WESTERN ZHOU RITUAL BRONZES FROM THE ARTHUR M. SACKLER COLLECTIONS

A Review Article

BY

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Jessica RAWSON: Western Zhou\[Chou\] Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections, Volumes IIA & IIB. Published by the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1990, 1–208 [IIA], 209–776 [IIB], numerous (but unlisted) Figures and Plates; Appendixes (6), Bibliography, Character Glossary, Index to Inscriptions, Index [General], etc.

Again a most sumptuous publication and one produced along the same luxury lines as described in my review of the first [Shang] Volume (T’oung Pao LXXVI (1990):271–298). Nevertheless, there are still to be observed a number of the short-comings which attended the design and planning of the first volume and which in

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1 Throughout these pages Wade-Giles romanization will be used—even in cited passages. The reason is threefold: (a) It holds pride of place as the system employed throughout the greater bulk of English-language publications on China (no less than 90%); and which, up to six or seven years ago was rapidly attaining the status of the standard form of romanization. (b) Despite its linguistic shortcomings, it does not have the ill-considered allocation of our alphabet to sounds that bear no relation to the actual sounds involved, e.g. q, x, zh, z, and c, which initials are used in the Mainland p’in-yin 拼音 respectively for such sounds as: 秦 (ch’ien), 夏 (hsia), 周 (chou), 莊 (chuang), 子 (tsu), and 才 (ts’ai); so causing unnecessary confusion in the minds of non-sinologists, thus widening the gulf of understanding of Chinese culture by the bulk of the English reading public (see my appraisal in Barnard & Cheung [hereafter referred to as Studies] 1983:105–141). And in the case of Mainland Chinese readers of Western publications, there results a lack of incentive to learn the Wade-Giles system so as to cope effectively with the general corpus of Western contributions of scholars in the past, and of those of us who seek to maintain the standard form of romanization. (c) If a real need for a more accurate form of romanization in general and scholarly literature were felt, the creation (or the choice from amongst the several that have long been available) of that romanization would surely be the responsibility of the peoples concerned! Not the politically inspired acceptance of an alien system.
the present two-part volume tend to detract the reader's attention from the generally admirable quality of the author's contribution. Let us consider these, before proceeding into the review proper, together with comment upon the several new "mishaps" that have come to the fore—the responsibility for which, it would seem, ultimately rests with the publisher's editorial and design personnel.

As in the first volume, there is the lack of listings of Figures and Plates in the Table of Contents, along with the omission to provide Plate nos. and captions for the main vessel illustrations (reproduced in excellent colour in Volume IIB) and the rubbings and/or photographs of inscriptions (where relevant) placed opposite the Plates. Omission of the latter, in particular, is rather inconvenient for reference purposes; while the failure to include in the prelims some explanation of the curious numbering "system" with its repetition of Figure Nos. between the two volumes (viz. Fig. 1—Fig. 180 in Volume IIA, and Fig. 1.1—Fig. 129.8 in Volume IIB) results in a lot of page turning and jumping to and fro between the two volumes before one realizes what's going on. Upon checking again notes made during the reading of the Introduction in the Shang Volume, I find a pencilled observation "can't find Figures 90.3, 92, . . ."—much the same difficulty was experienced in the early stages of reading there, too.

Division of the total of 776 pages into two dissimilar-size volumes has been effected in a strange and unwieldy manner: Volume IIA contains the Introduction—apparently intended as the basis of division—but the contents naturally being considerably shorter than the contents of the second volume, the designers have placed the Appendixes, Bibliography, Glossary, Inscription Index, etc. also into the first volume obviously in an effort to expand its width; and the main Index is retained in the second volume! Understandably, a single volume of over 700 pages of this heavy-weight semi-glossy-surfaced paper would be even heavier to handle than the larger volume is now—possibly, even, some technical difficulty with binding—but a near equal-size physical division would be not only orthodox, and the location of the Appendixes, etc. fall into the appropriate areas of the book, but also, I feel, preferable to the user. If only book designers could be encouraged to appreciate that books have a functional purpose—and are actually to be read, and/or studied! And that they are not merely vehicles for the aesthetic expression of the designer who, it may be suspected, would probably not have realized the problems that would be engendered during the process of reading, by his unfortunate choice of such light-reflecting paper.