BELL OWNERSHIP AND THE EVOLVING DEFINITION OF THE ‘OTHER’
IN ANCIENT CHINA

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Fine Arts of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts

Rebecca A. Fields
June 2005
This thesis entitled

BELL OWNERSHIP AND THE EVOLVING DEFINITION OF THE ‘OTHER’

IN ANCIENT CHINA

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FIELDS, REBECCA A. M.F.A. June 2005. Art History

Bell Ownership and the Evolving Definition of the ‘Other’ in Ancient China
(89pp.)

Director of Thesis: Tom Patin

This paper will look at the Chinese bronze bell and its constructed role as a tool used by the socio-political dominant from the Shang Dynasty to the Warring States period, the latter half of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Bells and bell ownership represented power. They were musical instruments that reflected an awe-inspiring level of artistic achievement. But they were also used as tools by upper echelon of the socio-political hierarchy to reflect their power and control. As the bronze bell evolves from the Shang dynasty to the close of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, the signified or the perceived meaning of the bell never changes. Bells always represented power. However, what did change were the rules of ownership. By studying Michel Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge; how historical context can change perceptions and meanings; and the rules of bell ownership, this paper will illustrate how the power structure in China was changed.

Approved: Tom Patin

Professor of Art History
The accomplished man . . . therefore, by scrutinizing sounds, comes to know musical tones. By scrutinizing musical tones, he comes to know music; by scrutinizing music, he comes to know government. With this, his knowledge of the Way is complete.

*Yue Ji* (Record of music, c.a. third century B.C.E)
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The political landscape of early China was formed by hundreds of clans whose mythical history gave each group justification for its existence and rule. As clans evolved into structured political units, only a few are evident in extant findings.\(^1\) To date, the earliest documented Chinese culture was the Shang Dynasty. The Shang had evolved from several agriculturally based cultures into a complex society that was controlled by an appointed king. This culture developed social hierarchies, divisions of labor, extensive ritual practices, and regulations to maintain this structure. Music was one entity that was heavily regulated because it was intrinsic to the ritual and political process. This included performance, production of music and instruments, and instrument ownership. A fourth century B.C.E. compilation, the *Guo Yu* (Narratives of the states) declares, “government is modeled upon music.”\(^2\) The ruler’s music reflected the state and condition of the ruler’s power. Another passage from *Yue Ji* indicates that rulers could transgress this relationship by using music not to emphasize their ordained power, but to manipulate the listeners:

The former kings paid close attention to what aroused the feelings [of the people]; they used ceremonies to guide [the people’s] intentions, music to harmonize their sounds, regulations to unify their actions, and punishments to prevent conflict.

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among them. Ceremonies and music, punishments and regulations—their ultimate aim is one: they are that by which the hearts-and-minds of the people are unified and the Way of order is produced.\(^3\)

The most influential instrument used to this end was the bronze bell. This paper will look at the bell and its constructed role as a tool used by the socio-political dominant from the Shang Dynasty to the Warring States period, the latter half of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty. Bells and bell ownership represented power. They were musical instruments that reflected an awe-inspiring level of artistic achievement. But they were also used as tools by upper echelon of the socio-political hierarchy to reflect and justify their power and control. As the bronze bell evolves from the Shang dynasty to the close of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, the signified or the perceived meaning of the bell never changes. Bells always represented power. However, what did change were the rules of ownership. This is surprising because power was also regulated in ancient China. By studying Michel Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge; how historical context can change perceptions and meanings; and the rules of bell ownership, this paper will illustrate how the power structure in China was changed.

*History of Chinese Bells*

Historically, music served a prominent role in Chinese culture. Extant written evidence indicates that music was intrinsic within the Chinese ritual context, and therefore, was controlled exclusively by the upper echelon of political power. During the ritual process, music, and especially bronze bells, were used to communicate to ancient

\(^3\)Ibid.
gods who would protect the king and those who served him. Bells were cast in
graduated sets and suspended from racks. They were played by appointed musicians who
used wooden mallets to play a range of musical tones, much like a vertical xylophone
(fig. 1).

Figure 1. Bell players performing bell set from Marquis Yi of Zeng. Reprinted from So,
Music in the Age of Confucius, 41.

Bells were believed to be the medium by which humans could communicate with the
divine beings through various musical arrangements. Justification of the king's role was
reinforced by the constructed 'truth' that he was a direct descendant of the lower echelon
of gods that the Shang worshipped. The gods provided rain, successful hunts, abundant
crops, and justification of the king’s power. The king was the only person allowed to possess bells, and therefore the only means of communication with the powerful gods. Music was part of every ritual event as was the communications between the king and the higher powers. Scholar Jenny So states:

Therefore the early kings, when they instituted rites and music, did not do so to gain full satisfaction for the desires of the mouth, stomach, ears, and eyes. But they intended to teach people to regulate their likes and dislikes, and to turn them back to the normal course of humanity . . . Therefore the early kings instituted rites and music to regulate human conduct.4

This concept was enough to give a single man, the king, the sole link of communication to the gods and complete dominance over his people. The music that was composed was used to inflict emotions to enhance the level of control, either that of harmony, awe, or fear.

The bronze industry was heavily regulated for not only the purposes of controlling bell production, but also, and perhaps more importantly, because it was used to create weapons. Bronze was also used to create functional pieces like chariot fittings, mirrors, and personal ornaments. But due to their importance in the ritual process, the sacrificial vessels and the bronze bells received the most artistic and metallurgical detail.5 The metal composition needed to create bronze is 92 percent copper and 7 percent tin. Early Chinese bronze craftsmen were accomplished metallurgists in not only creating complex

alloys, but also the process of mining for the correct ores. During the Shang period, wet clay was applied the exterior of a clay or wood model and was removed in sections, once dry. The sections were reassembled around a clay core and then filled with molten bronze. During the Spring and Autumn period the lost wax method gained popularity. Wet clay was applied to a wax model and instead of removing the mold in sections, the wax was melted and ran out of the mold, keeping it intact. The Spring and Autumn period also illustrates a method of attaching cast handles and legs to larger cast pieces and adhering the compilation together in a final casting. The molds were embellished by an artisan's hand, but by the Spring and Autumn period bell consumption increased to a level that required die blocks to assist in the speed of production. Only the ruling families wielded enough power and control to support and maintain this industry. They monopolized the resources and controlled the complex operations, as well as, the workforce needed to cast bronze works. Bronze was so cherished that it was usually passed to subsequent generations. They served as reminders of the familial power reinforcing the ruling class's identity and social order. Only ordained and later appointed people could own bronze bells or vessels. Rules of bell ownership were strictly followed. These rules stipulated how many and what types of bronze pieces could be owned. The

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9Ibid., 30.
size and shape of the racks have been determined by figurative drawings of rituals from period pottery.¹⁰

During the Western Zhou period, the role of the bell changed slightly because the masses no longer believed the higher powers controlled the things that influenced their livelihoods. Droughts, floods, and famines still occurred regardless of the number of ritual sacrifices they practiced. The idea that the king controlled their lives more so than the whims of the deities to whom they had been divining, evolved to become the new 'truth'. This shift, although slight is crucial to the perceived power structure. The king, a living man, was responsible through his decisions and good rulership to maintain a harmonious society. The bell, though still seen as a means of communicating with the heavenly beings, was now used more for court presentations. This weakened its effectiveness over the masses. During the Western Zhou period, the bell now became an icon of the court but was still perceived as a commodity of power.

During the Eastern Zhou period, as the government politic became more and more structured, bell ownership was extended to the leaders of the many vassal states. These leaders were usually related to the king and bell ownership represented the king’s alliance and power over the distant lands. Over time, as the leaders were further removed from the familial ties to the king, they began to wield more power. This created a very hostile environment where vassal states were overthrowing other vassal states controlled by distant relatives. As soon as a new state was created, the new leader would cast a set of bells that reflected “his” message to the listeners. This message was transmitted visually

¹⁰ von Faukenhausen, Suspended Music, 39.
by the iconography and surface embellishment added to the bells. Surface embellishment reflected a surge in the level of creativity during this period. It also reflected a loosening of the political control. Heads of vassal states commissioned bells of their own taste and not that of the reigning king. Embellishments went from symmetrical geometric patterns, as seen in Shang and early Western Zhou bells, to spirals and to complex abstractions of animal forms during the Eastern Zhou period. Figures 2-through 9 illustrate the evolution of style. Creativity was also transmitted through the complexity of the tones emitted in an entire set of bells.

Figure 2. Frontal view of Nao excavated in 1973 at Sanmudi, Ningxiang (Hunan). Local culture contemporary to late Shang, probably twelfth-eleventh century B.C.E. Reprinted from von Falkenhausen, Suspended Music, 150.

Bells were rarely cast as a single piece, but rather as a set. Sets of bells could range from eight pieces up to sixty-four pieces, as found in the tomb of the Marquis Yi (see figs. 10

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11Kuwayama, Ancient Ritual of Bronze China, 10.
Each bell evolved in design to the point that each bell could play two notes exactly a minor third apart.\textsuperscript{12} The artistic and technical genius of this feat is daunting. How a master craftsman could control the entire process to perfection is still a mystery.

![Figure 3. Side view of Nao excavated in 1973 at Sanmudi, Ningxiang (Hunan). Local culture contemporary to late Shang, probably twelfth-eleventh century B.C.E. Reprinted from von Falkenhausen, \textit{Suspended Music}, 150.](image)

Every phase of the process had to be controlled from the percentages of tin and copper to the level surface embellishment to create an aesthetically matching set of graduated bells that could hit specific notes. The web link below is for an audio file of a musical performance using Chinese bronze bells:

\url{http://www.regenerating-universe.org/BellStandDetail.htm}\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12}So, \textit{Music in the Age of Confucius}, 40.
\textsuperscript{13}A. W. L. Chan, \textit{The Regenerating Universe Theory- T.R.U.T.H.} (Hong Kong, 1998) [database on-line]; available from \url{http://www.regenerating-universe.org/BellStandDetail.htm}.

Figure 5. Shicheng-yongzhong excavated in 1974 at Qiangjiacun, Fufeng (Shaanxi). Early part of late Western Zhou (mid-ninth century B.C.E.). Reprinted from von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, 165.
It is during the latter stages of the Eastern Zhou period, a time referred to as the Warring States Period, that leaders at the local level cast bells. Bells were in such high demand that workshops became factories for mass production. Bells, created to the point of commodification, were now symbols for political and military prowess. At the end of the Warring States period, China was once again united under the rule of the Qin Dynasty. To date there is no evidence that suggests the bell tradition survived this transition.


Research Perimeters

This paper will examine the bell from the Shang dynasty through the end of the Eastern Zhou dynasty. The Shang dynasty is the earliest documented culture found in extant evidence to date. The bells found in archaeological research have not been dated
Figure 7. One of the three Qin Gong-bo (with its suspension hook), excavated in 1978 at Taigongmiao, Baoji (Shaanxi). Workshop of Qin, early Spring and Autumn period (probably reign of Wu Gong, 697-678 B.C.E.). Reprinted from von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, 172.

Figure 8. Bell from the first middle-tier subset from the Marquis Yi of Zeng (Warring States period) bell set in the Hubei Provincial Museum. Photograph by Pan Bingyuan. Reprinted from So, *Music in the Age of Confucius*, 42.
Figure 9. Detail of ritual bronze vessel from the Warring States period. Reprinted from Smith and Yu, *Ringing Thunder*, 43.

Figure 10. Group of thirty-six bells displayed on a modern stand at the Suizhou City Museum, Hubei Province. Photograph by John Tsantes. Reprinted from So, *Music in the Age of Confucius*, 57.
Figure 11. Group of sixty-five bells displayed on a modern stand from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. This bell set represents the pinnacle of bell artistry from the Warring States period and is at the Suizhou City Museum, Hubei Province. Photograph by John Tsantes. Reprinted from So, *Music in the Age of Confucius*, 37.

to an earlier period. Therefore, to start at the inception of the bronze bell tradition is to begin with the Shang dynasty. Likewise, the bell tradition appears to end with the close of the Eastern Zhou period. This paper looks at the entire evolution from the inception to the decline of the bronze bell tradition. This also allows for a greater understanding of the true function of the bell. If the research had only focused on one dynasty that function would be less noticeable since the transition within each dynasty is subtle. To look at the overall evolution, what was a subtle message during the Shang dynasty becomes more evident during the Eastern Zhou period. Further, to understand how intricately entwined the bronze bell is to the Chinese culture; the Shang dynasty has to be studied. Cultural influence and the historic connotation of the bell is an important factor
to this research. To illustrate the way the bell was used exclusively as an instrument of politics and power, the Eastern Zhou period offers the clearest body of evidence. For these reasons I have encompassed the entire bell tradition.

Methodology

Culture has been defined in many ways. In the broadest sense it refers to “the civilization, customs, artistic achievements, etc., of a people, especially at a certain stage of its development of history.”\textsuperscript{14} From this foundation many theorists from art history, anthropology, and political science have focused on certain elements of that loosely defined term to create new discourse and theories associated with our historical past. Since culture really reflects the actions, choices, and thoughts and beliefs of many individuals within their environment; the number of theories can be limitless. Some of these have included, “kinship, education, medicine, psychological issues, economics, work, ecology, language, feminist studies, innumerable regional and cultural zones, computers, tourism, migration, herding societies, human rights, indigenous knowledge and on and on.”\textsuperscript{15} The term culture is such a broad term that it needed to be defined specifically for this project to set the perimeters and focus the direction of the research. For this paper, I am going to use a definition that has been put forth by scholar, Paul Halsall. His definition for culture is this:


\textsuperscript{15}Michael Payne, ed., \textit{A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 120.
The system of shared ideas and meanings, explicit and implicit, which a people use to interpret the world and which serve to pattern their behavior. This concept of culture includes an understanding of the art, literature, and history of a society, but also less tangible aspects such as attitudes, prejudices, folklore, and so forth. In other words unconscious, or even conscious, mental habits are just as important as art and history in understanding what a culture is.\textsuperscript{16}

Further, I am going to focus my research in the areas that Halsall suggests for achieving a more rounded picture of a society, its art and the elements that influence it. These include government, economic life, social structure, religion, and literature. This type of cultural observation is especially challenging as every element is interconnected with the others. However, it is impossible to write about a single element without touching on the others, as they all inherently influence one another. Once I have described the context of the period, I will then discuss the role of the bronze bell in relation to the cultural context and how it has affected the rules of ownership. The primary focus is government, one that is justified through the religious rites, and its power. The structure that is created by this dual influence serves to define the social structure and the economic conditions. The government and religious institutions that justifies and reinforces their power create literature or ‘Knowledge’ learned through musical performance and religious rites. In order to defend the thesis of this project, I will refer to a few cultural theories and definitions. I feel each of the theories play a role in creating, maintaining, and changing the constructed power structures. In order to understand their influence on this topic, I will give a brief overview of these theories as I understand, and therefore will apply them to this project.

Mandate of Heaven is a concept that was introduced and promoted during the conquest of the Shang by the Western Zhou. The change of power was justified through a constructed ‘Truth’. “It came to illustrate the irrepressible will of Heaven turning its mandate from one state, the rulers of which had grown distant from the people, to another state blessed with virtuous rulers.”\(^\text{17}\) This concept was used to justify overthrowing a sitting king. Acceptance of the new ruler was secured once the people believed a higher power ordained the change.

Another concept, familial ties or filial piety, is deeply rooted in the Chinese culture and dates into the pre-history of early China. It is a concept that requires honor and obedience within a family hierarchy. As scholar David Shepherd Nivison states, “the obligation extended past the grave: rites and offerings were owed to ancestors.”\(^\text{18}\) This innate concept was promoted through the ritual process and was used to reinforce the king’s right to power, since it was his ancestors that represented the lower echelon of gods.

Another important concept is a theory proposed by French philosopher, Michel Foucault. His theory looks at the way culture, learned social behaviors and historical connotations influences the representation of things. Things can include language, music, objects, symbols and media. Further he looks at the production of knowledge through discourse. 'Knowledge' is developed and defined by what is perceived and stated as


\(^{18}\)Ibid., 749.
known 'truths' and perimeters are created to contain thoughts within a body of 'knowledge', limiting what is thought about 'knowledge'. Foucault is concerned that power limits 'truth' and 'truth' limits 'knowledge'. Labels are given to things or theories, so that discourse is more organized and becomes more credible. Power uses 'truth' to shape 'knowledge'. ‘Truth’ has been constructed by an authority that is comprised of people who are influenced by historical connotations and biases. This is why the bronze bell, always remains a symbol of power, but the rules of ownership evolve. The bells are part of a larger discourse of power and privilege used to justify the position of the bell owner. From the Shang dynasty through the close of the Warring States Period, the bell transitioned from a vital ritual tool used only by the king, to an icon of the court used by various government officials, to a status symbol that could be purchased at a local market. All the while, the privileged or bell owners were promoting a 'truth' used to justify and control the ownership of bells.

Problems

There are several issues that make researching ancient Chinese bronze works difficult. The first problem is the scope of the topic. In order to understand the significance of the bell and its evolution, we have to look at many different phases of the Chinese culture through a period of 1300 years. Bronze works have been used for ritual events since their origin, approximately 1523 B.C.E. Since only the upper echelon of the

ruling class attended early Chinese rituals, these objects became symbols of political and social status. These classes not only existed in life, but also in death. The number of grave goods buried in the tombs reflects the social status of the deceased. There have been several great archeological finds that support this, but there is also evidence that many of the tombs have been robbed of many of their treasures. It is possible that looting may have occurred as early as the Western Zhou dynasty (1027 B.C.E). There is even some speculation that the Western Zhou looters melted down Shang bronzes to cast their own vessels. Further, “inscribed bronzes without a sure archeological provenance are often suspect because of innumerable forgeries and because false inscriptions have often been affixed to genuine pieces”. Prior to the 1930’s, tomb discoveries were fortuitous. Today, as the country undergoes “unbridled urbanization,” its archaeological heritage is in jeopardy. In most instances the bronze works that are in the collections of Chinese or Western museums were taken out of their archaeological context. Sometimes, due to the fervent with which foreign treasure hunters pursued Chinese objects, the archaeological context was even hidden or destroyed. The market demand also created a stage for innumerable forgeries. Without this context, much of the research done in the past on the Chinese bronze vessels is considered speculative. In

21 Ibid., 264
24 Kuwayama, Ancient Ritual Bronzes of China, 8.
26 Debaine-Francfort, The Search for Ancient China, 35.
28 Kuwayama, Ancient Ritual Bronzes of China, 8.
addition, from the archaeological records that we do have, items from tombs were
catalogued as though they were produced during the same period. Researchers now
know that royal tombs contained heirloom treasures that were manufactured several or
several hundred generations earlier. There are also bronze works of regional styles that
were attained through marriage or warfare. 29 Finally, due to war and subsequent politics
in China, methodologies and theories used in archaeology were Marxist based during the
last fifty years. 30 It has only been since 1991 that foreign cooperation in archaeology has
once again been allowed. 31 However, most theories that are derived from Marxism are
automatically dismissed because archaeology had been limited to these ideologies and in
the past have proven to be inaccurate. 32 Archaeologists and art historians are just now
beginning to piece together an accurate timeline of the evolution of bronze works through
interdisciplinary research. In addition to the bronze works themselves, researchers are
looking at literature, poetry, military history, habitation patterns, and not only royal
tombs, but also those of the common laborer in order to determine the true social and
political mindset of the bronze caster. “Some excavated evidence from settlements
pertains to ordinary urban dwellers, but as yet archaeology provides no direct information
about the life of the rural population. Such a lopsided perspective is a fundamental
problem in research on the Chinese Bronze Age, severely curtailing archaeology’s

29Ibid., 9.
30Debaine-Francfort, The Search for Ancient China, 140.
31Ibid., 35.
32Ibid., 140.
potential contribution as an independent source of evidence that may complement as well as modify the conclusions of text-based historiography."\(^{33}\)

CHAPTER 2

SHANG PERIOD (ca. 1523 – 1045 B.C.E.)

The Shang emerged from a number of agriculturally based regional cultures.\textsuperscript{34} Over several centuries this agriculturally based culture, through their shared beliefs, banded together and evolved into a complex dynastic empire. The Shang's origin is attributed to the Tzu clan, who were descendents of its founder, Hsieh. According to the clan's legend, Hsieh's mother ate an egg that had been dropped by a dark bird, which resulted in her pregnancy.\textsuperscript{35} Archeological evidence shows that the Shang dynasty was the first Chinese culture to possess clear evidence of centrality and cultural unity including a unified political order.\textsuperscript{36} Evidence also shows that they developed writings, metalworking, and domestication of animals, industrial specialization and class stratification that were controlled by a political-religious hierarchy.

\textit{Shang Government}

The Shang Dynasty’s political and social structures were based on a feudal system, with many vassal states feoffed to relatives of the Shang kings.\textsuperscript{37} Throughout the evolution of the Shang dynasty the capital had moved to five different locations due to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{35}Chang, \textit{Art, Myth, and Ritual}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{36}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 230.
\item \textsuperscript{37}Caron Smith and Sung Yu, \textit{Ringing Thunder: Tomb Treasures from Ancient China} (San Diego: The San Diego Museum of Art, 1999), 18.
\end{itemize}
political warfare. It isn’t until the reign of Wu Ding (?-1189) that the Shang Dynasty begins its complex stratification of power.\(^{38}\) The royal lineage of the Shang included the king and his sons. The sons, after reaching adulthood, had their own minor lineages and territories to rule. Anyone who was in the main-line descent had more power than those of collateral lineage. For instance, a grandson would have more power than his cousin. The next level of power consisted of ministers, officers and diviners who were connected to the royal lineage by blood, social ties, or political service.\(^{39}\) These individuals were the king’s advisors, and according to extant documentation, held a level of communication with the king that was direct and candid.\(^{40}\) With the exception of the Princes who were charged with the duty of ruling distant territories, everyone in a position of power lived within the palace compound or the capital. The next level of power came to the local officers, chiefs, and rulers. They lived outside the core area of the palace in designated areas, according to their titles. They included Field Officers (agriculture), Dog Officer, Pastors, and Guards. They had enough authority to lead their own dependents in the king’s service, but it is unclear whether or not the duties performed were those requested by the king or their own independent agendas.\(^{41}\) In order to promote loyalty to the King in the more distant vassal states, the title of lord was awarded to those remote leaders.\(^{42}\) With the title of lord, the vassal states could then own


\(^{39}\)Ibid., 272.


\(^{42}\)Smith and Yu, *Ringing Thunder*, 18.
their own set of bells so they could continue their devotion to the king’s ancestors in the distant regions. With time, those officers located farther away from the core of the palace appear to have welded more power than those closer to the king to the point that they were deemed rulers in their own right. The key to a king’s success was the ability to delegate particular tasks to assigned officers. In a political structure that is based on familial ties, most posts would be held by devoted relatives. However, extant evidence lists assignments to the Many Horses officers, the Many Dog officers, the Many Artisans and the Many Archers. This suggests the beginning of a more detached form of administrative organization. Through this administrative organization, labor groups were formed and workshops were created to support the needs of the aristocracy. One such controlled entity was the bronze industry.

Shang Religion

Shang kingship was firmly grounded in religion and ritual. Early in the Shang dynasty, the rituals consisted of shamanistic techniques of human and animal sacrifices to the celestial powers. The Shang practiced divination as a means of communicating with the gods. Filial responsibility for the ancestors influenced the divinations since it was believed that relatives possessed more spiritual power when dead than when alive. As the dynasty evolved, so did the belief and ritual system. Historians have come to understand the ritual process better through the discovery of oracle-bone inscriptions.

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44 Ibid., 286.
The oracle-bone inscriptions were means by which the ancestors communicated with the living. During a divination the king would ask a question of the ancestors, a heated rod would be inserted into hollows bored into the back of cattle scapula or turtle shells, and the resultant stress cracks would be the ancestral reply. Once the ritual had occurred and the higher power’s response was realized, then the bones were taken to a specialist who recorded onto the bone the king’s question, as well as the higher power’s response. Most questions concerned hunting, harvests, and military campaigns, as well as a receipt of tributes. This process could be viewed as record keeping for the administration of a state organization or justification of a king’s reign through his ability to communicate successfully with the ancestors. Once the documentation had occurred the bones were saved in storage pits within the temple palace grounds. The sacrifice of cattle, which could have been in the hundreds by neighboring countries, the cleaning of the scapulas and plastrons, the drilling of the holes in preparation for the diviner’s heated rod, the time spent conducting the ritual, recording the event and then the storage of these bones speaks to the amount of labor devoted to the cause and therefore the cultural importance of the ritual. In addition, the rituals were held in various ancestral temples according to the question posed. For instance, a question regarding the crops or rain might be posed to a lower ranking ancestor, whereas a question about a military campaign would be posed to a more senior ranking ancestor. It was the diviner who

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47 Ibid., 236.
50 Ibid., 236.
placed the heated rod onto the bone, however in most instances, only the king had the “ability” to read the cracks.\textsuperscript{51} This feat was attributed to his kin relationship with the ancestors, which further monopolized the event from others.\textsuperscript{52} In fact, only the king could offer ancestral offerings and was done so frequently following a ritual calendar.\textsuperscript{53} Oral poetry was an important part of the communication process with the Shang Di (High God) during ceremonies. The diviner would say prayers, sing songs, and dance to music. The poems were filled with praises for the tribal leaders for their brave actions and the hopes of a better life.\textsuperscript{54} The medium for which these communications were translated came in the form of food and wine presented in ritual vessels.\textsuperscript{55} Various containers were used to hold the millet and sacrificial blood offerings to the gods. Also, music in the form of bronze bells was used so the king could communicate to the worshipped. It was believed that music could link both the living and the spiritual worlds together. Of all of the materials used to make the instruments of the ritual orchestra including bamboo, silk, gourd, skin, pottery, bronze, and wood only the tone of the bronze was consistent and therefore could be controlled.\textsuperscript{56} The tone that the bell played when it left the artisan’s workshop is the same tone that can be played on the same bell today. Because the ancestral communication could be controlled, the bell became invaluable to those in power. Simply, without bells you could not communicate with the gods and you could not control your destiny.

\textsuperscript{51}Chang, \textit{Art, Myth, and Ritual}, 45.
\textsuperscript{52}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 247.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 272.
\textsuperscript{54}Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 52.
\textsuperscript{55}Smith and Yu, \textit{Ringing Thunder}, 43.
The Shang worshipped entities placed in a social order that much reflected the social status of the living. Foremost, was Di, the high god. The Shang considered Di to be the reigning god of all the other gods and ancestral powers. He was responsible for the success and failure of all aspects of the Shang world. The next hierarchical tier is that of the Nature Powers, which controlled the soil, river, and the mountains. Below the Nature Powers were the Former Lords, who were worshipped differently than the ancestors. The next group was the pre-dynastic ancestors, followed by the dynastic ancestors (those of the king), and then finally the dynastic ancestress or the consorts of the kings on the main line of decent. Di, the Nature Powers and the Former Lords were concerned with state matters, whereas the other sects were concerned with the king’s personal well-being and day-to-day life. The Former Lords were individuals who had served the king, such as an officer or minister, which in death had been canonized because of their devotion and duty to the king. This practice served to promote that with devotion to the king, one could transcend to the heavens in the afterlife. Because the king’s ancestors were viewed as part of the higher power echelon, the king and his descendants were validated in their status as rulers. According to scholar David Keightley, “the Shang ancestors had jobs to do, and it was the role of their living descendants both to sustain the ancestors with cult and to provide the hierarchical, jurisdictional, and functional structure that enabled the ancestors to exert their continuing

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58 Ibid, 253-254.
59 Ibid., 254.
60 Ibid., 255.
and orderly influence in the world. Since the worshipped played a crucial role in the
prosperity of the king and the people, bell ownership was limited to people who had
aristocratic ranks and had been entitled by the king to own them. As the Shang dynasty
increased, bell ownership evolved from just one set of bells for the reigning king, to
many sets for those he had appointed to rule in distant territories. Further, by the time
Shang Dynasty entered its latter phase with the rule of Wu Ding (?-1189 B.C.E.), the
kings no longer divined Di. This could be attributed to the increased confidence of the
king in the powers of their dynastic ancestors, the increased disregard to Di’s existence,
or that it was pointless to divine for things, since Di appeared to do what he wanted
regardless of the worship customs.

Shang Economic Life

The Shang were primarily an agricultural society. Oracle bone inscriptions
indicate that the king would divine not only for the king’s crops, but also those
throughout his reign. The king controlled many farms that were worked by royal labor
gangs. These farms were fruitful and organized enough to support the royal house, the
ruling elite, a large handicraft industry, and the king’s army. One archaeological find of a
number of stone sickles, some still being made, indicates that there was an entire labor
system in place to support the farming industry. The primary crop was millet and like
any farming industry would have suffered the losses due to drought or pests, in spite of

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61Ibid., 256.
62von Faukenhausen, Suspended Music, 56.
63Loewe and Shaughnessy, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, 261.
64Ibid., 278.
their ritual requests. Economic and spiritual security would be felt for every successful harvest. Some of the oracle-bone inscriptions indicate that the king would divine about opening up new fields. This task would have included clearing the land and creating the fields. The process of setting up a new field was beneficial to several labor entities. For instance, the hunting parties would accompany the field workers to the new site. The field workers would burn the brush to clear the land, which would drive the game out into the open. The hunters then would destroy the game, also considered military training, while fertilizing the new fields.\textsuperscript{65} The rulers also held large herds of livestock. The number of animals needed for the ritual process, as well as the bone workshop, demanded an organized force to breed and domesticate cattle, sheep, pigs, deer, dogs, and horses. In fact, oracle-bone inscriptions indicate that one ritual could require the sacrifice of 100, 300, or 500 cattle, 100 sheep, 200 pigs, and 100 dogs.\textsuperscript{66}

A portion of the Shang Dynasty’s economic stability relied on the tribute offerings of their dependents and allies. The vassal state leaders would send human beings, frequently Qiang prisoners, for ritual sacrifice. However, the greatest tribute offerings were the turtle shells and cattle scapulas sent in for ritual. This tribute was so important that great care was taken in documenting the number received and who sent them in the sockets of the scapulas or on the bridges of the plastrons. There was no tribute schedule, in fact most tributes occurred on an irregular basis and occasionally the king in return for a tribute offered cowries, cattle, sheep, and weapons. However, tributes

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 279.
\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 280.
to the king were more than economically beneficial, they were also evidence of the support for the dynasty.\textsuperscript{67}

In addition to farming and animal management, the royal house also had a manufacturing system set up to produce handicrafts. Evidence shows that there was extensive division of labor and specialization of craft. For instance, one bone workshop exclusively made hairpins. Another produced ritual vessels, and yet another weaponry. Organized labor was the fundamental source of state power in ancient China.\textsuperscript{68} They consisted of laborers of low, commoner status who were organized by an emerging central elite.\textsuperscript{69} Their duties included serving in the army, building temple-palaces, excavating tombs, hauling supplies, clearing and farming the land, and worked in various production roles in the manufacturing industry.\textsuperscript{70} However, “of all the goods that constituted wealth in ancient China, including jade, cowrie, gold, ivory, and ceramics, bronze alone was so labor intensive and required such a high level of technological expertise that its significance as an indicator of power was unequaled.”\textsuperscript{71} It required an incredible operation to make these sophisticated products. In fact, the workforce required to make an eight hundred kilogram like the \textit{Square Ding Dedicated to Mother Wu}, would be two to three hundred craftsmen, not to mention the laborers needed to mine and smelt the ore.\textsuperscript{72} The Shang were able to enhance primitive metallurgy techniques to produce bronze. The ore, once found had to be protected and mined from pits over 150 feet deep,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[67]Ibid., 281-282.
\item[68]Ibid., 282.
\item[69]Ibid., 291.
\item[70]Ibid., 285.
\item[71]DeWoskin, "The Power of Bronze," 50.
\item[72]Ledderose, \textit{Ten Thousand Things}, 48.
\end{footnotes}
not an easy task considering copper is only in a small portion of the ore that is found. Evidence shows that the copper was smelted at the mine site and then transported to the artisan’s kilns. Smelting the metal required furnaces heated through huge fires where the temperature could be controlled all the way through the cooling process to prevent cracking or weakening in the molecular structure of the ingots produced. Once the artisans received the ingots they used an upside-down casting technique with segmented decorative molds. It is staggering to realize that within the confines of crude equipment and only an oral tradition for record keeping, that within a few hundred years their manufacturing process could be perfected. Some of the bronze objects found to date are as large as three feet in height, and were cast in two stages. Further, the surfaces of the bronze vessels were covered in decorative embellishment. The decorative embellishment was intricate, symmetrical, and encompassed or became an extension of a stylized animal mask, whose meaning is still being debated. The earlier cultures of this region used animal masks in their shamanistic rituals to assist in the communication with the dead. Since the bronze vessels were used for the same purpose during ritual ceremony the animal mask seems relevant. Further the bronze casters produced bells that were to be suspended and played in a graduated set. Research has shown that after 1000 B.C.E. each bell had been cast to play not one tone, but two depending on what side the bell was struck. Achieving particular tones with the bell sets was not a priority for the Shang

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74 Debaine-Francfort, *The Search for Ancient China*, 58.
kings or the casters as it would be for the Zhou. This entire industry must have required countless laborers and artisans organized and managed to attain such feats evident in the bronze relics found from the Shang era.

Shang Social Structure

Ritual events were very elaborate and at the heart of the Shang’s socio-political power. Kinship structure and hierarchy were established as the roles of family were prescribed in the ritual performances. Further, ancestor worship was practiced within the narrow context of the family. This strengthened the family cohesiveness, but weakened the general sense of social responsibility. The hierarchy that the religious belief created was a social status that was reinforced, even in death. When a member of the royal lineage died, they would be buried with numerous grave goods, sacrificial humans and animals in a multiple level or room tomb during a prolonged ritual event. The deceased would be placed in elaborate halls with numerous attendants, surrounded by familiar objects. Kings remained kings and servants still served him. When an officer or petty elite died, they would have been buried with some grave goods, usually ceramic instead of bronze and possibly a human or animal sacrifice. When a common laborer died, they would have been buried in a wooden coffin, at best. Most often they were just covered with a cloth, however, they would have been buried with a replica of their career tools.

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76 Ibid., 229.
77 Lu, Rhetoric in Ancient China, 49.
78 Smith and Yu, Ringing Thunder, 42.
Kinship to the living members of the royal house, as well as, the ancestors they worshipped was used to reinforce the hierarchy, even though the wealth was not distributed equally amongst those members. Since the king served as the only channel for communication with the Shang Di, he had absolute power in the social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{80} Within this hierarchy, main line descendents wielded more power than the collateral line descendents. The common laborer whose beliefs are based on those that he is taught and having never known another social system would never question his place or obligation. Further, a member of Shang society would never question or try to attain a higher social status since he is not related to a king, who has promoted that social mobility is not the law of Di. Archaeological evidence shows by the number of attendants that were entombed with their king, that the social hierarchy and service obligations continued after death.\textsuperscript{81} So with all of these historical and ritual influences, the king and his sons’ function at the central core of the Shang dynasty. Then there are the members of the royal house followed by the officers, artisans, noblemen that live within the palace compound. Beyond the compound are the officers and chiefs of the various regions that delegate duties to their officers who specialize in certain labor areas. At the bottom of the social structure is the common laborer. Although inconclusive, there may have been slave society below the social standing of the commoner. Further, the prisoners captured were not used as slave laborers, but were instead executed en masse during ritual ceremonies. Although many scholars have speculated that a slave society existed, others

\textsuperscript{80} Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 50.
\textsuperscript{81} Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 290.
suggest since there are no written records of slave labor that the Shang society was not able to absorb slave labor. The humans that were sacrificed during rituals were essentially enemies of the state and there is no evidence that implies they were employed in any labor prior to their execution. In fact one scholar notes, “no legal concept of individual rights existed, it is more useful to characterize Shang society in terms of degrees of dependency and privilege, rather than slavery and freedom.”

It is only in this privileged position that a member of Shang society would have come in contact with the ritual bells. In fact it is unlikely that anyone outside of this privileged family group ever heard the bells in performance. However, the privileged few that did witness the bells were reminded of who had the divine power and the wealth in their society. Bell ownership was a costly venture, owned and controlled by the state.

The capitals, where the privileged class resided, were all very complex consisting of large palaces, temples, and alters. Only the royal lineage and its collateral kinship lived in this central cult core. Outside the core area, there were settlements that consisted of the king’s officers, chiefs, and rulers. These settlements were independent and each one had a specific function. For instance, in the literature of the period there is a reference made to the king visiting the “Dog Officer” at Cheng. These sites included the industrial areas such as, bronze, pottery, and stone foundries, as well as, a significant number of farms, worked by labor gangs under the control of an officer. Beyond the settlements were small houses and then burial grounds. The social structure of the royal

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82 Ibid., 286.
83 von Falkenhausen, Suspended Music, 32.
84 Loewe and Shaughnessy, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, 272.
85 Ibid., 278.
capital was complex, but consistent with the Shang political ideology. If the king wanted to expand his domain, he would send a party out to physically, methodically build it and fill it with people. This militaristic style process was as controlled as every other aspect of society. The towns were unable to naturally grow, but were predetermined by the king. Archeologists have discovered a few dozen of these towns, but according to oracle bone inscriptions, almost a thousand Shang towns existed.  

Finally, the hierarchy that existed in the Shang society could also be reflected in its treatment of the dead. The social status of the deceased was reflected in the size of the grave or tomb, the number of grave goods, as well as the number of animal and human sacrifices performed for the event. Early in the Shang burial ritual, human sacrifice was common and profuse. For example in one royal tomb found in Yinxu, there is skeletal evidence of about two thousand human sacrifices. Social status was determined initially by military power that evolved into an aristocracy that controlled labor forces and resources. These resources were unfairly divided within the society and the division was justified through a reiteration of rituals and beliefs.

**Shang Literature and Education**

This dynasty is the dawn of literature. Extant evidence currently indicates that the Shang culture was the first to create a written language and used the language to

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document issues of the dynastic state, a reflection of the organization of the state.\(^89\)

There are no written texts in the traditional sense, but record keeping abounded. The Shang developed their language around 3,000 pictograms and ideograms.\(^90\) The earliest known documentation came from the oracle-bone inscriptions used for rituals, but would evolve to notations recording the number of enemy slain, the amount of booty recovered during a battle, and detailed head counts of animals secured during a hunt.\(^91\) It is evident by the inscriptions used on the oracle-bones for the ritual setting that the Shang had tremendous respect for the power of the written word.\(^92\) For state records scribes would also record “speeches given by the king, conversations between the king and his ministers, government proclamations, requests from dukes and subordinates, imperial genealogical information, and political or military actions taken by the king.”\(^93\) The interiors of the bells would be inscribed with the name of the ancestor or ancestress for which it was dedicated. It wouldn’t be until the Zhou dynasty that bronze bell inscriptions would become more prevalent and lengthy. Written language during the Shang period was limited to a select few. The scribe responsible for the script was part of the king’s entourage and written language was not available, not seen, not known to most members of the Shang society. Most communication shared through the generations was done so through an oral tradition. There was a rich tradition of producing ballads, folk songs, and poems. Oral poetry started with the working class, who sang songs

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\(^93\) Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China*, 53.
resembling the sounds of their work and were easily memorized. These songs typically described life experiences or expressions of feelings. They were used to reduce fatigue and exchange information regarding work skills and reinforce the cultural values promoted by the ruling class. The songs performed during ritual events, served the functions of creating moral codes, unifying people, making aesthetic appeals, and transmitting cultural information. A collection of oral poems from the Shang dynasty, *Shang Song*, part of the text, *Shi Jing* (Book of Odes) illustrates two types of poems. One type illustrates ritual settings and the other reminds the listeners of the king’s bravery. “Unlike the oral poems improvised by working-class people, these poems, carefully crafted by highly educated diviners or religious seers, were indicative of the increasing aesthetic and moral consciousness of the Shang people, along with the marked division between literate and illiterate classes.”

If an education system existed it was only in the workshops of the artisans. There were four types of discourse used at the time: (1) mythic discourse, used to share myths and legends among tribal members; (2) ritualistic discourse, exclusively used by heads of families at ceremonies honoring their ancestors; (3) spiritual discourse, conveyed through divination to Shang Di and other celestial spirits; and (4) political discourse, used by the ministers to give advice to the king. The social elites who used these methods of discourse did so to create cultural codes and played a crucial role in defining Chinese thought patterns, modes of communication, and cultural orientations in subsequent dynasties.

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94 Ibid., 52.
95 Ibid., 54.
**Shang Bell Ownership**

Bells during the Shang Dynasty represented the most powerful tool of communication. Music, and therefore bells, was the direct link between the heavenly world and the Shang world. The Shang culture believed that the heavenly powers controlled all aspects of their lives and created a strict regulation for those who were allowed to negotiate at that level. But how did this level of regulation begin? By applying Michel Foucault’s theory of the production of 'knowledge', it is possible to identify the formation of these rules that would reflect the cultural structure of the Shang Dynasty.

Music in China has a long history and from all extant evidence found from the Shang culture, it and the bell was well indoctrinated into the culture before 1600 B.C.E. Following Foucault’s theory, 'knowledge' about bell ownership would have been constructed on 'truths'. The 'truths' used to this end were created to protect and justify the king's authority. This was achieved by promoting the ‘truth’ that bells could be used as a medium to communicate to the gods. The Shang allowed the bells to be used only during the king’s rituals, justifying this regulation through the ‘myth’ that through his kinship and filial ties to the gods would be the only person worthy of the task. Foucault asserts that this ‘knowledge' must gain authority. In the case of the Shang, three factors played a part in this development. First, the king being the highest member of the conical clan, and again, through filial piety, commanding the highest honor of the palace would be the family member closest in hierarchy to the lower gods. The king declares that he is the
only person allowed to own bells, then his authority will not be questioned. Secondly, music could be used to create emotions, including fear. If the king has command of the bells that creates fear in those who hear it, then it reinforces his power. Finally, the king through organized labor and artisans had the bells created. The bells were freshly cast bronze, very large and covered with abstract animal detail. Alone even without the musical tones, they must have been powerful icons of the court and would have required the command of hundreds of artisans and laborers to produce. Another factor to Foucault's theory is to consider how society deals with those who own bells (king) and ‘the Other’. Lead by the king, the Shang society allowed only the king to own bells and eventually in late Shang, the sitting kings granted permission for certain people to own them so they may worship "his" gods. The final step in the creation of ‘knowledge’ is the acknowledgement that a different discourse will eventually arise and replace the existing one giving new definitions to the term bell owners and ‘the Other’. This occurred when the Shang kings granted permission to the distant vassal lords to own bells so they could have their own rituals in the king’s name.

Shang Conclusion

Bells were tools used by the most powerful to flaunt their authority. However, through the course of the Shang dynasty that authority became compromised. The signified message of the bronze bell does not change; it is power. However, those that are allowed to access that power does change over time based on the needs of those in control. This is due to the evolving 'truth', which created a new definition of bell owner.
During the Western Zhou dynasty bell ownership becomes even more dispersed. In the late 12th century B.C.E., the Shang dynasty was overthrown by Wu, the king of Zhou. Ironically, Zhou was one of Shang’s vassal states.
CHAPTER 3
WESTERN ZHOU PERIOD (ca. 1045 – 771 B.C.E.)

The Zhou culture dates back to the 13th century B.C.E., originating from the northwest of China. They gradually expanded eastwards and then, claiming to have a Mandate from Heaven overthrew the Shang dynasty in 1045 B.C.E.96 With this shift in power came evolutions in the government structure, class structure, economic life, the number of people who were educated, as well as the ritual process. Jessica Rawson states:

A shared material culture seems to have permeated and influenced an immense area: from Baoji, Shaanxi in the west to Beijing in the northeast is a distance of about 1250 km; the region is approximately 800 km north to south in some places. Obviously, it would be unrealistic to claim that the Zhou controlled this whole area in detail. However, it is evident that the lengths of their lines of communication were exceptionally impressive. Moreover, similarity of material implies centralized direction not only of political relations, seen in royal gifts and the implements of war, but also of practical matters, such as the organization of foundries, and of ideological ones, such as ritual and belief. The Zhou achievement thus lay in creating a large unified state, unified at least in terms of an elite culture, where none has existed on this scale before.97

The Zhou rule is divided into two periods. The first is the Western Zhou period that reflects the term when the capital was located in the west at a site near modern Xi’an, Shaanxi Province. In 771 B.C.E. the capital was moved eastward to a site near modern Louyang, Henan Province and this period is known as the Eastern Zhou period.

96Debaine-Francfort, The Search for Ancient China, 70.
Western Zhou Government

According to the inscriptions on the ritual vessels from the early Zhou dynasty, the early Zhou rulers were very conscious that they had usurped the Shang. With that the Zhou rulers began a marketing campaign that justified their actions because, “Heaven deliberately shifted its allegiance to a more virtuous line.” The Western Zhou have been attributed with the concept of bureaucratic government, by implementing a feudal structure. The government structure throughout the Shang dynasty and up to the middle of the 9th century B.C.E. had been organized on kinship relationships. Sons, cousins, and brothers were appointed rulers for the colonized territories. Following a disastrous defeat in a military campaign in which the king and most of the royal army had been killed, there was a shift in how these appointments were assigned. Documentation shows that individuals were assigned these roles that had no apparent familial ties to the king or the royal house. The restructuring of the court system eventually lead to new social and intellectual developments. The vassal states had autonomous power, their own land, and military troops. By the end of the Western Zhou period, the Zhou land would be divided into more than 170 feoffments. The Shang ancestor worship and divination practices were still used by the Zhou. However, whereas the Shang believed that Shang Di had the ultimate power; the Zhou believed the gods were in a separate sphere. The

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100 Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 293.
101 Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China* 55.
responsibility of moral judgment shifted from the Heavenly Mandate to a code of conduct that should be followed by humans. This change was brought about with the concept of the Mandate in Heaven. Rulers, who did not treat their people well, did not deserve to rule. However, this idea did make the ruler the accountable for all human affairs.¹⁰³ Virtue through benevolent governing would become the maxim of the Mandate of Heaven. The following is an excerpt taken from a speech given by Duke Zhou to a future king of Zhou:

O Feng, we must be clear about this. I want to advise you the ways you can execute benevolent governing and how you can invite punishment. Now people are restless. If we do not comfort and repeatedly educate them, Heaven will punish us. We cannot complain. Now, the crimes are not that serious or prevalent yet and Heaven has not heard all of them. Well, Feng, you must be cautious; do not make enemies; do not use bad strategies; do not adopt unfair measures, for they would block your sincerity. You should govern benevolently so that you can reassure the public. Remember their [common people’s] kindness and virtue; be flexible in taxing them; provide them with food and clothing. When people are peaceful, Heaven will not blame or abandon you.¹⁰⁴

This speech shows that the power is now partially controlled by the people. However, this does not imply that a democratic form of government was forming. The first Western Zhou king, King Wu 1049/45-1043, decreed in the Law of the Imperial Zhou:

Death to anyone who disturbs the government by initiating reforms; death to anyone who confuses people by making lascivious noise, wearing barbaric clothes, exhibiting strange skills, and using strange utensils; death to anyone who confuses people through adherences to wrong doings, arguing for sophistry, studying unorthodox thoughts, and rebelling against authority; death to anyone who confuses people by practicing witchcraft, astrology, and fortune telling.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Lu, Rhetoric in Ancient China, 55.
¹⁰⁴Ibid., 59.
¹⁰⁵Ibid., 60.
There was no tolerance for anything that was not institutionally sanctioned. Much later, that would change during the reigns of King Cheng and King Kang, 1042/35-1006 and 1005/3-978 B.C.E.. Chinese history would describe the time as, ”more than forty years during which punishments were not applied.”

This sort of loosening of the reigns must have affected the control that the government had over its people. Without any repercussions, an entire generation would have experienced living in a society where more personal freedom must have been exercised. Shortly after the reign of King Kang, another king, King Mu (956-918 B.C.E.), was credited as having set up the first systematic legal code.

In addition, the colonies established earlier in the Zhou dynasty were now controlled by second and third generation cousins whose identification with the Zhou court was diminishing. This forced the king to rely on a bureaucracy based on reputation instead of personal ties. There is also evidence that like the Shang, the kings of the Western Zhou period became distant to their subjects. In the last twenty years of the Western Zhou period, there was an attempt by the last king, King Yi, to revitalize the struggling empire by returning to the traditional values and practices, but it was to no avail. In fact, during his reign, the Zhou army invaded and attacked one of the many vassal states that had been established under his rule and is an indication of his

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107 Ibid., 322.
108 Ibid., 323.
109 Ibid., 326.
110 Ibid., 329.
diminishing authority.\textsuperscript{111} This event would spark a number of counterattacks by other powerful vassal states over the following decades on the weakening Zhou court. It is during this period that bronze vessels take on a more political role than religious one. Long inscriptions cast into them indicate that they were used to memorialize political events and record gifts between monarchs and subjects. The bronze vessels for religious rituals were used to sanctify secular events and political relationships.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Western Zhou Religion}

During the Western Zhou period many of the same practices of the Shang were followed by the Zhou, however by the middle of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E. there was a change in the size of the ritual event. Documentation indicates that the rituals evolved from private matters with only family members participating to events performed by ritual specialists in front of a large audience.\textsuperscript{113} There were also changes in the ritual vessels used during the events. Stylistically the vessels still reflected the Shang, but by the 9\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E., the vessels were used in sets. Whereas one vessel would have served in the past, now it required several vessels of the same shape and decorations. The scale of the vessel sets also grew to massive proportions. All of this undoubtedly played to the high drama that the ritual event required for the growing audience.\textsuperscript{114} At the center of this “ritual revolution” are the bronze bells.\textsuperscript{115} The inscriptions on the bells were

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{111}Ibid., 330.
\bibitem{113}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 332.
\bibitem{114}Smith and Yu \textit{Ringing Thunder}, 45.
\bibitem{115}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 360.
\end{thebibliography}
longer and they were embellished in an abstract, sober style.\textsuperscript{116} Owners of the bell expanded to include military men, as they were the most traveled of the patrons.\textsuperscript{117}

The Zhou people also practiced \textit{ba gua} (eight diagrams), a method of divination guided by \textit{Zhou Yi} (the Book of Change), which viewed the universe from a philosophical and metaphysical orientation. As a result, “the purpose of divination greatly changed from the quest for fortune, predictions about the weather, and information concerning the outcome of military expeditions to acquiring insights into how to maintain a balanced life and become a moral person.”\textsuperscript{118}

\textit{Western Zhou Economic Life}

The sheer number bronze pieces recovered from this period to date give an indication of the flourishing bronze industry of the period. In addition, the filial reigns of distant regions were beginning to shift to commoners.\textsuperscript{119} This change in social mobility undoubtedly affected the economic structures of the lower and new emerging middle class. Wealth was no longer guaranteed to be a benefit of filial ties to the king, nor was poverty considered a permanent burden for the lower classes. The bronze industry experienced a seamless transition from the Shang to the Western Zhou authority. The Zhou aristocrats maintained the Shang rituals.\textsuperscript{120} During the late Western Zhou period, the unstable political environment could be reflected in the diminishing metallurgical

\textsuperscript{116}Debaine-Francfort, \textit{The Search for Ancient China}, 72.
\textsuperscript{117}Bagley, \textit{The Great Bronze Age of China}, 29.
\textsuperscript{118}Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 55.
\textsuperscript{119}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 546.
\textsuperscript{120}Smith and Yu, \textit{Ringing Thunder}, 46.
standards.\textsuperscript{121} There are no written sources to specify how the bronze foundries were organized, but some conclusions have been drawn by studying the bronze vessels themselves.\textsuperscript{122} Division of labor was required to complete the production process. While some workers prepared the bronze, others carved the molds, a very time-consuming stage in the production process. One craftsman may have carved all the mold pieces required for one vessel. However, if an entire set of vessels were cast, many workers would have to make the necessary molds.\textsuperscript{123}

Standardization was essential in the production system. Individual creativity was limited because even the smallest change could affect any stage of the process, as well as the final acoustic outcome of a graduated set of vessels. The adoption of the pattern block technique separated the artisans carving the decorative elements from the metal-smiths creating the vessels. Because of this, the workshops were reorganized to encourage the level of production. Division of labor allowed the casters to produce great numbers of bronze vessels to meet the growing demand.\textsuperscript{124}

\textit{Western Zhou Social Structure}

During the Western Zhou period the restrictions of class structure began to change. Much of that had to do with the \textit{li}: “law and convention; ritual and civility; and standards of conduct.”\textsuperscript{125} This state promoted ideology was propagated to the common

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Smith and Yu, \textit{Ringing Thunder}, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ledderose, \textit{Ten Thousand Things}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 48.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 49.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 59.
\end{itemize}
people. It was the foundation that was used to create educational programs, social programs for the poor, and creating laws to protect individuals. Another element of this doctrine was shi neng (employing talented people). This allowed people based on competency to hold official positions regardless of the kinship ties they did or did not possess. This is the advent of the shi status. Xing Lu describes it as follows:

*Zhou Li* also functioned as a system for evaluating and selecting competent government officials. Any person, no matter the class, was eligible to take exams on the contents of *Zhou Li*. Examinations started at the local level and moved to the state level. After a careful screening process, only those deemed wise, intelligent, and learned were accepted as officials. Shi, a group of individuals of official rank were instrumental in communicating the ideas and ideals of *Zhou Li*. Though shi were not considered members of the aristocracy, their social status was above that of common people, shi were knowledgeable in war strategies, rituals, and moral doctrines. In addition, they organized and participated in religious sacrifice and other ritualistic ceremonies, and some were hired as tutors for the sons of noble families. All such communication channels enforced and reinforced the teaching of *Zhou Li* at both official and local levels. In this way, ideology and moral conduct were standardized. The pressure to conform was great due to the fear of punishment and the hope of advancing up the social ladder.¹²⁶

The *Zhou Li* also had strict rules stipulating bell ownership during this period:

- the Zhou king (wang) was entitled to “palace suspension” (*gong xuan*): set of bells and musical stones on all four sides of the courtyard of the ancestral temple;
- the Many Lords (zhuhou) governing the states surrounding the royal domain were entitled to “awning suspension” (*xuanxuan*): bells and musical stones on three sides of the courtyard;
- the ministers (qing) and magnates (daifu) were entitled to “divided suspension” (*panxuan*): sets of bells and musical stones on two facing sides of the courtyard; and

¹²⁶Ibid., 60-61.
- the noblemen (shi) were entitled to “single suspension” (texuan): bells and musical stones suspended from a single rack on one side of the courtyard.\textsuperscript{127}

The social structure for the period also changed especially after the Reign of King Mu (956-918 B.C.E.). Much of this can be contributed to just a few events. Due to the lack of law enforcement during the reigns of King Cheng and King Kang (1035-978 B.C.E.) society had an opportunity to pursue, enjoy and later expect some measure of personal freedom unlike any that had ever been known. Secondly, by allowing members of society without familial ties to the king to hold positions of power, King Mu allowed the traditional social structure to weaken.\textsuperscript{128} Now upward social mobility was achievable. In addition, with the frequency in which text was used and promoted, there must have been some sort of education system in place in order for members of the society to read it.\textsuperscript{129} Further, now non-familial members were allowed to attend the once very private ritual events.\textsuperscript{130} Now these members of the congregation with their liturgical hymns were part of the “voice” that spoke to the ancestors, a role that during the Shang dynasty had been the king’s alone.\textsuperscript{131} Members of this society who were once suppressed now found another voice, one that composed and openly sang songs and poems that were critical of their government.\textsuperscript{132} Finally, court documentations show that lawsuits were filed over land disputes. This is important for two reasons. First, land ownership was now possible

\textsuperscript{127}von Falkenhausen, \textit{Suspended Music}, 32.
\textsuperscript{128}Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 293.
\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., 298.
\textsuperscript{130}Ibid., 332.
\textsuperscript{131}Ibid., 255.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 335.
for those who were not part of the “royal court” and secondly, the emergence of a middle class. In addition, there is evidence of commoners becoming wealthy and nobles becoming destitute outside of the Zhou feudal structure, which indicates an increase in social mobility in the outlying areas. These outlying areas, with shifts in political and economic control, would eventually lead to the demise of the Western Zhou regime.  

*Western Zhou Literature and Education*

With a shift in communication away from a primarily oral tradition toward a combination of oral and written traditions, ideologies became more abstract and rational. Styles of spoken language also changed from mythic to moral and official. Poems produced during the Zhou period were filled with moral indoctrination. The religious poems used at the ritual events were still performed with music, but not as a means of communicating with the gods. Instead the music was used in conjunction with the poem to reinforce the institutionally approved rituals. In addition to poems, there was also an increase in speeches delivered in public forums. Speeches became vehicles of political persuasion as people began to harness the power of words in changing human perceptions and actions. There is a lot of evidence to research from the Western Zhou period because of the amount of written documentation found in the bronze inscriptions; oracle-bone inscriptions; and the number of poems, songs, and literature that were produced during this period. One of the first texts written was *Classic of Documents*, which is

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133 Ibid., 546.  
135 Ibid., 57.  
136 Ibid., 58.
considered one of the five classic pieces of literature in Chinese historiography. It is one of the founders of the Zhou Dynasty’s, Zhou Gong, thoughts on government. In addition, two other classics, Classic of Changes and Classic of Poetry, were also written during this period. Also like the Shang, the Zhou recorded court events. However, during the Zhou period, these descriptions evolved from factual recordings to precise detailed accounts of court proceedings.

The inscriptions placed on the ritual vessels became longer, promoting the heroics of the donor or an important event. The documentation produced to acknowledge the heroic acts performed by the ruler only served to reinforce the connection between those in power and the ancestors. The nature of the inscriptions would become less and less religious in content. One scholar writes, “enormous effort was sometimes lavished on casting long and elegant inscriptions in vessels that have no pretension to artistic quality. In these cases, at least, the bronze vessel serves as nothing more than the vehicle for an inscription; at times we receive the impression that, for the Zhou nobleman, bronze casting was merely the most prestigious form of publication.” Due to the growing length of inscriptions “bronze masters invented movable type in the 6th century B.C.E.” to accommodate the inscription requests. Further, the Western Zhou were so concerned with the written record that they would record even lower-level appointments in triplicate form. Researchers have found copies of speeches and recorded discussions from the royal house, as well as, liturgical hymns and poems used in the ancestral

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[137] Smith and Yu, Ringing Thunder, 47.
temples, maps, and verdicts in legal cases.\textsuperscript{141} There was also a change in the ritual process where the audience sang communal hymns, which needed to be composed and distributed.\textsuperscript{142} Songs, as well as poems, then became more reflective of the popular culture.\textsuperscript{143}

There were two kinds of educational programs during the Zhou dynasty: \textit{guo xue} (state learning) for aristocratic families; and \textit{xiang xue} (country learning) for the common people. Once a year, a high official would distribute through oral and written pronouncements the official laws of the \textit{Zhou Li}. Great effort was taken to make sure that everyone was aware and understood the laws of \textit{Zhou Li}. Once \textit{Zhou Li} was disseminated, unconditional acceptance was required and those who did not were charged as criminals. Freedom of speech, thought, and action were absolutely forbidden.\textsuperscript{144} Eventually, the advent of correlative thinking took place as a way of offering subtle criticism of the royal government.\textsuperscript{145} This form of critical analysis of the ruling bodies was the springboard for such philosophers as Confucius, Mozi, and many other Eastern Zhou thinkers.\textsuperscript{146}

\textit{Western Zhou Bell Ownership}

During the Western Zhou period, bells still represented symbols of the royal court

\begin{footnotes}
\item[141] Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 299 and 326.
\item[142] Ibid., 332.
\item[143] Ibid., 334.
\item[144] Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 60.
\item[145] Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 336.
\item[146] Ibid., 351.
\end{footnotes}
and power. Music was still used during the ritual events, but was becoming more secular. And like the Shang period, the distribution of bells grew. Considering Michel Foucault’s theory for the development of discourse, it is possible to identify the new 'truths' for bell ownership that were established during the Western Zhou period.

During the Shang Dynasty bells were used as a medium to communicate to the gods. The new ‘truth’ that was created during the Western Zhou period is that bells represented allegiance to the king and his throne. Bell owners expanded to include military heroes and as many as one hundred seventy heads of state for the feoffments, which could now include members without kinship ties to the king and who have passed competency tests to hold those positions. Again following Foucault’s model, this ‘knowledge’ must gain authority. The bell owner's position was justified by either the traditional familial ties to the court or by the intelligent standards judged by the state sanctioned exams. During the Western Zhou period, the Zhou king still had supreme power, albeit diminishing. Further, disobedience was not tolerated which made bell ownership easy to control. As the Western Zhou period comes to an end, the definition of the bell owner continued to change as the king’s power diminished and his vassal states became more autonomous.

Western Zhou Conclusion

During the Western Zhou dynasty bell ownership becomes even more dispersed. The function of the bells became more secular and less tied to the traditional court rituals. With the increase in educational opportunities and manufacturing techniques, a middle
class society is beginning to emerge in the Western Zhou period. However, the Zhou court was becoming less stable with many vying for political power. During the reign of King You (781-771 B.C.E.) political corruption had taken its toll on the court, as well as the king life. The next king, Ping, moved his court and the Zhou capital to the east where his allies were stronger. This begins the period of the Eastern Zhou.
CHAPTER 4

EASTERN ZHOU PERIOD (771-256 BCE)

SPRING AND AUTUMN PERIOD (771-481 BCE)

There are three important political and social developments that took place during the Eastern Zhou period. The first is the transition of power from the Zhou court to the vassal states. Secondly, the political power within the states themselves became very competitive. The third important development during this period is the evolution of the political structure from the old aristocratic order to a more rationalized and centralized polity.\(^{147}\) With the fall of the Western Zhou capital a new capital was moved further east to an area that was less devastated by war and natural disasters called Chengzhou (at present-day Luoyang, Henan). This was also beneficial to a new king whose principal supporters were in this region. The dynasty survived at this new location until 256 B.C.E., though the Eastern Zhou was only a pale shadow of the preceding Western Zhou period.\(^{148}\) The Eastern Zhou period, in turn, has also been divided into two separate periods. The first three centuries are called the Spring and Autumn Period (770-481 B.C.E.), after the *Annuals of the State of Lu*, a history of the period written by Confucius.\(^{149}\) The second period is called the Warring States period (480-256 B.C.E.), which is derived from the *Discourses of the Warring States*, a philosophical and

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\(^{148}\) Ibid., 546-547.

\(^{149}\) Smith and Yu, *Ringing Thunder*, 16.
theoretical document on the delicate balance of alliances in order to retain power during this period. This division is not caused by location of capital, but by the distinct shifts of power, social ideologies, and government structures that occurred during this period. The changes are so marked that they are considered distinct enough to view as two separate periods. The Eastern Zhou period was a time of on-going warfare, cunning statecraft, and opposing philosophies. However, it was also a period cultural, social, and artistic fusion. Improved communications and prospering trade lead to a lively interchange of artistic ideas, resulting in unparalleled flowering of the arts. Regionalism in the arts was also enhanced due to the weakening control of the Zhou dynasty. This allowed the artistic production to become individualized and more secular compared to the traditional state art of the past.

*Spring and Autumn Government*

Once the capital was moved to the east in 770 B.C.E., the feudal structure that existed at the end of the Western Zhou period immediately began to collapse. Under the Western Zhou rule portions of the Zhou territory was delegated to various individuals with whom the king had familial ties. Through the succeeding generations as new rulers inherited the appointed lands or vassal states their ties became more and more distant to their Zhou king. This is especially true for the vassal states that were awarded to

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individuals in exchange for political servitude where no familial ties had ever existed. The Zhou king’s power and influence was reduced to that of a figurehead. The increasing disregard for the royal power and the royal court was evident by a change in traditional protocol. For instance when the first Eastern Zhou ruler, King Ping, died in 720 B.C.E., the duke of Lu did not attend the funeral ceremonies, which was a blatant violation of court etiquette. As the vassal states continued to lose confidence in the Zhou court, many states began to wage war on their weaker neighbor states. The stronger states were able to expand their territories by assuming the smaller ones reducing the number of vassal states from several hundred to less than twenty. Many of the vassal states consisted of non-Zhou people and the remaining vassal states became ethnically and culturally blended groups. For many years the Zhou states were without leadership. The Zhou court had little authority and the various states faced many military threats from the non-Zhou people in the outlying areas of the region. During this time the development of the title Ba occurred, which means senior one. The title was first given to Qi’s Huan Gong (ruled 685-643 B.C.E.) for several reasons. Qi was one of the larger states and because of its location it profited from interstate trade, coastal salt flats, and various industries like textiles and fishing. Huan Gong had also rescued several states from military invasion by their enemies, without usurping their power. One by one each

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157 Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 586
158 Ibid., 547.
159 Ibid, 549.
of the vassal states began to support Ba and followed Huan Gong’s style of rule, which was different than the traditional social and political pyramid based on kinship to the king.\textsuperscript{160} Huan Gong’s state of Qi was divided into fifteen smaller areas with the lord of the state and his two senior ministers each commanding five of the areas. The artisans, craftsmen, farmers, and military were also equally divided and administrators were appointed for each civil or military entity. Each individual’s performance was appraised and either rewarded or punished. Compared to the more loosely structured Zhou states, the new distribution system allowed for a more efficient allocation of the state’s human and material resources.\textsuperscript{161} In addition, Huan Gong held interstate meetings, in which rulers from all of the states would convene and discuss issues and ethics. All of these reforms were positioned as a means of “restoring the authority of the Son of Heaven” while serving the “function of guardian of the Zhou feudal system.”\textsuperscript{162} The reforms put forth by Huan Gong and the subsequent Ba system eventually replaced the feudal structure and by the sixth century B.C.E. China was a multi-state system.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Spring and Autumn Religion}

The ritual bronze vessels used during the Western Zhou period slowly evolved artistically into wild imaginative style. The motifs were borrowed from the western and southern regions, illustrating the influence of blended cultures. Also, the zoomorphic and relief designs became more and more exuberant and expressive. The ritual vessels reflect

\textsuperscript{160}Ibid., 553-555.
\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., 554.
\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 555.
\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., 564-565.
the movements and development of theological ideology of the period. With more opportunities to speak or listen to public debate and the increasing production of written text, the early Chinese recognized the power of symbols and language in shaping their thoughts and arguments.  

Through the promotion of new education systems for all social classes, critical thinking and individual morality was encouraged. This allowed a break from the traditional religious teachings that were interwoven with the strict class structures and limited empowerment. This change is also evident in the burial tombs. During the Shang and Western Zhou periods social stratification was still emphasized. Persons of nobility in this life continued to be nobility and lowly persons continued to be lowly. These ideas were difficult to change. But eventually the concepts did evolve to the point that by the Warring States period, it was believed that anyone, including the lowly servant, could attain ascension in the afterlife.

Spring and Autumn Economic Life

During the Spring and Autumn period, land ownership increased and personal wealth became more attainable. In addition to the changes in land ownership, economic changes occurred with improved technology in metallurgy. Bronze, copper, iron, and steel were used to make any number of objects, both utilitarian and decorative. With these advances and improved farming techniques the traditional network of wealth distribution slowly changed to a market economy. As part of interstate agreements,

\footnotesize{164} Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China*, 67.  
\footnotesize{165} Li, *Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations*, 486-487.  
\footnotesize{166} Ibid., 487-488.
secured highway and waterway systems were established enabling a flourishing trade industry. Further, trading and material wealth flourished so much that a minted coin system was instituted. Some of those in the lower social classes were unable to escape their poverty, as documentation shows that some members of this class were required to live on financial loans and sustenance from the emerging middle class and wealthy in order to survive.\textsuperscript{167} The bronze casting industry was greatly affected by the shift in power from a central Zhou court to the local governments.\textsuperscript{168} In an effort to justify their newly gained power, local princes commissioned bronze vessels at an incredible rate. The bronze vessels were used to mimic the traditional courtly events and rituals. Bronze vessels were also used more frequently for banquets and festivities in more secular realms. There was also an increase in giving the vessels as a wedding dowry or as a good faith emblem in diplomatic interactions. The richly inlaid bronzes from the latter half of the period were sought not only by the feudal princes, but also by the newly prosperous merchant class, who used them to justify their social position. Due to the demand, the regional bronze-producing centers began to flourish creating their own distinct style. The increased demand for ritual bronzes changed the bronze vessels in two ways. First, as production increased in the foundries, there is clear evidence that the quality of the bronze vessels diminished.\textsuperscript{169} Also, the manufacturing process became more streamlined. For example, the excavations done at Houma indicate that the different industries—bone carving, ceramics, and bronze casting industry itself were specialized. Some of those

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 582.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Bagley, \textit{The Great Bronze Age of China}, 31.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 32
\end{itemize}
industries were responsible for producing just one type of commodity. The bronze industries at Houma produced many types of objects, ranging from ritual vessels of all shapes and sizes, to bells, horse and chariot fittings, mirrors, belt hooks, and bronze coins. Extant evidence shows that the section-mold method of production was still being used, but that a series of master stamps were used to detail the molds with the repeated patterns. The Shang and Western Zhou bronze pieces were made by someone who carved each mold individually. By using the master stamps, the mold maker could embellish the mold very quickly using a reusable stamp. This technique was developed due to the growing commercialization of the bronze works and the need to mass-produce them.\(^{170}\)

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**Spring and Autumn Social Structure**

With the transition from the former Zhou feudal system to the *Ba* system, access to education through the *shi* class, and the beginning of humanist discourse; there was opportunity for upward social mobility that had never existed before. During the Western Zhou feudal system, all lands and resources belonged to the king. All of the king’s subjects were fiefs expected to work their craft or a portion of a farm in exchange for food, clothing and shelter. The following poem called “Seventh Month” from the *Classic of Poetry* illustrates the hardships faced by those who existed in a life of servitude:

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\begin{align*}
\text{In the seventh month the Fire Star passes the meridian:} \\
\text{In the ninth month clothes are given out.} \\
\text{In the days of [our] first month, the wind blows cold;} \\
\text{In the days of [our] second, the air is cold.} \\
\text{Without coats, without garments of hair,}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{170}\)Ibid., 36.
How could we get to the end of the year?
In the days of [our] third month we take our plows in hand;
In the days of [our] fourth month we make our way to the fields.
Along with wives and children,
We eat in those south-lying acres.
The surveyor of the fields come and is glad.\textsuperscript{171}

The Zhou feudal system was replaced by the \textit{Ba} system, meaning superior one, which developed from the states battling for control. The rulers of the states required the farmers to pay a tax in kind. As Cho-Yun Hsu observes, “tax based on production from land held by the peasant was tacit recognition that the farmer was entitled to use the particular piece of land. In other words, it entitled ownership, or at least tenure of land.”\textsuperscript{172} This encouraged the peasants to increase their productivity. They began to plant for summer and autumn harvests, which lead to crop rotation and the beginning of intensive farming.

\textit{Spring and Autumn Literature and Education}

The Spring and Autumn period is known for having dramatic changes in the education and intellectual development. This period is known as \textit{bai jia zheng ming} (contentions of one hundred schools of thought), was defined as a period of free expression, critical thinking, and intellectual vigor.\textsuperscript{173} Some of the most important changes that occurred during this period were within the educational system that prior to the Spring and Autumn period had been controlled by the government for the elite. The

\textsuperscript{171} Loewe and Shaughnessy, \textit{The Cambridge History of Ancient China}, 576.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Ibid.}, 577.
\textsuperscript{173} Lu, \textit{Rhetoric in Ancient China}, 66.
educational system changed as a result of the changes in political structure and social system in two respects. First, private institutions emerged and flourished. Confucius was credited with bringing about this change. During the Western Zhou period, members of the noble class were called *shi*. The *shi* were more than just aristocratic warriors, but were trained to take part in civil duties, as well. They received training in the following areas: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics.\(^{174}\) The most influential of the *shi* was Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) whose philosophies would transform the ancient Chinese culture.\(^{175}\) During this time private institutions of learning opened their doors to the rich and the poor alike. The teaching methods were interactive, with free exchange between the teacher and the students. “Likewise, individualistic and critical thinking was encouraged, with governments, officials, kings, and princes often the targets of criticism and attack.”\(^{176}\) As the Zhou feudalism changed to the *Ba* system, there was competition amongst the states to recruit and retain the best and most capable people for such roles as sheriff, judges, stewards, and advisors. These roles required men who had not only intellectual abilities, but also moral integrity. Many of the roles were filled by former nobles who had lost their position when their former state had been assumed by the larger, more powerful states. The noblemen shared their education with those who in the past had no access to literacy and learning.\(^{177}\) Art historian, Cho-Yun Hsu writes:

This shift from consideration of status to that of competence eventually ushered in a new criterion of social preference. The term *shi* thus acquired a new definition,

\(^{175}\)Ibid., 583.
\(^{176}\)Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China*, 63.
\(^{177}\)Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 583.
now referring to a person of excellence, one with high capabilities as well as character; it came to refer to a cultural status rather than social grouping. This new cultural elite brought a new consciousness of their responsibility to serve the world. It was a mentality that nurtured many of the best minds of the time to devote themselves to the task of defining and disseminating ideas.178

There are several documented incidents that occurred to reflect the influence of the new policy. One occurred in 625 B.C.E. when the recently deceased Lu Xi Gong was positioned in a more prestigious location than his predecessor. Traditionally, Lu Xi Gong would have never been given a higher ancestral honor over a predecessors whose ancestral ties and therefore, celestial ties would have been stronger. Regardless of the amount of debate this action caused, Lu Xi Gong’s alter placement was finally accepted. Also, in 536 B.C.E. the first legal code was cast in metal. This illustrates a confidence in the morality and judgment of those in society. The traditionalists unsuccessfully argued that if the commoners knew the legal statutes, they would no longer respect the traditions and become unlawful.179 This also reflects a newly established discord for those members of society, a discord that was brought about with the philosophy of Confucius. Confucius was raised in an aristocratic family that lived in exile from its former vassal state. He remembered his aristocratic past, but while growing up was required to work many humble jobs. As art historian, Cho-Yun Hsu writes:

Confucius had a family history that reflected the downward social mobility of many noble houses of the Spring and Autumn period. He retained a memory of the past glory, but had the experience of leading a life of service. It was a condition that made Confucius a marginal person in both the upper and lower classes of the post-feudal society. The former status gave him knowledge of the roles, rituals, etiquette, and code of conduct of the old aristocrats, while the latter

178Ibid., 584.
179Ibid., 585.
inspired him to envision a world where humans could transcend class background.180

Spring and Autumn Bell Ownership

During the Spring and Autumn period, bells still represented symbols of the royal court and power. Music and bells were still used for court events. However due to the new Ba system of government, there were many more ministers to manage the state. This increased the demand for bells. Following Michel Foucault’s model for development of discourse, it is possible to identify the changes and formation of new rules of bell ownership during the Spring and Autumn period. New 'truths' were created to form 'knowledge' about bells and bell ownership. Initially during the Spring and Autumn period bell ownership was limited to those who were assigned government power. This 'knowledge' gained authority due to the less stringent rules for attaining power in the Eastern Zhou society. This can be attributed to the implementation of the Ba system, which allowed anyone with a certain level of intellect and moral authority, regardless of birthright, to rule at the local level. Leaders at the local level could own bells for their administrative duties. The bells were still seen as power symbols, but only as icons of a dying court system. Also the transition from Western Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period, reflected a freer society that could purchase bells. The authority grew as individual rights and wealth grew, making bell purchases possible. In this instance the traditional institution had lost its power and could no longer control bell ownership. The traditional institution had lost its authority over the people, who were

180Ibid., 585-586.
now influenced by the new authority created by the Ba. The definition of the bell owner changed again with the purchase of bells by the merchant class. Bell ownership was limited only by the ever-improving economic conditions instead of the traditional social restrictions. This would become the new 'truth'.

Spring and Autumn Conclusion

The Spring and Autumn period is remembered as a time of change brought on by new philosophical ideals that touched all aspects of the Chinese culture. This change allowed for upward social mobility that affected one’s education, social standing, personal wealth, and religious beliefs all based upon an individual’s ability and intellect instead of their family lineage. The ideals of equality, ability, intellect, and individuality were recognized and encouraged.

WARRING STATES PERIOD (481-256 B.C.E.)

Documentation from the Warring States period unfortunately is very sparse. Even though literacy and state documentation flourished during this period, much of those materials have been lost. Oftentimes when a victorious ruler gained control of a weaker state, the records of the weaker state were systematically destroyed, or perhaps even rewritten to reflect a more favorable opinion of the new ruler. However, with the surviving documentation scholars have been able to piece together an impression of this period. As the number of states grew fewer and fewer, the remaining states would mobilize mass peasant armies for their defense. The Warring States Period was a time
when a few powerful states controlled large geographic areas rich in natural resources that funded large standing armies. Shrewd diplomacy was the only measure smaller states with limited resources could employ to maintain an indefinite autonomy. States would vie for the most brilliant of political advisors, who would promote their schemes in an effort to protect the state’s position in the unstable political climate. Commanding forces rose during this period to disrupt the unity that had been established during the Spring and Autumn period. This included not only the old kinship ties to the traditional court, but also the diversity of the merging cultures and their artistic influences. This atmosphere served to challenge the existing intellectual, political, economic, and social models of the period. Further, with a new breed of social elite infatuated by power, conspicuous consumption drove industries to the point of mass production. During the years that followed the Spring and Autumn period, the multi-state system that had been so successful in bringing order to the crumbling regime became increasingly competitive. This competition brought about an endless series of violent civil wars starting at the end of the Spring and Autumn period and continuing throughout the Warring States period. However, the social and political reforms that took place in the Spring and Autumn period set the stage for not only a political revolution, but also a complete cultural revolution that would later culminate into an early imperial China by the close of the Warring States period. Music of the Warring States period had also transitioned to a more secular realm for entertainment, and away from the liturgical settings of the ancient rites.

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Smith and Yu, *Ringing Thunder*, 16.
Warring States Government

The multi-state system that began in the Spring and Autumn period continued to evolve in the Warring States period and eventually feudalism was replaced by a system of a central authority appointing local officials.\textsuperscript{182} During this period of competitive power, philosophical scholars were often recruited in hopes of securing political stability.\textsuperscript{183} Larger states began to absorb the smaller states competing with each other in wealth and power, while traditional rites lost their significance.\textsuperscript{184} By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, only seven prominent states vied for power: Qi, Yan, Han, Zhao, Wei, Qin, and Chu. Further, the political situation within each state was also unstable. The ministers and lords vied for more power as they attempted to increase their own territory by conquering their neighbors. Ministers and lords would band together to strategize future plans and discuss political questions in what could be considered a summit conference.\textsuperscript{185} Forming a league-like brotherhood, the leaders were even competitive and combative within their own group.\textsuperscript{186} Military advisors and, on occasion, military equipment were sent to insure the delicate political balance remained between the states.\textsuperscript{187} These leaders would mobilize mass peasant armies that had no formal military training, and through battle warfare, specialists would emerge. The specialist, due to the

\textsuperscript{182}Li, \textit{Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations}, 484.
\textsuperscript{184}Debaine-Francfort, \textit{The Search for Ancient China}, 76.
\textsuperscript{185}Lawton, \textit{Chinese Art of the Warring States Period}, 10.
\textsuperscript{186}Li, \textit{Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations}, 7.
Ba system, was awarded his title based on skill, instead of ties to nobility, which would have followed a code of ethics for warfare. These armies and personal retinues of the leaders expanded the scale and sheer brutality of warfare.\footnote{Loewe and Shaughnessy, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, 598.} One particular account occurred in 260 B.C.E. when the entire Chao army surrendered to the Ch’in army, who promised their lives would be spared. “Instead, in an act of wanton savagery even for this period, the Ch’in slaughtered 450,000 Chao captives by burying them alive.”\footnote{Lawton, Chinese Art of the Warring States Period, 13.} In addition, oftentimes a ruler and his entourage would surround themselves with fugitives and refugees from a state they were about to attack. As scholar, Mark Edward Lewis notes, “This support from outsiders and the lower elements of society proved decisive in its victories over rival noble lines. This drawing into service of new social elements, along with new methods to secure their loyalty, defined the Warring States polity.”\footnote{Loewe and Shaughnessy, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, 599.} During this period each state began to encompass their territory with fortress walls for protection against the other states.\footnote{Lawton, Chinese Art of the Warring States Period, 10.} This is a dramatic shift from the open highway systems that were installed during the Spring and Autumn period.

**Warring States Religion**

With the new philosophical ideologies taking root during the Warring States period, changes occurred in the way people viewed their role in relation to the celestial powers. Three ideologies played a significant role in this transition, which ultimately affected religious views and rituals. Each of the philosophies had disciples that traveled
throughout the states attempting to influence those in power. As the number grew smaller, states became more desperate to retain their power and were very open to the influences of the disciples. Many of these philosophies were adopted into all aspects of a state’s culture including religion. Confucius (551 –479 B.C.E.) was the first influential philosopher. Confucius felt that the ideal form of government was that of the traditional Zhou empire in which all would accept the station assigned to them while focusing on their social responsibility to others. The widespread 'knowledge' of Confucian thought can be attributed to two of his disciples, Mencius (ca. 370-ca.300 B.C. E.) and Xunzi (ca. 310-ca 215 B.C.E.). However, each disciple used Confucius’ ideas as a foundation of their own. Mencius emphasized instead of traditional rituals, winning the loyalty of the people through benevolent governing and morally focusing on the goodness of human nature. He promoted new tax and financial measures to improve the livelihood of the commoner’s life and ease their financial burdens. Xunzi, had more of a political and administrative background and was less tied to the traditions of the Zhou court. As scholar, Patricia Buckley Ebrey writes:

He wrote fully argued essays on many of the issues in social, political, and moral philosophy that engaged thinkers of his age. He carried further than either Confucius or Mencius the tendency on Confucianism toward a humanistic and rationalistic view of the cosmos. Divination was to him fine as a social ritual but did not reveal Heaven’s desires or tell anything about the future. He directly attacked Mencius’s argument that human nature is inherently good, claiming to the contrary that men’s inborn tendencies are bad and therefore education is essential.

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193 Ibid., 17.
194 Ibid., 18.
Another important philosophy of the period was Daoism. The foundation of Daoism is surrendering to the spontaneity of celestial processes and the disapproval of the unnatural or artificial. Ebrey writes, “plants and animals act spontaneously in the ways appropriate to them, humans have separated themselves from the Way by plotting and planning, analyzing and organizing.”\footnote{Ibid., 27.} The third influence of the period was that of Legalists. The Legalists believed “that strong government depended not on the moral qualities of the ruler and his officials, as Confucius claimed, but on establishing effective institutional structures” and laws.\footnote{Ibid., 32.} All three of these philosophies were looked at during this period, each overlapping in regions, time, and popularity. All of these influences transitioned the Chinese cosmology from a “heaven-centered to human-centered orientation, from spiritual concerns to moral preoccupations.”\footnote{Lu, Rhetoric in Ancient China, 61.} This period marks the shift in Chinese thought toward an inward focus.\footnote{Lawton, Chinese Art of the Warring States Period, 16.}

\textit{Warring States Economic Life}

The wealth of the metropolis is described in terms of a populace that enjoyed the luxury of musical instruments, fighting cocks, running dogs, dice, and soccer. The crowded streets of the city—always a cause for comment in descriptions of early Chinese cities—were said to be so choked with chariots that hubcaps struck against one another, and pedestrians were so numerous that if they were all to wipe perspiration from their brows at once, a rainfall would result.\footnote{Ibid., 15.}
Before states began to alienate themselves from their neighbors, many commercial trading centers flourished. Many industries were established based on location of natural resources or auspicious geographic conditions, which made them more profitable and contributed to the prosperity of certain urban centers. One industry that flourished was the metal foundries, as they were responsible for supplying weapons for the never-ending military conflicts. These same foundries were also responsible for producing the decorative elements for the courtiers, as well.  

In these government-managed industries there were crafts officers who were responsible for managing, training, and quality control of their craftsmen. In fact, laws were set to insure each craftsman would maintain the volume of productivity. Further, a crafts officer would be charged in the form of produced goods if the quality of work did not meet the government’s standard. If a craftsman committed a crime against the state his fellow craftsmen could also receive physical punishments. In this bustling economy, there were officers in charge of organizing and collecting the state taxes for the goods sold in the government controlled and organized markets.  

As the Warring States period progressed, trade between the urban centers flourished. But rivalries developed between the workshops and their artists as the political situation became more tense. Eventually the trade between the regions ended as cities became more fortified and socially isolated.

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200 Ibid., 14.
201 Li, *Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations*, 471.
Warring States Social Structure

During this period, upward social mobility transcended from those who were most competent and possessed good character, the former shi, to those who had the most wealth. This transition would have compromised the esteemed morality and consciousness that those power positions would have possessed in the past. In fact, most states had some form of a social ranking system, some with as many as twenty designations. The titles were usually awarded with military achievement, but not always. Documentation indicates that titles could be purchased or bestowed on children of titleholders. With a title came certain privileges such as land and housing. One Chu poem, attributed to Qu Yuan called Zhaohun (Summoning the Soul), describes the lavish lifestyle of an aristocrat. It also describes the practice of hiring shamans to call a soul believed to have departed the body to another realm. The shaman entices the soul with two good reasons to return, elsewhere is horrifying and home offers many pleasures. The poem allows researchers to put the vessels, ornaments, and other objects found in these tombs within the context of the living:

Hear while I describe for you your quiet and reposeful home.
High halls and deep chambers, with railings and tiered balconies;
Stepped terraces, storied pavilions, whose tops look on the high mountains;
Lattice doors with scarlet interstices, and carving on the square lintels;
Draftless rooms for winter; galleries cool in summer;
Streams and gullies wind in and out, purling prettily;
A warm breeze bends the melilotus and sets the tall orchids swaying.
Beyond the hall, in the apartments, the ceilings and floors are vermilion,
The chambers of polished stone, with kingfisher curtains hanging from jasper hooks;

__204__ Li, _Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations_, 465.
Bedspreads of kingfisher seeded with pearls dazzling in brightness; 
Arras of fine silk covers the walls; damask canopies stretch overhead... 
Bright candles of orchid-perfumed fat light up flower-like faces that await 
you. . .

The poem continues to describe delicacies served for dinner and entertainment one is 
likely to find upon returning home including secular music played by bells. However, 
not everyone lived at that level of luxury. Typically, workers and their families lived 
within the workshop areas and were sometimes even buried there. One of the seven 
prominent states, Qin, had a legal code that regulated the amount and types of food that 
were allowed to each division of rank. Titles could also afford greater religious 
privileges such as higher tomb placement or more trees planted on the tomb. However, 
as scholar Li Xuegin notes, “because of the incessant differentiation of members of the 
contemporary society, the economic level of members of the lower levels or even title 
less persons sometimes exceeded that of people with higher titles.” Whether out of 
tradition or belief, grave goods still play a prominent role in the burial process. Extant 
evidence indicates that a social hierarchy was maintained in the tombs. According to 
archeological records, the following illustrates the typical findings in tombs and graves 
for the social rankings listed in Warring States period texts:

I. Tombs with burial chambers featuring partial sets of bronze vessels, high 
quality ceramic mingqi, and utilitarian ceramics; assigned to Upper shi (shangshi), the lowest tier of the landholding aristocracy.

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205 Smith and Yu, Ringing Thunder, 111.
207 Li, Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilization, 465.
208 Loewe and Shaughnessy, The Cambridge History of Ancient China, 462.
209 Li, Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilizations, 466.
II. Tombs with burial chambers that contain for the most part sets of utilitarian ceramics, augmented sometimes by a small number of ritual vessels made of pottery or bronze (these tombs are, on average, about half the size of those in Class I); assigned to Middle and Lower shi (zhongshi and xiashi), who did not possess landed estates or official positions.

III. Tombs without burial chamber, but featuring a coffin and burial goods (mostly ceramics); assigned to Commoners (shumin).

IV. Tombs without either burial chamber or burial goods; assigned to Paupers (pinmin)(most, but not all of these had coffins).^{210}

However, due to the theories and practices of the period that were fueling the social and political change, the ideals of equality, ability, and individuality were becoming ingrained in the mindset of the commoner.^{211} Regardless of the social and political changes of the period, one barrier always remained. Only a person of noble birth could become king. It wasn’t until the reign of Lui Pang, an ambitious commoner, that too would finally change. Pang united and transformed the war torn China into the Han dynasty, illustrating the remarkable revolution in social and political thought.^{212}

Warring States Literature and Education

With the dramatic changes in social, political and economic developments, as well as the weakening court traditions, this became an impetus for philosophical ideologies. During the Western Zhou period, 'knowledge' was controlled by the royal court and its access was limited to only a privileged few. However, Li Xuegin notes the

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transition into the Eastern Zhou period:

After the beginning of Eastern Zhou, because of the decline of the aristocracy, the reach of knowledge became expanded, and this led to the emergence of private teaching. In addition, the growth of the states of lords created the need for intellectual service and, thus, an enthusiastic welcome for people of knowledge. At this time, diverse schools of scholarly thought and art sprang up. They represented the styles of various regions or ethnic groups and reflected the interests of the various classes and ranks. The result was the thriving of “The Hundred Schools Contend” during this time of change.213

Beginning with Spring and Autumn’s Confucius, other philosophers like Mencius, Hsün-tzu, Mo-tzu, Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, Kuan-tzu, and Han Fei-tzu all shaped the culture with their influences. These philosophers challenged traditional religious concepts and constructed a new mindset for followers to realize their social and moral purpose, which greatly affected all aspects of Chinese culture, then and now. With their influences free speech and argumentation became customary. As Yu Ziliu describes:

Because this social reform had effected every social class and institution, people became liberal in their thinking. They asked questions relating to social change, and expressed their opinions from their own perspectives. The old tradition broke down. Since a new centralized government was not established yet, there was no dictatorship in cultural values and ways of thinking. Such apolitical situation made it possible for argumentation among the different schools of thoughts. Thus, a society of dukes having different ways of governing, and scholars having different ways of thinking came into being.214

There were three arenas where this type of rhetoric was promoted. The first was the political realm where ministers lobbied their agendas to their kings. The second place was is the realm of education where intellectuals promoted their ideologies to their students and those in political control. Finally critical thinking and debate was

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214 Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China*, 64.
encouraged at the *Jixia* academy, where philosophers of different schools often participate in public forums regarding moral, political, and epistemological issues.\(^{215}\)

*Warring States Bell Ownership*

During the Warring States period bells still represented power symbols, more economical than social or political. This is illustrated by a poem from the *Chu Ci* (Elegies of Chu):

Before the dainties have left the tables,
Girl musicians take up their places.
They set up the bells and fasten the drums
And sing the latest songs . . . \(^{216}\)

Music, now used mostly for secular purposes, increased the market demand. Ownership was only limited by one’s ability to purchase them. Again, by following Michel Foucault’s model for development of discourse, it is possible to identify the changes and formation of new rules of bell ownership that occurred during the Warring States period. The change from the Spring and Autumn period to the Warring States period was a complete lifting of all rules for bell owners due to the loss of authority by the Zhou court. This period was a time between the old traditions of the court system and a new central power, which allowed many schools of thought to become the voice for 'truth'. Many of the philosophies of the period promoted a new 'truth' that society should be more human-centered than heaven-centered. This created an environment where people had more control of their social and economic status. Upward social mobility transcended from

\(^{215}\) Ibid., 65.

education and morally servitude to those who had the most wealth. It is this class that had the means to promote the new 'truth'. During the Warring States period, anyone who could afford to purchase bells could own them. Bells were purchased by so many, that they foundries had to change their casting techniques to keep up with the market demand. This ‘knowledge’ gained authority and was justified by the emerging middle class in a society that offered upward mobility and opportunity for wealth. By the close of the Warring States period, bells were no longer used in ritual or secular settings. All of the historical connotations associated with the old aristocratic court were so old that they no longer granted any value to the bell. The bronze bell tradition dies with the close of the Eastern Zhou period.

_Warring States Conclusion_

During the Warring States period bronze vessels, although still status symbols, were commodities that were mass-produced for anyone who could afford them. The production of these objects did not decline until the middle of the fifth century. The decline of bronze objects can be attributed to several factors. First, the secularization of art and the change of attitudes toward traditional rituals played a large part in the market demand for bronze vessels. Bronze art for the home was clearly a luxury item and with the strained financial burden of on-going warfare paid for by the taxpayers, luxury items were no longer affordable. Secondly, other more affordable materials were produced for the purpose of tomb burials such as iron tools and decorative jewel encrusted pottery.
But most importantly, it was the increase in warfare that affected the bronze industry.\textsuperscript{217} Bronze was used for chariot fittings and weaponry. Some states were forced to melt down their bronze treasures for the sake of their war efforts.

\textsuperscript{217} Kuwayama, \textit{Ancient Ritual Bronzes of China}, 12.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Bronze bells in ancient China have always represented power. The rules of bell ownership have changed only as the definition of the ‘Other’, or the non-bell owner, has changed. Those who could own bells and the ‘Other’ or those who could not, were expected to follow those rules that had been created and promoted by those in power. During the Shang Dynasty it was the king who created the ownership rule and filial piety bound the ‘Others’ by honor to abide those rules. During the Western Zhou period it was again the king that granted permission for those who could own bells. Only those who had blood ties to the throne or had proven themselves in service to the king was allowed to control distant appointed states. As the king’s representative, the lords were allowed to own bells and use them in rituals honoring the court. During the Spring and Autumn period, as vassal states were divided into smaller administrative areas, the local lords were able to own bells. Lastly, during the Warring States period, bells could be owned by anyone. Ironically those wanting to retain their powers, were the social groups that were responsible for creating the new body of 'knowledge' that would define the next ‘Other’.

Database on-line. Available from [http://www.regenerating-universe.org/BellStandDetail.htm](http://www.regenerating-universe.org/BellStandDetail.htm)


