

## CONCLUSION

The musical culture of the Shang Dynasty (16th-11th century B.C.) has never been clearly understood. According to the classics of the Zhou Dynasty (11th century - 256 B.C.), the major types of instruments that the Zhou people had were already known to the Shang people. This is plausible because archaeological finds shows that the Shang people already had a high culture, and that much of the Zhou culture was inherited from the Shang. However, only four types of instruments have been recovered at Shang sites, namely, qing (磬 "musical stone"), drum, bronze bells, and xun (埙 "ocarina"). It is not certain whether the Shang people also had vertical flutes, double pipes, mouth-organs, zithers and other instruments. Fortunately, through interpretation of the oracle bone graphs (OBG), some of which are quite pictorial, the existence of these instruments in Shang times can be verified. In fact, the OBG (single graphs) and the OBI (oracle bone inscriptions, long sentences) also provide new information about Shang instruments already known to us.

Many of the Shang instruments were not invented by the Shang people. Their pre-Shang prototypes have been depicted in this work. The Shang instruments that have been unearthed, especially those dating from the second half of the Shang period, show great variety of decoration and shape, as well as maturity in workmanship. In fact, Shang qing and xun look more artistic than the later Zhou ones.

I. UNEARTHED INSTRUMENTSA. Qing

More than 30 Shang qing (including broken ones), mostly made of limestone, have been recovered (Chapter Three.III). The OBG 𠄎 (磬 :qing) depicts a triangular qing being suspended (𠄎); the right part of the graph shows a hand holding a mallet (𠄎). Qing were either used singly (特磬 te-qing), or in sets of three or five, each tuned to a special pitch (編磬 bian-qing). It is believed that the qing might have developed from the neolithic stone ploughshare (Ch. Three, I.B), and my interpretation of the OBG 𠄎 (長 :chen) supports this theory. Although many Shang qing show exquisite decorations with the shapes of birds, tigers, and fish (Figs. 16, 17, 19),

some still reveal possible relationships with stone tools (Ch. Three, IV.D). Later in the Zhou period, the qing acquired a "standardized" (basically triangular) shape and set of measurements (Ch. Three, IV.E).

### B. Drum

Two large bronze two-headed barrel drums with a low stand have been found (Figs. 41, 42). Their prototype is believed to be a wooden drum, represented by the graph (𥝒 :gu). The remains of a large wooden drum, found in Large Tomb No. 1217 at Xi Bei Gang, are traditionally thought to suggest an instrument of this type. However, my study shows that the remains might be those of a pole drum-- a large two-headed barrel drum mounted horizontally on a pole fitted into a stand (Ch. Four, V.E). In my opinion, the OBG (𥝒 庸 :yong) depicts the pole drum and the stand; this interpretation results in sensible explanations to many OBI and Zhou texts previously not understood (Ch. Four, V).

### C. Bell

Two types of bronze bells have been found in Shang sites. The most common one is the ling (鈴 clapper bell), usually only a few centimeters tall. It has a small loop on the top, and a clapper in the bell (𥝒). Typologically, the ling was the prototype of later Shang and Zhou bells. However, in the Shang period, the ling was mainly used as a signal instrument rather than as a musical instrument (Ch. Five.II.A). The Shang bells actually used as musical instruments are much larger, weighing from a few pounds to as much as three hundred pounds each. These bells always have a hollow shank, and were either held or mounted with the mouth facing upward when used (𥝒). They were either used singly (mainly the large ones) or in sets of three or five bells (mainly the smaller ones, Ch. Five, II.B and C). In Zhou times, bells of this type, with mouths facing upward, were called nao (鈞), zheng (鉦), or other names (Ch. Five, note 3). In this work they are called shang-bells because I believe that the graph shang (𥝒 = 商) depicts the bell (𥝒) with mouth facing up mounted on a stand (𥝒), and perhaps the Shang people were named after this bell (Ch. Five.IV). Whether the Shang bells were also suspended with mouths facing down, as in the Zhou period, is still open to discussion, though the possibility is great (Ch. Five, V.C).

As far as I know, all Shang bells have a leaf-shaped cross-section (𥝒), the vibration pattern of which enables

each bell to produce two pitches when struck at different positions on the lip of the bell. The scales of Shang music, therefore, might be more complicated than previously expected (Ch. Five.III).

#### D. Xun










Only one type of wind instrument has survived in Shang sites, the xun (埙 ocarina). Shang xun, made of clay, bone, and stone, mostly have five finger holes, and many of them are decorated with tao-tie (animal face) motif, perhaps signifying that they were used by the nobles (Ch. Six.I).

The above four kinds of instruments--qing, bronze drum, bell, and xun--are the only Shang instruments actually unearthed. The existence of some other instruments, fortunately, can indirectly be verified by the graphs that the Shang people inscribed on oracle bones (Ch. One.VII).









## II. SHANG INSTRUMENTS VERIFIED BY OBG









In the past, scholars have successfully interpreted several graphs relating to instruments. These include the graphs 磬 (磬 :qing, "musical stone," Ch. Three.I); 鼓 (鼓 :gu, "drum"--two-headed barrel drum with a low stand, Ch. Four.I); 言 (言 :yan, "vertical flute," Ch. Five.II); 龠 (龠 :he, "small mouth organ," Ch. Six, V.A); 箏 (箏 :yu, "large mouth-organ," Ch. Six, V.B); and 樂 (樂 :yue, "music"--implying the existence of stringed instruments, Ch. Seven.II).

In this work, I have interpreted several more graphs referring to instruments, by examining both their graphic structures and their placement in OBI syntax. These include the graphs 磬 (= 磬 = 磬 :qing, "musical stone," Ch. Three.I); 豐 (豐 :feng, "large-drum," Ch. Four.III); 庚, 庚, 庚 (庚 :geng, "clapper drum," Ch. Four.IV); 庸 (庸 :yong, "pole drum," Ch. Four.V); 令 (令 :ling, "to order," "clapper bell"= 鈴, Ch. Five, II.A1); 設 (設 :she, "bells," Ch. Five, IV.A); 商, 商, 商, 商, 商, 商 (商 :shang, "shang-bell"--

bells with mouths facing upward, Ch. Five, IV.C);  (品 :pin, "ocarina"--the xun, Ch. Six.I);  (管 :guan, or  :yue, both meaning "double pipe," Ch. Six.III);  (系 :xi, "stringed instrument," Ch. Seven.III). My interpretations of the graphs  (Ch. Two, II.B, OBI 55-56) and , , , and  (Ch. Seven, II and III) are of special importance, because these graphs verify that the Shang people did have stringed instruments.

### III. PERFORMANCES

The OBG and OBI also provide information about Shang performances and rituals. Now we know that there was a bin dance, represented by the graph  or  (賓 :bin, "to welcome"), which shows a performer dancing under a building. The purpose of this dance was to welcome the ancestors who were thought to be living with God in Heaven (Ch. Eight, IV.A). The graph  (舞 :wu), traditionally thought to mean "to dance" and "dance," referred only to the rain dance originally (Ch. Eight, IV.B). The graph  (美 :mei, "beautiful"), in my opinion, depicts a person decorated with feathers on his head, and in OBI this graph refers to a feather dance performed for the ancestors (OBI 2 and 19 in Ch. Two); this dance was also performed at exorcisms (OBI 150 in Ch. Eight). The problematic graph  (誼 :zhi) depicts a vertical flute () and a ge-halberd () = , the two properties held by dancers in non-military and military dances. I think it does not refer to a specific dance, but rather it simply means "group dance" (Ch. Eight, IV.D).

The graphs  and  (誼 :qu or ou, "exorcism, to exorcize") refer to an old religious practice, usually called nuo (傩) in Zhou texts. In this ritual, a priest wearing a bronze four-eyed mask and a bear skin jumped about in the building, pretending to hit the evil spirits with his weapon. In the above graphs, the building is represented by the door () or the radical "house" (), while a hand is holding a weapon (, ) with which to hit a snake (, )--the symbol of evil spirits. This ritual probably represents the legendary war between the pre-Shang Yellow Emperor (黃帝, the clan name of whom was "the Bear" 有熊氏) and the "monster" (perhaps a rival

leader) Chi-you ( 虺尤 = 蚺尤 "the snake", "evil"). In other words, the war has become a symbol of good conquering evil, suitable for use in an exorcism (Ch. Eight, IV.E).

Some scholars have the opinion that the Yellow Emperor was perhaps a legendary person made up during the late Zhou period. Their evidence is that this name is not mentioned in earlier Zhou classics. If my opinion about the above exorcism is correct, it means that the Yellow Emperor was in fact known to the Shang people, hence giving a much earlier source for the legendary history of the Yellow Emperor and the "monster" Chi-you. In my opinion, the problematic name of a Shang ancestor, "High Ancestor" ( 高且 Shima:211), should read "High Ancestor" ( 猿 猿 (= 輶 :yuan)", referring to Yellow Emperor's well known name Xuan Yuan ( 軒輶 ).<sup>1</sup> In fact, traditionally the Shang people were said to be the descendants of Di Ku ( 帝嚳, Shi Ji, Juan 3, "History of Shang" 史記殷本紀), great grandson of the Yellow Emperor ( 史記五帝本紀). This perhaps also explains why, in the exorcism, the Yellow Emperor (represented by the bear skin) represents the good.

#### IV. "ANCIENT MUSIC"

The Zhou classics mention many pieces of pre-Zhou yue ( 樂 ) "music" or gu-yue ( 古樂 "ancient music"), musical performances involving music and dance (Ch. Eight.I); at least two of them are seen in OBI. The hu-music ( 濩 = 灌 ) is said to have been composed by the first Shang king, Tang ( 唐 = 湯 ), while the shao-music ( 韶 = 召, 韶 :shao) is said to date from the pre-Xia period (Ch. Eight, V.A and V.B respectively). In my opinion, the shao-music referred to a great tribal feast with music; this interpretation makes sense out of many OBI and Shang bronze inscriptions.

Whether the OBG ( 𪛗 ) should be equated with the modern word ( 命 (:yue) and understood as referring to one of the varieties of ancient music yue ( 樂, 夏命 ) is not certain. In this work this graph has been equated with the modern word ( 管 (:guan), meaning "double pipe." In fact, even if this graph should be equated with the modern word ( 命 (:yue), it might still refer to the double pipe (Ch. Six, III, also see note 11 in Ch. Eight).

In Zhou classics there is the name "wan-dance" (萬舞). Scholars have different opinions as to whether it refers to military or non-military dances, or to both. No one has been able to explain why the word wan (萬)

= 萬, originally depicting a scorpion) refers to dances. In my opinion, "萬" is a borrowed word, and

the word which refers to dance or dancer should be another word with the same pronunciation, 万 (:wan). In OBI this word 万 is written 𠂔, showing a dancer with a

hat, and holding a " | " (perhaps a dance property). This graph can also be written 𠂔 (万 :wan, "dancer"), which only shows the dancer and a hat. Its originally meant "dancer," and its evolved meanings are "to dance" and "group dance," without referring to a specific dance (Ch. Eight, II and III).

#### V. GRAPHS WHICH MEAN "TO PERFORM"

Traditionally one graph has been successfully interpreted as meaning "to perform": 奏 (奏 :zou,

Ch. Two, I.A). My study shows that ten other OBG express a similar meaning, namely, 樂 (置), 止 (作), 𠂔 (為), 又 (又), 出 (有), 𠂔 (延), 𠂔 (振), 用 (用), 𠂔 (設), and 𠂔 (尊).

Understanding these graphs is important, because they help us to confirm the meaning of OBG and OBI which concern instruments and performances. For example, it is not enough merely to assert that the graphs 𠂔, 𠂔, and 𠂔 represent the pole drum, shang-bell and feather dance respectively, but if these graphs are often seen in association with the verb "to perform," their meanings become clear and the interpretation more convincing (see OBI 1, 2, and other OBI in Ch. Two). The OBI translated in this work give details as to how instruments and rituals were used in Shang times--information that cannot be derived elsewhere.

#### VI. DISCOVERIES BASED ON OBG

Besides verifying the existence of some instruments and performances, as mentioned above, the OBG provide other valuable information. For instance, the graphs 𠂔 (= 奏)

"flags," see OBI 4), 庸 (庸 :yong, "pole drum"), and 商 (商 :shang, "bells") show the rough shape of the stands for flag pole, pole drum, and shang-bell (Ch. Five.V). The graphs 商 and 庸 (= 商 = 庸 :shang, "bells") suggest that a small pin was used to keep the shang-bell ( 商 ) in position when mounted on a pole which was fitted into a stand (Ch. Five, V.B). The graphs 置 (置 :zhi, "to set up instrument") and 用 (用 :yong, "to use instrument") lend further support to this opinion (see Ch. Two, I.B and I.I respectively).

Some OBG reveal interesting anthropological information, but their graphic structure could never have been known if they had not been related to musical instruments. For instance, it was not known why the graphs "to order" and "now" are written 令 (令 :ling) and 今 (今 :jin) respectively. In my opinion, in both graphs the triangle represents the clapper bell ( 令 → 今 ). According to Zhou classics, the clapper bell was used as a signal instrument, to convey orders and to summon servants. The graph 令 probably depicts a person kneeling next to a clapper bell to receive an order, hence the meaning "to order." When the king rings the clapper bell, he wants the servant to come now, hence the meaning "now" (Ch. Five, II.A).

## VII. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Not too many early Shang instruments have been unearthed. Those which have been found are rather simple in decoration and primitive in craftsmanship. The late Shang Dynasty, however, was a period when musical instruments were mostly beautifully decorated, mainly with the tao-tie motif, perhaps symbolizing the domination of the powerful ruling class over the poor common people who seldom have any instruments.

It is interesting that the Shang people had mouth-organs of small and large sizes, and that the graph for the smaller one 龠 (龠 :he) evolved the meaning "harmony" in Zhou times. It is not known how much "harmony" the Shang people applied in their music, but the mouth-organ is not meant for monotones, which means that there was probably harmony of some sort.

It is believed that drums had control over ghosts and evil spirits. This perhaps explains why drums were used in

exorcisms, together with other instruments and the feather dance.

In this study I have relied a good deal on my new interpretations of OBG concerning music. Two of the most interesting possibilities are that the Shang people and the first king, Tang, were named after the shang-bell (商 = 𠔁) and the pole drum (𠔁 = 𠔁 = 𠔁 = 唐 = 湯) 𠔁

respectively (Ch. Five, IV.B, and Ch. Four, V.F). The fact that percussion instruments were used as signal instruments is reflected in the graphs. For instance, the graph 𠔁 (長 :chen) shows a person holding up both hands to strike a triangular object, which might be an unused stone ploughshare or a qing, to give signal of time and danger (Ch. Three, I.C). The graph 令 (令 :ling, "to order") shows a person kneeling next to a clapper bell to receive an order (Ch. Five, II.A1). The graph 𠔁 (𠔁 :jian, "problem, disaster, alarming news") shows a person ready to give signal by striking the drum--whenever danger or enemy appears, hence the meaning (see OBI 70 in Ch. Four).

The OBI reveal that musical instruments were used mainly for religious purposes, though they were possibly also used for entertainment and military activities. No notation of any sort has been found. Perhaps music and old dances were handed down by actual training and oral tradition. The Shang people had a school for training dancers, who were also musicians (Ch. Eight.III, OBI 133). These people were sometimes buried with a dead king, indicating that the life of a musician in the Shang period was precarious (Ch. Eight.II).





While we appreciate the excellent achievements of the Shang musical culture, we can also feel sorry about the miserable situation of the slaves and common people of the period. It was these people who cast the bronzes and constructed the instruments. However, very few of them could enjoy the instruments they made, and many of them were killed to help furnish the tombs of their masters.



#### NOTES


1. Wang Guo-wei (王國維) equated the graph 𠔁 with the modern word 𠔁 (:nao), which means "A greedy animal, also refers to the monkey." (Shuo Wen, Juan 5.2:37. 說文 : "貪獸也。一曰母(沐)猴"). Wang believed that the archaic pronunciation of this word and another modern word 𠔁 (:ku), name of a Shang ancestor in legend, were similar. Therefore, he suggested that the name "High Ancestor 𠔁" in OBI refers to Ku. His






opinion has been accepted by some people, but it has also been rejected by some scholars because the archaic pronunciations of the two words are quite different (Chen 1956:338).

The graph  can be written in many ways: , , , (Shima:211). I think these graphs represent an

animal with a tail, but which looks like a man--an ape. The head, hand, and foot in these graphs are similar to that of a man, as can be seen in graphs like  (首: shou, "head", Shima:100), and  (耜: ji, "to

plough", Shima:27. This graph shows a person  "

and a plough  ".). In short, I believe that the graph  should be equated with the modern word 


(:yuan), meaning "an ape". In OBI, it refers to the Yellow Emperor, whose personal name was Xuan Yuan (軒轅, observe the same pronunciation yuan in both cases, and that the two words 猿 and 轅 share the same part "袁"), as recorded in the Shi Ji (Juan 1, "Wu Di Ben Ji" 史記. 五帝本紀: "黃帝者……名曰軒轅").

In classical Chinese, the word xuan (軒) often means "tall." If in the name Xuan Yuan the second word in fact refers to the ape, then the whole name perhaps meant "The Tall Ape" or "The Great Ape"-- a respectful name for the Yellow Emperor. Adding similar adjectives to names of legendary pre-Shang kings was common. For example the legendary emperors Shun (舜) and Yu (禹) were often called Da Shun and Da Yu respectively. In these cases "Da" (大) means "Great."

It should be noted that in OBI the name "High Ancestor" always shows the animal standing up, perhaps to indicate its tallness and greatness. On the other hand when the same graph refers to a real monkey, the animals always sits down:

鐵雲藏龜拾遺  
(Tie Yun Cang Gui Shi Yi 6.9)




    
其 隻(獲) 隻(愛猿猴猿)  
Shall we catch monkeys/apes?

Other similar images of monkeys in OBI are listed in Shima (:211). Strictly speaking, the graph  should be equated with the modern word 猿 (:nao, "monkey/ape," also written

獲, 獲, 猿). Since Zhou times this word evolved into several forms, with different but related pronunciations, still all referring to the monkey or ape: 猿, 猿, 猴.

That the name of such a famous and important emperor is related to an ape is not surprising. The name of the first Xia king, Yu (禹), for instance, is related to the snake or reptile (Shuo Wen, Juan 14, 2:18). In fact, primitive people used to name themselves with names of animals.

It is generally known that the ancestor of the Shang people was Di Ku (帝嚳 Shi Ji, Juan 3, "Yin Ben Ji"), and this was why Wang Guo-wei thought that the name "High Ancestor 皇" refers to Di Ku. However, the Shi Ji also mentions that Di Ku was the great grandson of the Yellow Emperor (Shi Ji, Juan 1, "Wu Di Ben Ji," 史記·五帝本紀: "帝嚳高辛者, 黃帝之曾孫也."). It is, therefore, more probable that the term "High Ancestor" refers to the Yellow Emperor.

In my opinion, the graph  on a late Shang bronze (in the shape of a standing rhinoceros), in the Avery Brundage Collection at the Asian Museum of San Francisco, is just a variation of the OBG . The additional stroke on the top does not make it another graph. In fact, similar additional stroke is also seen in OBG  (Xu 6.19.4). Hence that bronze inscription could be translated as follow, referring to the same High Ancestor Nao in OBI:

(小臣彝犧尊)

• 𠄎  
丁巳

王 𠄎  
王 省



自  
祖

(On the day) Ding-si, (the) king paid (to ancestor) respects Nao's temple.

With the above understood, the Japanese names for a form of performance that they got from ancient China might be better explained. These names are 能樂 (:neng yue, "noh gaku" in Japanese), 猿樂 (:yuan yue, "sarugaku" in Japanese generally explained as "monkey music"), and 散樂 (:san yue, "san gaku" in Japanese, meaning "miscellaneous music"). No scholar has convincingly explained the meaning of the word 能 in this case, and its evolved meaning "strength, able" does not make good sense. I think that the Japanese pronunciation for the word, noh, might have come from the Chinese word 傩 (:nuo, "exorcism"). In ancient China, the nuo exorcism had long developed into some sort of folk musical entertainment, called san yue (散樂). In this exorcism, the bear skin that the priest wore symbolized the Yellow Emperor (see discussion in Ch. Eight, IV.E, and note 20). It is possible that when this ancient performance was introduced to Japan, the two old names of this performance, yuan yue (猿樂

"monkey music" or "ape music") and neng yue (能樂 "bear music") were also preserved. In short, the words yuan (猿 "ape") and neng (能 "bear") refer to the Yellow Emperor's personal name (猿軒轅) and clan name (有熊) respectively (the word 能 was the earlier form of the word 熊, "bear").