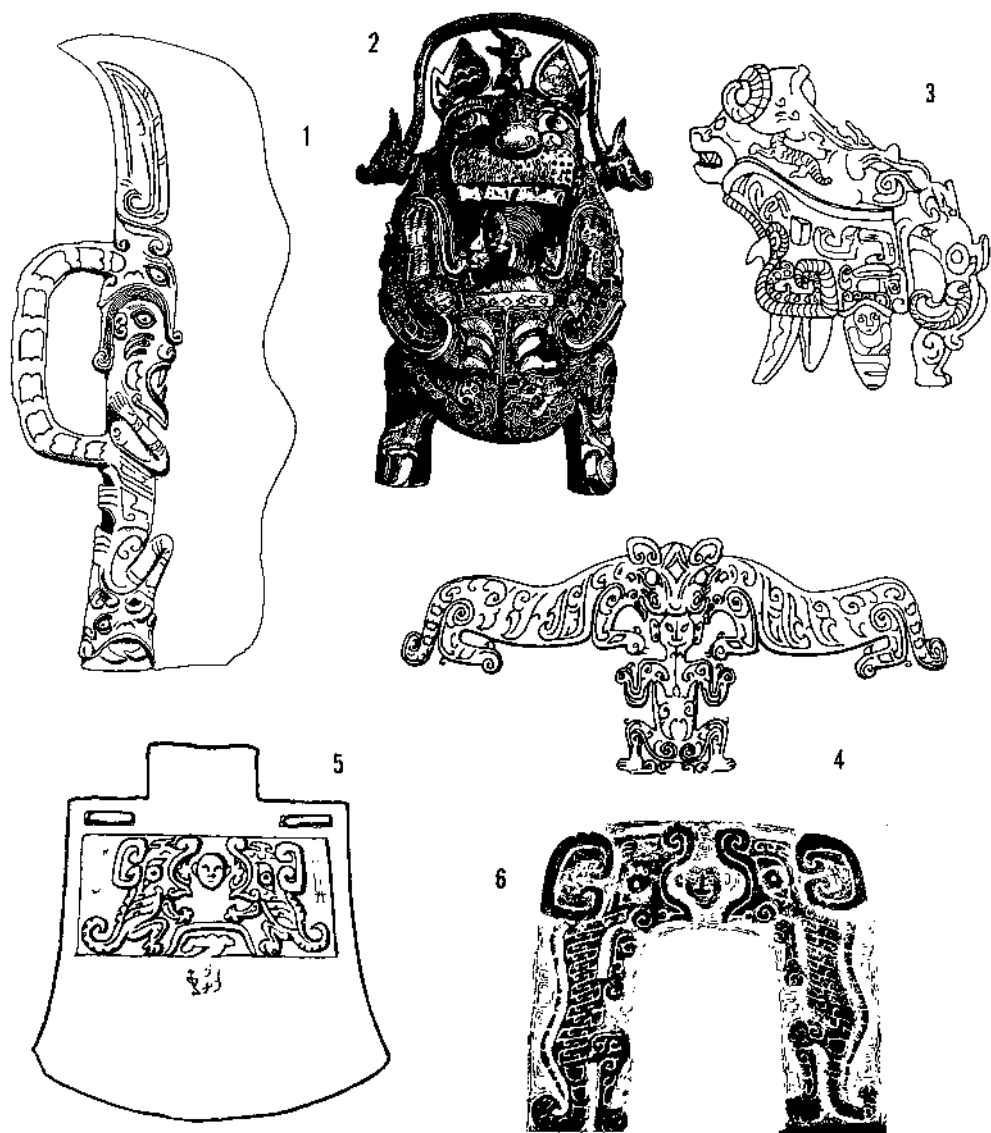


Fig. 2: Man-and-Beast motif in Shang bronze art. 1. Freer knife (from Hentze, see n. 41). 2. Sumitomo yu (from Hentze). 3. Freer kuang (from Chang, *Archaeology of Ancient China* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press 1977], Fig. 182). 4. Fu-nan tsun (from Douglas Fraser, "Early Chinese artistic influence in Melanesia?" in *Early Chinese Art and Its Possible Influence in the Pacific Basin*, ed. N. Barnard [New York: Intercultural Arts Press, 1972], p. 646). 5. Fu Hao tomb ax (redrawn from report in n. 16 by Wu Hung). 6. Ssu Mu Wu ting (from Li Chi, *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization* [Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1967], Pl. 1).

Why do they often appear in pairs? Why do they sometimes occur together with humans? Why do man and beast adopt the distinctive formal interrelationship characterized above?

THE MEANING OF THE ANIMAL DESIGN

Is there "meaning" in the animal designs on Shang and Chou bronzes? By this I refer to the iconographic meaning invested in the animal forms by the Shang and Chou artists. Most students of ancient Chinese bronzes believe that there is such meaning, and past studies—too many to be enumerated here—have pointed either to familiar "totems" or to mythical deities that are represented by specific animals, but these efforts have suffered from a lack of contemporary documents linking specific designs with specific "totems" or deities. On the other hand, a minority opinion (with forceful advocates) holds that the animal had developed out of geometric forms, as an afterthought, as it were, and therefore has no meaning. The most often quoted lines advocating such a position are those of my senior colleague at Harvard, Max Loehr:

If the ornaments on Shang bronzes came into being as sheer design, form based on form alone, configurations without reference to reality or, at best, with dubious allusions to reality, then, we are almost forced to conclude, they cannot have had any ascertainable meaning—religious, cosmological, or mythological—meaning, at any rate, of an established, literary kind. Quite possibly these ornaments were iconographically meaningless, or meaningful only as pure form—like musical forms and therefore unlike literary definitions.¹⁶

The contrasting positions are clear, and a resolution easily suggests itself. I believe we may approach this from two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, we should be able to ascertain the historical sequence of the development of the animal designs to see if indeed geometric form alone has temporal precedence. On the other hand, we can propose an iconographic theory that is convincingly based on facts. On the first point, we shall simply and straightforwardly state that zoomorphic decorative designs not only occurred as early as the earliest-known decorative designs on ancient Chinese bronzes, but may even be traceable to the neolithic period,

¹⁶ Max Loehr, *Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China* (New York: The Asia Society, 1968), p. 13.

as mentioned earlier. Here we will concentrate on the second point, namely to present a theory of meaning that scholars may be reasonably expected to find convincing. Such a theory should result from a simple and straightforward reading of the textual and archaeological facts, and it should take care of *all* the characteristic features of the animal design enumerated above. I believe such a theory exists.

In fact, explanations of the meaning of both the bronze ritual vessel and their animal decoration are furnished by the ancient Chinese themselves in pre-Ch'in texts. In the "Ch'u Yü 楚語" section of *Kuo-yü* 國語 (*Narrative of the States*, fourth century B.C. with later additions), King Chao of Ch'u 楚昭王 (515-489), puzzled by the *Shu-ching* 書經's statement about the separating of Heaven from Earth, is quoted as having asked his minister: "If it had not been thus, would the people have been able to ascend to Heaven?" To which the minister Kuan She Fu 觀射父, after answering in the negative, supplies his own metaphorical explanation. The first part of his explanation as summarized by Derk Bodde follows:

Anciently, men and spirits did not intermingle. At that time there were certain persons who were so perspicacious, single-minded, and reverential that their understanding enabled them to make meaningful collation of what lies above and below, and their insight to illumine what is distant and profound. Therefore the spirits would descend into them. The possessors of such powers were, if men, called *hsi* 覡 (shamans), and, if women, *wu* 巫 (shamanesses). It is they who supervised the positions of the spirits at the ceremonies, sacrificed to them, and otherwise handled religious matters. As a consequence, the spheres of the divine and the profane were kept distinct. The spirits sent down blessings on the people, and accepted from them their offerings. There were no natural calamities.¹⁶

The Chinese original of this passage used two words, *wu* 物 (animal offerings), and *ch'i* 器 (ritual vessels), in such a way as to make it clear that the shamans and shamanesses were instrumental in the communication between Heaven and Earth, or between the ancestral spirits and other deities and the living people, and also that both the vessels and the *wu*-animal offerings were a part of the paraphernalia essential for the performance of the Heaven-Earth communicating service.

¹⁶ Bodde, "Myths of Ancient China," in *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel N. Kramer (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 390.

If the bronze ritual vessels were invested with a purpose such as helping in the ritual of bringing the dead and the living together, might not the animal designs on them be an essential part of the paraphernalia? This question has been clearly answered in *Tso chuan* 左傳, third year of Duke Hsuan 宣公 (606 B.C.). In that year, the King Chuang 莊王 of Ch'u went on a military expedition against the Jung tribe of Lu-hun 陸渾之戎. When he reached the Lo 雒 River he halted to view his troops near the Chou capital. King Ting 定王 of Chou sent Wang-sun Man 王孫滿 to cordially receive the King of Ch'u, who, impudently, asked Wang-sun about the size and the weight of the *ting*-tripod, the royal symbol. Wang-sun Man's pointed reply began as follows:

Ting-tripods do not matter, virtue does. In the past when the Hsia Dynasty was distinguished for its virtue, the distant regions put into pictures their distinctive *wu* 物, and the nine pastors sent in the metal of their provinces. The *ting*-tripods were cast, with representations on them of those *wu*. All the *wu* were represented, and [instructions were given] of the preparations to be made in reference to them, so that the people might know [the distinctions] between the helping and the harming spirits. Thus the people when they went among the rivers, marshes, hills, and forests, did not meet with the injurious things, and the hill-spirits, monstrous things, and water-sprites, did not meet with them [to do them injury]. Hereby a harmony was secured between the high and the low [or the Heaven and the Earth], and all enjoyed the blessings of Heaven.²⁰

This passage has been interpreted variously,²¹ but the above translation represents a very simplified and straightforward literal interpretation. To paraphrase it, it means that the Hsia cast the bronze tripods and put the images of the *wu* on them so that living people would realize which animals were helping people to cross from Earth to Heaven and which animals were not helpful or were even harmful. Thus, Wang-sun Man as much as told us that among the animals are some which are capable of helping the shamans and the shamanesses in their task of communicating between Heaven and Earth, and that the images of these animals were cast on ancient bronze ritual vessels. This was a relevant point in Wang-sun Man's

²⁰ Based on the translation by James Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew, with the Tso Chuen*, Vol. V of *The Chinese Classics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), p. 293.

²¹ E.g., Chiang Shao-yuan 江紹原, *Chung-kuo ku-tai li-hsing chih yen-chiu* 中國古代旅行之研究 (1935; rpt. Taipei: Shangwu, 1966).

reply to the King of Ch'u because he concluded by saying that the King of Chou was still very much in touch with Heaven!

The key word in the *Tso chuan* passage is *wu* 物, which is translated, not as "objects," but as "animal offerings" or "animals to help in Heaven-Earth crossings." This reading is based on two facts. First, on the ancient vessels themselves we see no "objects" but animal images, which have to be the "representations on them of those *wu*" referred to in *Tso chuan*. Second, the passage made it clear that the purpose of the casting of tripods with *wu* images on them is such that "a harmony was secured between the Heaven and the Earth and all enjoyed the blessing of Heaven," which conforms completely with the statement of *Kuo-yü* discussed earlier concerning the function of the bronze vessels. If the bronze ritual vessels were a part of the shamanistic paraphernalia in the Heaven-Earth crossing task, it should come as no surprise that images of animals who were helpers in this task were cast on the vessels.

Can the word *wu* be used in this way? The word appears in *Tso chuan* some five or six dozen times and was used in various ways but "animals with power" or "animal offerings" was the meaning on many occasions. Under the entry for the tenth year of Duke Ting 定公 (500 B.C.) we read that "the armor of the Shu-sun Shih 叔孫氏 are [decorated with] *wu* 物." According to what we know of ancient armor, the decor could only be animal designs, not "objects." Under the entry for the thirty-second year of Duke Chuang 莊公 (662 B.C.), is the following passage:

In autumn, in the seventh month, there was the descent of a spirit in Hsin 莘. King Hwei 惠王 asked Kuo 過, the historiographer of the Interior, the reason for it, and he replied: "When a state is about to flourish, intelligent spirits descend in it, to survey its virtue. When it is going to perish, spirits also descend in it, to behold its wickedness. . . ." The King then asked what should be done in the case of this spirit, and Kuo replied, "Present to it its own proper *wu* 物, which are those proper to the day on which it came."²²

The *wu* here is usually translated as "offerings," which varied according to the spirits involved and the days in question. These documentary data, recalling the passage in *Kuo-yü*, have enabled us to understand that the sacrificial animals were the same ones which

²² Based on the translation by James Legge, p. 120.

had the power to help the shamans and the shamanesses in their communication task, and to make animal offerings was a concrete means of achieving the communication between Heaven and Earth, the dead and the living.²³ We have, thus, come to the inevitable conclusion that the animal designs on Shang and Chou bronzes are iconographically meaningful as the images of the various animals that served as the helpers of shamans and shamanesses in the task of Heaven-Earth, dead-living intercommunication.

Earlier, in connection with *lung* or dragon, we mentioned the phrase "a pair of *lung*." This appears repeatedly in *Shan-hai ching*, where the term is invariably associated with agents bringing messages back and forth between Heaven and Earth. In its "Ta-huang hsi ching 大荒西經" chapter we read about the well-known deed of Ch'i 啟 (or K'ai 關), the second sovereign of the Hsia Dynasty:

Beyond the sea in the southwest, south of the Red River, and west of the shifting sands, a man wears two green snakes on his ears and rides on two *lung*-dragons, and his name is K'ai, the Lord of Hsia. K'ai ascended to Heaven three times to have an audience [with God] and he descended with the [poems and songs] "*Chiu-pien* 九辯" and "*Chiu-ko* 九歌."²⁴

The same figure is seen also in the "Hai-wai hsi ching 海外西經" chapter, where he is again described as riding on two *lung*-dragons. Clearly K'ai was a hero who brought heavenly music and poetry down to our world, and in that role he was a shaman helped by two snakes and two dragons.

These dragons and snakes were also standard equipment for the god's agents in the four directions (Figure 3):

East: "In the east is Kou Mang 句芒, who has the body of a bird and the face of a human, and rides on two *lung*-dragons" ("Hai-wai tung ching").

²³ Cf. Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年, "Pa Ch'en P'an chün 'Ch'un-ch'iu Kung shih yü yü T'ang shuo' 跋陳槃君春秋公矢魚于棠說," *CYYY*, 7, No. 2 (1938), 194-97. The character *wu* 物 in the oracle inscriptions of the Shang has not been absolutely identified and is sometimes confused with the character *li* 犁 for plow; see Li Hsiao-ting 李孝定, *Chia-ku wen-tzu chi shih* 甲骨文字集釋, Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Monographs No. 50 (rpt. Taipei, 1970), pp. 317-30.

²⁴ See also the lines, "In the Nine Variations and Nine Songs of Ch'i/The house of Hsia made revelry and knew no restraint," in "Li sao" (translated by David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'ü: The Songs of the South*, [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959], p. 26).

東方白芒



西方蓐收



南方祝融



北方禺疆



Fig. 3: The Agents of the Four Directions in *Shan-hai ching*. Upper left, Kou-mang of East; upper right, Ju-shou of West; lower left, Chu-jung of South; lower right, Yü-chiang of North. (From illustrations in *Shan-hai ching ts'un*, 1895 ed.).

- West: "In the west is Ju Shou 蓐收, who wears a snake on his left ear and rides on two *lung*-dragons" ("Hai-wai hsi ching").
- South: "In the south is Chu Jung 祝融, who has the body of a beast but the face of a human, and rides on two *lung*-dragons" (Hai-wai nan ching").
- North: "In the north is Yü Chiang 禺疆, who has the face of a human but the body of a bird, wears two green snakes on his ears and two green snakes under his feet" [another version: "with black body, hands and feet, riding on two dragons"] ("Hai-wai pei ching").

In his commentary to the *Shan-hai ching*, Kuo P'u 郭璞 (276-324) said that Kou Mang had been sent by Shang Ti 上帝, the Supreme God on High, to bring to Duke Mu of Ch'in 秦穆公 an extra nineteen years of life, and that Ju Shou was the deity who served Ti Shao Hao 帝少皞. The dragons and the snakes presumably were related to their role as God's agents crossing between His world and the Man's. It is to be noted that *Shan-hai ching*, in which references to the *lung*-dragons appear frequently, has been characterized as "a book for shamans in the ancient times."²⁵ The only other book in which the same reference to the two *lung*-dragons appears is *Ch'u tz'u* 楚辭,²⁶ another late-Chou volume tied to the shamanistic tradition.²⁷ Such data on the role of dragons and snakes in the shamanistic task of ascension certainly support the view of the animal

²⁵ Yuan Hsing-p'ei 袁行霈, "Shan-hai ching ch'u t'an 山海經初探," *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 (1979) No. 3, pp. 7-35.

²⁶ Also riding on two dragons was Ho Po 河伯, the God of the Yellow River. See the poem "Ho Po," in "Chiu-ko":

I wander with you by the Nine Mouths of the river
When the storm wind rises and lashes up the waves.
I ride a water chariot with a canopy of lotus;
Two dragons draw it, between two water-serpents.

(Trans. David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u*, p. 42). For additional details on Ho Po, see Wen Ch'ung-yi 文崇一, "'Chiu-ko' chung Ho Po chih yen-chiu 九歌中河伯之研究," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica*, No. 9 (1960), pp. 139-62.

²⁷ See Ling Shun-sheng 凌純聲, "'T'ung-ku t'u-wen yü Ch'u-tz'u 'Chiu-ko' 銅鼓圖文與楚辭九歌," *Chung-yang yen-chiu yuan yuan k'an* (*Annals of Academia Sinica*), 1 (1954), 403-417; Fujino Iwatomo 藤野岩友, *Fukei bungaku ron 巫系文學論* (Tokyo: Daigaku Shobō 大學書房, 1969); Chan Ping-leung, "*Ch'u Tz'u and the Shamanism in Ancient China*," Diss. Ohio State Univ. 1974.

design on the Shang and Chou bronzes also as agents between man and the other world.

Even though ancient documents such as *Kuo-yü*, *Tso chuan*, *Shan-hai ching*, and *Ch'u tz'u* date from late Chou Dynasty, they are generally taken rather seriously as texts containing some facts from Shang and earlier Chou histories, and the religious and cosmological concepts found in them should include some continuities from earlier periods in any event. Insofar as the shamanistic task of crossing worlds and the role of animal helpers are concerned, they are found in oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang. The oracles themselves were, in fact, taken through the bones of animals, which were truly instruments of the Heaven-Earth communication. In addition, Shang Ti or Ti, Supreme God on High, is shown to be served by a number of officials, including "the messenger phoenix."²⁸ The animal images on the Shang and Chou bronzes thus provide their direct documentation.

Modern ethnography shows that all these reconstructed or speculated roles for vessels and for animals indeed exist in societies with shamanism which ethnographers have been able to observe. As Mircea Eliade pointed out,

the shamans also have divinities peculiar to them, unknown to the rest of the people, and to whom they alone offer sacrifices. . . . The majority of these familiar and helping spirits have animal forms. Thus among the Siberians and the Altaïans they can appear in the form of bears, wolves, stags, hares, all kinds of birds (especially the goose, eagle, owl, crow, etc.), of great worms, but also phantoms, wood spirits, earth spirits, hearth spirits, and so on.²⁹

As pointed out by scholars and their shamanistic informants,

the shaman's power rests in his ability to throw himself into a trance at will. . . . The drum and dance simultaneously elevate his spirit and conjure to him his familiars—the beasts and birds, invisible to others, that have supplied him with his power and assist him in his flight. And it is while in his trance of rapture that he performs his miraculous deeds. While in his trance he is flying as a bird to the upper world, or descending as a reindeer, bull or bear to the world beneath.³⁰

²⁸ Ch'en Meng-chia, *Yin-hsü pu-tz'u tsung-shu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Peking: K'o-hsüeh, 1956), p. 572.

²⁹ *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 88-89.

³⁰ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 257.

One of the common ways of summoning the shaman's animal familiars is to offer such animals for sacrifice, from whose bodies the animal spirits are released and undertake their ascent (Figure 4).

Let us give an example here of a shaman's use of the animal spirits to lift him up and over such barriers that he may wish to cross. A Nisan shamaness, a Manchu of Chinese Manchuria, was described in a long narrative as being on a long journey. When she

reached the bank of the Red River . . . she looked around [but] there was no boat to ferry her across and she did not even see the shadow of a person. Consequently there was nothing else to do: she began to murmur, beseeching the spirit:

Eikuli yekuli Great eagle
Eikuli yekuli circling the sky,
Eikuli yekuli silver wagtail
Eikuli yekuli circling the sea,
Eikuli yekuli malicious snake
Eikuli yekuli slithering along the river bank,
Eikuli yekuli eight pythons
Eikuli yekuli going along the Jan River—
Eikuli yekuli Young lord, I myself
Eikuli yekuli want to cross
Eikuli yekuli this river.
Eikuli yekuli All you spirits
Eikuli yekuli lifting me, ferry me across.
Eikuli yekuli Hurry!
Eikuli yekuli Reveal your power!
Eikuli yekuli

Then throwing her drum into the water the shaman herself stood on top of it, and like a whirlwind she crossed the river in an instant.²¹

Later at the end of the journey she reached the city she was heading for. But the gates were closed. She again murmured her chants to conjure up the great soaring bird, sandalwood kingfisher, oakwood badger, nine snakes, eight pythons, small tiger, wolverine, golden wagtail, silver wagtail, flying hawk, lead eagle, many-colored eagle, and vultures. "When she finished, all the spirits rose up in flight and became like clouds and fog" (ibid., p. 67).

These examples of modern accounts of shamanism by themselves do not prove anything for the Shang and Chou Chinese three thousand years ago, but by witnessing actual shamanistic activities

²¹ Margaret Nowak and Stephen Durrant, *The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness: A Manchu Folk Epic* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1977), pp. 62-63.

and the roles of animal familiars in these activities, we are reassured that what the ancient Chinese told us and what we have reconstructed on the basis of archaeological and textual evidence are actually workable systems in human society.

These examples also show us that these animal familiars are no other than the common animals which the shamans and their people know from in everyday life. As Li Chi pointed out, "[the] majority of the animal patterns employed by the decorative artists of this period, whether carving a stone, casting a bronze, inlaying a wooden article, moulding a clay object, polishing a piece of jade, had originally an indigenous and naturalistic background."²² The animals he has named as providing decorative motifs for Shang art include the deer, ox, buffalo, goat, sheep, antelope, rhinoceros, elephant, bear, horse, tiger, boar, and birds, reptiles, insects, amphibians, fishes, and worms. Probably they all served as shaman's helpers and, if the above discussion carries merit, they served for sacrificial purposes. As to the mythological animals such as *t'ao-i'ieh*, *fei-yi*, *k'uei*, and *lung*, they were surely not real-world animals, but apparently they were transformed from naturalistic prototypes of the ox, sheep, tiger, and reptiles. Again as Li Chi has pointed out,

the inlaying technique . . . must have given the artists, when manipulating these mechanically cut units of shells, a sense of freedom never enjoyed by the wood-carvers who had only stumps of wooden timber to deal with. It must be especially true, when the inlaying technicians were faced with the problem as how to delineate a plastic object on a flat background. Their solution was to split a tri-dimensional animal body into two equal halves and arrange the split units in the most symmetrical fashion on the plane of a two-dimensional decorative field. The success of this new arrangement created in the mind of these artists a sense of freedom that led them to indulge their imagination further in this direction; they started to manipulate the different parts of the whole body after this fashion and began to take liberty to transplant the part of the body of one animal on that of the other and vice versa, or exaggerate one part of the animal at the expense of the other part; such imaginative wanderlust was restricted only by the boundary of the decorative field. The decorative artists must have been perfectly delighted with this new sense of freedom; and soon, the sculptors, the potters, the jade carvers, and the bronze founders all followed suit. So the tiger's head may be attached to a simian body, and a pair of horns may be planted on a human skull. . . . Nevertheless, it is important to observe, the elementary materials with

²² Li Chi, "Hunting Records . . .," p. 12.

which these artists worked were all taken from their direct contact with the physical world.³³

DISCUSSION OF OTHER FEATURES OF THE ANIMAL DESIGN

Earlier we described two other characteristic features of the Shang and Chou animal design—that animals often appear in pairs arranged symmetrically on the surface of the object, and that humans occasionally appear with animals in a distinctive relationship. Can the above hypothesis concerning the meaning of the animal also explain these additional features?

Let us begin with the man-beast relationship. One of the earliest references to this theme in ancient Chinese bronze art was made in 1908 by Lo Chen-yü 羅振玉 in describing the Sumitomo piece as “a beast that has grabbed a man and acts as if to devour him.”³⁴ Jung Keng refers to it as the *t'ao-t'ieh shih jen yu* 饕餮食人卣, or “the *yu* wine goblet with a *t'ao-t'ieh* devouring a human” decor,³⁵ a term that seems to have stuck among Chinese antiquarians. The term has to be based on the reading of the man-beast relationship as one of antagonism or worse, which is, of course, consistent with the role assigned to the *t'ao-t'ieh* in *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* about its *shih jen* 食人或 “devouring humans.”³⁶

A closer look at the seven man-beast objects we have, however, discloses no convincing evidence that a devouring act is being depicted. On the Sumitomo and Cernuschi *yu*-vessels the man is shown hugging the beast, his feet firmly planted on the beast's hind feet, and the Fu-nan and An-yang pieces depict a frontal human face wedged between the gaping mouths of the beasts but not within them. We certainly should seek alternative interpretations for the gaping beast's mouth and for the placement of the human head beneath or beside it.

Attention must first be directed to the fact that the man-at-the-

³³ Ibid., p. 16. Cf. T'an Tan-ch'ung 譚旦岡, “T'ao-t'ieh wen te kou-ch'eng 饕餮紋的構成,” *CYYY, chi-k'an wai-pien* (Special No.), 4 (1960), p. 274.

³⁴ *Yung-lu jih cha* 饕餮日札, in *Ch'i-ching k'an ts'ung-k'an* 七經堪叢刊 (1937), ts'e 9, p. 3.

³⁵ Jung Keng, pp. 419-420.

³⁶ As pointed out by Tung Tso-pin, “T'ao-t'ieh shih jen yu 饕餮食人卣,” *Ta-lu tsa-chih* 大陸雜誌, 9 (1954), 35.

gaping-mouth-of-beast motif occurs widely throughout the world. As Nelson Wu has stated,

One common idiom in religious art is the motif of the serpent, an animal associated with water and hibernation. Frequently a composite animal form is employed for this purpose, and the mystical makara [of India] is the most commonly found. These notions may be behind the carving of the Sarpa Gumpha (Serpent Cave) at Udayagiri whose entrance is underneath the cobra hood of the naga motif. Nearby is the Bagh (Tiger) Gumpha, which is entered through the wide open mouth of the beast. Similar usage in separating one world from another is common in other cultures. Temple xxii in Copan, Honduras, with its serpent entrance way, and the *t'ao-t'ieh* motif of Chinese bronzes are other examples half a world apart.³⁷

The view that the gaping mouth of the beast may be an archetypal symbol to separate one world (such as death) from another (such as life) provides a workable hypothesis for our use here, for we look at the animal precisely as the shaman's helper in the crossing from one world to another. In that event, the human depicted could be no other than our shaman who is shown being helped in his crossing task.³⁸ The gaping mouth could be an archetypal motif traceable to man's palaeolithic past, but in the immediate context of Ancient China it could also signify the animal's breath, which the ancient Chinese believed to bring forth wind, and wind was another essential instrument in the Heaven-Earth communication.

Shan-hai ching again furnishes relevant information with regard to the placement of beasts on both sides of the human head and to the origin of wind in the animal's breath. The reference to the wearing of snakes on either one ear or on both ears of the shaman is seen in *Shan-hai ching* on many occasions (see under "Hai-wai hsi ching," "Hai-wai pei ching," "Hai-wai tung ching," "Ta-huang tung ching," "Ta-huang nan ching," "Ta-huang hsi ching," and "Ta-huang pei ching"). A most interesting deity (or shaman) is one referred to in "Ta-huang nan ching" as Pu T'ing Hu Yü 不廷胡余, who wears snakes on both ears, has snakes at each foot, and has a

³⁷ Nelson I. Wu, *Chinese and Indian Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1963), p. 25.

³⁸ Not to be confused with the idea that the *t'ao-t'ieh* represents the shamanistic mask, although our shamans could very well have worn *t'ao-t'ieh* shaped masks. See Jordan Paper, "The Meaning of the T'ao-T'ieh," *History of Religions*, 18 (1978), 18-41; Carl Hentze, "Eine Schamanentracht in ihrer Bedeutung für die Altchinesische Kunst," *IPEK*, 20 (1963), 55-61.

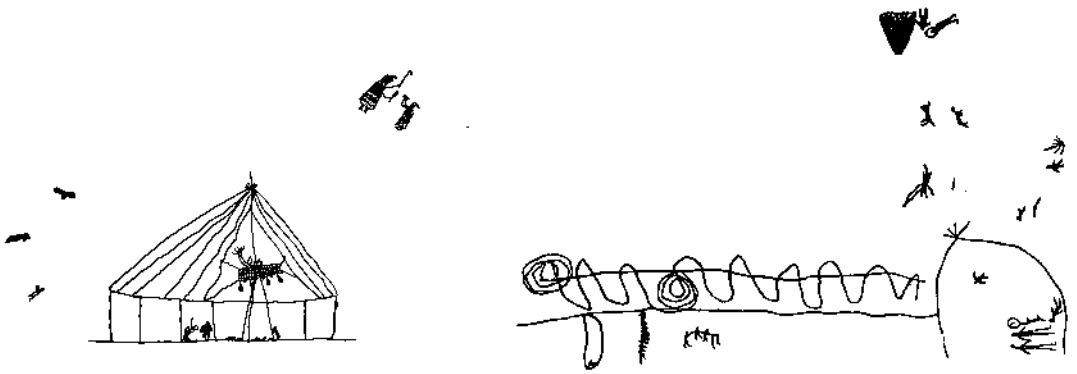


Fig. 4: Animal spirits ascending in rituals, as depicted by the Chukchee of Siberia. *Left*: Autumn sacrifice to Sea Spirit. Sea Spirit and his wife are shown in upper, right corner. Shamans are performing inside the tent, with ritual vessels on the floor. On the left, animal spirits are ascending; one is a bird and another is a fox. *Right*: A funerary rite. Sacrificial animals are shown being offered at right; their spirits are going up to the residence of the death deity. The deceased is shown knocking on his door. (From W. Bogoras, *The Chukchee*, *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. 11 (1909), pp. 317, 530).



Fig. 5: Images of Pu T'ing Hu Yü (*right*) and Yin Yin Hu (*left*) in "Ta-huang nan ching," of *Shan-hai ching* (from illustrations in *Shan-hai ching ts'un*, 1895 ed.).

companion called Yin Yin Hu 因因乎, who is the producer of wind from his mouth (Figure 5). The derivation of wind from animal breath is described in connection with the mythical creature Chu-yin 燭陰 or Chu-lung 燭龍:

The deity of Chung Mountain 鍾山 is called Chu Yin. When it opens its eyes there is day, when it closes the eyes there is night; when it blows breath the winter comes, and when it sucks in air the summer comes; it does not drink, eat, or breathe; when it does breathe there comes wind. Its body is a thousand *li* long, placed east of Wu-ch'i 無啓. Its shape is that it has a human face and a snake body, and its color is red. ("Hai-wai pei ching")

This creature is probably the prototype of the later creator Pan Ku 盤古, who is described in *Wu-yun li-nien chi* 五運歷年記 by Hsu Cheng 徐整 (third century) as one "whose breath brings forth the wind and the clouds."³⁹ As we have mentioned earlier, Shang oracle inscriptions refer to the phoenix as God's messenger, and a single character designates both wind and phoenix in the Shang script. As the four directions each have a special agent riding on two dragons (see above pages 540-42), they also each have a wind.⁴⁰ The animals in the bronze art may have produced wind out of their gaping mouths, and the shamans were helped in their ascent by the wind. The combination of the shamanistic image, his helping animals, and the gaping mouth as the source of the lifting wind on one and the same bronze vessel depicts the communicating act—or even causes that act—in its most complete form.

Whatever the direct link is between the animal mouth and the lifting wind, the placement of the human (possibly shamanistic) head below or beside the animal mouth only serves to suggest the closeness (*not* the antagonism) of the man-beast relationship. As pointed out by Wu and, much earlier, by Carl Hentze,⁴¹ the man-beast motif is prominently shared by the ancient arts of China and of Mesoamerica. Among the ancient Aztecs, for example, every

³⁹ *Wu-yun li-nien chi*, which is no longer extant, is quoted in Ma Su 馬驥, *I shih* 釋史 (Chin-kuei P'u-shih 金匱浦氏 ed., 1889), 1. 2.

⁴⁰ Ch'en Pang-huai 陳邦懷, *Yin-tai she-hui shih-liao cheng-ti'un* 殷代社會史料徵存 (Tientsin: Jenmin, 1959), entry under Ssu-fang feng ming 四方風名.

⁴¹ Carl Hentze, *Objets rituels, croyances et dieux de la Chine antique et de l'Amérique* (Anvers: De Sikkel, 1936); *Die Sakralbronzen und ihre Bedeutung in den Frühchinesischen Kulturen* (Antwerpen: De Sikkel, 1941); *Bronzegerät, Kultbauten, Religion im ältesten China der Shang-Zeit* (Antwerpen: De Sikkel, 1951).

child at birth was given an animal by a shaman, which would for the rest of his life serve as his protector, helper, companion, or alter ego.⁴² In ancient art the alter ego is often shown as an animal carried on the person's back or enveloping the human head under its open mouth. In fact, the alter ego motif is circum-Pacific in its distribution.⁴³ This does not necessarily mean that all alter ego motifs had a single historic origin, but the situation in these other cultures furnishes useful hints insofar as an interpretation of the Chinese case is concerned. To regard the man as shaman and the beast as his helper is certainly a view consistent with the alter ego motif in the other cases where the motif is prominent in art. Another useful idea one can obtain from the New World situation has to do with the apparent fact that all these Chinese beasts depicted with humans are tigers. In the New World the jaguar is the alter ego for the members of the highest class. In the Shang dynasty the kings are sometimes called the highest shamans.⁴⁴ Very possibly these man-beast artifacts of China designate no less a shaman performing his crossing act than the king himself or one of his close kinsmen.

Finally, we come to the symmetrical pairing of the animals in Shang and Chou animal design, which is consistent with the textual usage of *liang lung* 兩龍 or "a pair of dragons." An interpretation of this phenomenon depends on the formulation of an important principle in the composition of the design. This involves the question of whether the animal design on Shang and Chou bronzes with a frontal view is the result of splitting a single animal into two halves and then spreading the two halves laterally on a flat surface, or the result of joining together two animal profiles at the center of the face. The former is apparently the predominant view; H.G. Creel's speculation on this is among the earliest:

The peculiarity of the *t'ao-t'ieh* is that it represents the head of the animal as if it were split in two, and the severed halves laid out on either side, being joined in the middle on a line with the nose. . . . If we take the two halves together they

⁴² Maguel Leon-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1965).

⁴³ Douglas Fraser, *Early Chinese Art and the Pacific Basin: A Photographic Exhibition* (New York: Intercultural Arts Press, 1968).

⁴⁴ Ch'en Meng-chia, "Shang tai te shen-hua yü wu-shu 商代的神話與巫術," *YCHP*, 20. 2 (1936), 532-576.

give a perfectly good *t'ao-t'ieh*, seen from the front, with two eyes, two ears, two horns, and the lower jaw represented twice. But let the reader cover the right-hand half of the picture with his hand. The left half is now a dragon seen from the side.⁴⁵

The "lower jaw" referred to here is more likely an extension of the upper jaw, for the lower jaws of animals are rarely if at all depicted. But the principle speculated upon here is consistent with the common principle of splitting images in the wood carvings of the Northwest coast Indians.⁴⁶

The opposite view, however, is equally plausible, which sees the *t'ao-t'ieh* and the *fei-yi* as two animal profiles joined together at the median axis of the face. Earlier we quoted Li Chi speculating on the origination of the *t'ao-t'ieh* face from the inlay art and the split images. In later writings, Li Chi appeared to be inclining toward the opposite sequence as at least another possibility. In his studies of the decorative animal band seen on bronze *ting*-tripods from Hsiao-t'un 小屯, An-yang, he arranged them into a sequence (which he calls logical if not chronological) beginning with two independent dragons facing each other and ending with a characteristic *fei-yi* band of a single frontal face at the center (Figure 6).⁴⁷

The two views of the *t'ao-t'ieh* and *fei-yi* origins do not have to be mutually exclusive: both could have actually happened. If there is to be a final answer it must be based on much additional archaeological sequencing to demonstrate the actual chronology of the many variations of the motif. But this issue of origin has considerable relevance to Shang cosmology and some bearing on the meaning of the animal design. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, seems to see the technical requirements necessitated by the spreading out of the three-dimensional animal head onto a two-dimensional flat surface as the probable cause of the dualism in Shang cosmology.⁴⁸ A contrary view could easily be that the artistic dualism on Shang

⁴⁵ Herrlee, G. Creel, *The Birth of China* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1937), p. 115.

⁴⁶ Creel, "On the Origins of the Manufacture and Decoration of Bronzes in the Shang Period," *MS*, 1 (1935), 64.

⁴⁷ Li Chi, *Yin-hsiu ch'u-t'u ch'ing-t'ung ting-hsing ch'i chih yen-chiu* 殷虛出土青銅鼎形器之研究, *Ku-ch'i-wu yen-chiu chuan-k'an*, No. 4, *Archaeologia Sinica*, (1970), pp. 81-82.

⁴⁸ "Split representation in the art of Asia and America," in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 245-68.

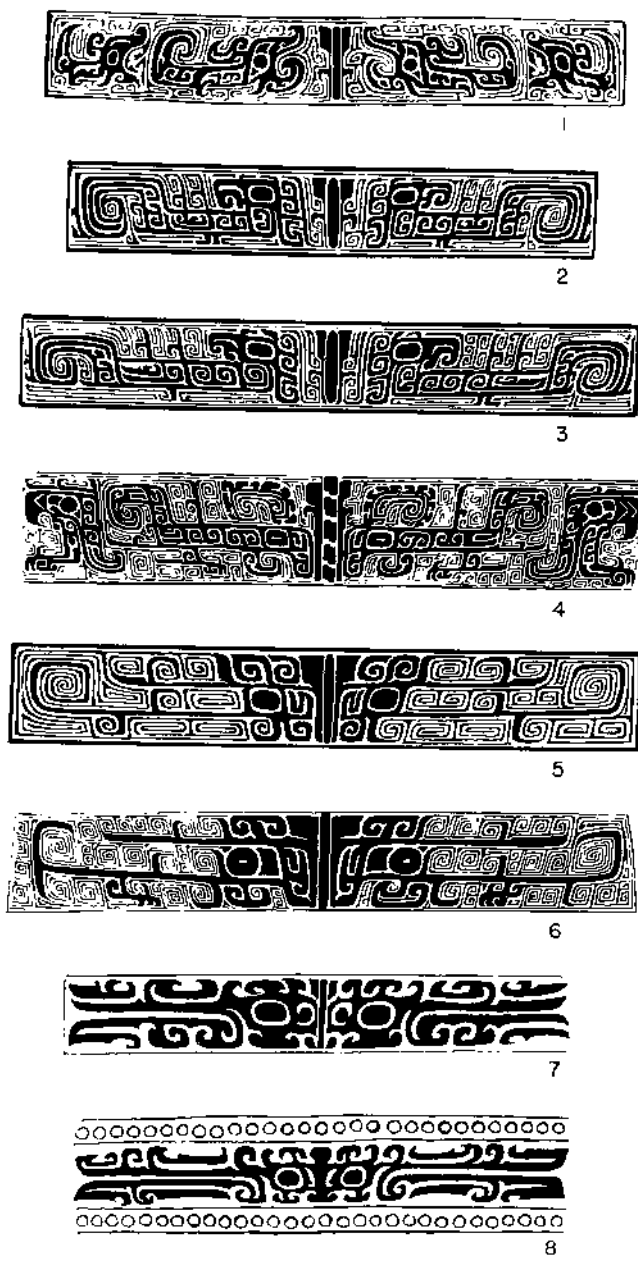


Fig. 6: A "logical sequence," from 1 to 8, of animal design development, as illustrated from decorative band designs on *ting*-tripods of Shang from An-yang (from Li Chi, see n. 47).

bronzes is merely a component, a link, of a dualism that permeated Shang institutions and Shang thought.

A number of dualistic phenomena can already be pointed to in both archaeological and textual data pertaining to the Shang: (1) The palace-temple foundations of the Shang capital at Hsiao-t'un are shown to have a layout consisting of an eastern row and a western row arranged along a north-south axis;⁴⁹ (2) the royal cemetery of the Shang dynasty, where the eleven kings at the end of the dynasty are believed to be buried, is divided into a western sector of seven tombs and an eastern sector of four tombs, separated by a distance of more than a hundred meters;⁵⁰ (3) the oracle inscriptions were engraved on the turtle shells in such a way as to place "positive" inquiries on one side of the shell and "negative" inquiries on the opposite side of the shell;⁵¹ (4) the ritual institutions of the Shang kings at An-yang, according to Tung Tso-pin 董作賓's studies of the oracle-bone inscriptions, belonged to two schools, the Old School and the New School;⁵² and (5) according to Bernhard Karlgren's statistical studies the Shang bronze decorative motifs are divided into A and B styles depending on their pattern of co-occurrence on the same vessels.⁵³

On the basis of these phenomena I proposed in a 1964 essay that dualism is an important key to the study of Shang society and, also, that the dualism of Shang institutions is likely closely related to the division of the royal house into two halves.⁵⁴ I have discussed the latter issue, royal dualism, at some length elsewhere;⁵⁵ space

⁴⁹ Tung Tso-pin, *Chia-ku-hsieh liu-shih nien* 甲骨學六十年, ed. Yen I-p'ing 嚴一萍 (Taipei: Iwen, 1965), p. 30.

⁵⁰ Kao Ch'ü-hsün 高去尋, "The Royal Cemetery of the Yin Dynasty at An-yang," *Bulletin of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, National Taiwan University* (see n. 5), Nos. 13-14 (1959), pp. 1-9.

⁵¹ Chou Hung-hsiang 周鴻翔, *Pu-tz'u tui chen shu-li* 卜辭對貞述例 (Hong Kong: Wanyu, 1969).

⁵² Tung Tso-pin, "Preface," *Yin-hsü wen-tzu* 殷虛文字, *Yi Pien* 乙編 (Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1948).

⁵³ Bernhard Karlgren, "New Studies in Chinese Bronzes," *BMFEA*, 9 (1937).

⁵⁴ "Some Dualistic Phenomena in Shang Society," *JAS*, 24 (1964), 45-61.

⁵⁵ "Shang wang miao-hao hsin k'ao 商王廟號新考," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* 15 (1963), 65-94; "T'an Wang Hai yü Yi Yin te chi-jih ping tsai lun Yin Shang wang-chih 談王亥與伊尹的祭日並再論殷商王制," *ibid.*, 35 (1973), 111-27; "Some Dualistic Phenomena . . ."; "Tien Kan: A Key to the History of the Shang," in *Studies in Early Civilization*, ed. David Roy and T. H. Tsien (Hong Kong: Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 13-14.

does not allow a full summary here, but a general description may suffice. The royal family was, in this view, divided into ten groups, named after the ten Heavenly Stems. These were ritual, political, and endogamous units. The kingship was passed on among the ten groups on a rotatory basis, but these groups were split into two major divisions, one dominated by the stem-Yi group and the other dominated by the stem-Ting group. The division of the royal family suggests explanations for the spatial layouts of the palace-temple complex at Hsiao-t'un and the royal cemetery at Hsi-pei-kang, and it may explain the alternation of the Old and New Schools of the Shang rituals.

The question confronting us is not the Shang system of kingship, which cannot be described adequately here, but whether or not the hypothesis we have presented here can satisfactorily explain the "two-dragon" principle of Shang and Chou art. My answer is yes, precisely because of our understanding of the Shang kingship. When the royal house was divided into two, the royal ancestors were presumably arranged similarly in the other world. When the shamans were to perform their crossing task in the service of the royal family, they must take both halves of the royal house into consideration, and a pair of animal helpers became logical instruments. When the shamans were riding on "two dragons," they in fact, as it were, had their "feet in both boats," attempting to achieve an appropriate social and political balance corresponding to that in the human world.