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The Inconstancy of Character Structure Writing in Chinese

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Introduction

Among the reviews on my series, *Archaeology in China*, the longest and the most critical one is that of Dr Noel Barnard on the third volume, *Chou China* (9) in *Monumenta Serica* (4). To review a book of 430 pages with 152 seems quite unusual and this is possible probably because the reviewer is an associate editor of the journal. He has done "a considerable research", consulting no less than 71 books and articles. Most of the criticism "is directed against matters concerning the inscriptions, the archaic script, and certain aspects of historical approach" (4, 308-309)*. He gives 28 pages to thirteen "minor miscellaneous corrections and comments", 70 to eight sets of "inscriptions", 26 on his "principle of constancy of character structures" and half a page on "a hitherto unpublished Shou-hsien bronze". It is indeed a solid piece of work.

Archaeology is a handmaiden of history. The purpose of *Chou China* is to show, as stated in the concluding paragraph, how "the excavations of the ancient remains have testified that the history given in literature is accurate and trustworthy in what it describes" (9, 303). But archaeology in China is young. It is still in a fact-finding stage and the interpretations of archaeological data tend to vary considerably. In a general work like *Chou China* there is no space for the enumeration of the various schools of thoughts, not to say, a critical survey of their works. Take for instance the dating of the Piao bells 鄀氏編鐘. At least a dozen scholars have voiced their opinions, giving dates ranging from 550 B.C. to 380 B.C. As Wen T'ing-ching's 溫廷敬 thesis seems to me to be the most reasonable of them all, his dating of 404 B.C. is mentioned in *Chou China*. But holding a different approach, the reviewer, a scholar of Chinese epigraphy, prefers to follow Shirakawa Shizuka's 白川靜 "long study" on the problem, but after reviewing most of the published studies Barnard could only conclude that "any date around 500 B.C. would be appropriate" (4, 395). I do not consider it fitting to bother my readers with all these controversies. However, such detailed comments are indeed welcomed because they serve admirably as critical commentaries on parts of the original text. As supplementary readings my readers may appreciate the complexity of the problems involved.

The main purpose of his long review, however, is "to reply to his [my] contention that my [his] principle of constancy of character structures is invalid" (4, 308). The principle has been advanced by Barnard in 1958-59, but since the generalization is not quite in keeping with the actual practice in Chinese writing, I have questioned its validity in less than two pages (9, 287-88). Now, Barnard has devoted 26 pages to uphold his theory. It would therefore be worthwhile to examine the principle once more, to see if the contention is "barely worth the amount of ink in writing it" (4, 418).

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* All references in the text are placed in parentheses. The number in bold face refers to the book or article under that number in the Bibliography which follows the text. In most cases the page reference is also given.

Dr Barnard's principle of constancy of character structures

The principle of constancy of character structures, according to Barnard, is a new theory which he has formulated after his long study of ancient Chinese inscriptions. It was first published in his article on a recently excavated inscribed bronze of Western Chou date as follows:

> In each of the several thousands of fully attested inscriptions I have studied it was observed that repeated characters, or elements of characters, in any one document, were always written on the same structural principles – numbers of strokes, position and intrinsic features of stroke combinations, always accorded in each occurrence of the same character written by the same writer. The principle is so irrefutably evidenced in attested texts engraved in bone, bronze, and stone; cast bronze texts; impressed seal texts; and in ink writing on silk and on bamboo, that there remains not the slightest shadow of doubt that here we have a fundamental principle that has governed Chinese writing from the earliest times in which authentic examples exist. (2, 37-38)

Dr Barnard then applied this principle to the inscriptions of *Mao-kung ting* 毛公鼎 and *San-shih p'an* 散氏盤, and finding some examples of inconstancy in these two famous inscriptions he declared that they "are neither archaic, Chou, nor genuine." (2, 39) In the foot-note at the bottom of the same page he reaffirmed that this "is the decisive proof of forgery in the case of the *Mao-kung ting*."

The proclamation of this new principle was probably not quite satisfactory to the author himself. So in his second declaration of the principle in Japan he writes:

> Amongst all these scientifically excavated documents I found that, within each individual document, every character repeated two or more times and each repeated element of a character (whether in the same character or in another character) was always written on the same structural principles. ... structures do not vary although shape differences are to be noted. ... This characteristic I term 'the principle of constancy of character structures' – it came to my notice six years ago when there was available only a very small amount of fully attested documents; since then a considerable number of new materials have been unearthed and not a single exception has appeared amongst them. (3, 25)

Then he goes on to give more examples of inconstancy in *Mao-kung ting* (P1.2) and *San-shih p'an* (P1. 1c), which appear quite irregular in his hand-copy. He concludes:

> In the face of properly attested examples of calligraphy can we accept this standard of writing as that of a Chou period scribe – one may even doubt that it was executed by a Chinese! That it is the work of a recent forger is not to be doubted. Such variation in structures in the writing of identical characters in above illustrations is certainly not the result of accident and it is definitely not a natural characteristic in Chinese calligraphy – it is merely ignorance of a type that could only have originated in recent times.
>
> If I am correct in interpreting 'the principle of constancy of character structures' in this way – i.e. to regard 'inconstancy' as evidence of forgery – then it must be applied throughout all relevant documents to test further its validity. (3, 28)

This he did and he gave the results of his investigations as follows:

(1) Amongst unattested oracle bone texts about 20 cases of slight inconstancy were found in a total of some 20,000 studied for evidence of this feature. (The foot-note says "Actually there were found only two definite cases of inconstancy comparable with those [*Mao-kung ting* and *San-shih p'an*] illustrated above. In all other instances it was merely a matter of one or two strokes omitted in one or more repeated characters in the same document. These are not really examples of structural inconstancy as the basic structure and stroke order of writing is maintained; they are accidental omissions whose insignificance is little greater than that of the Westerner who fails to dot his 'i's or cross his 't's. The examples cited above, however, illustrate the nature of inconstancy – an ignorant disregard of fundamental principle in writing: stroke order and the basic structure of the character".)

(2) of some 10,000 bronze inscriptions about 50 cases of inconstancy were noted.

(3) Amongst some hundreds of miscellaneous materials, e.g. Stone Drum text; pottery inscriptions, etc., practically no definite cases were found. (3, 28-29)

So Dr Barnard concludes:

Upon the basis of a statistical survey of all unattested archaic writings as well as an examination of all fully attested documents of the same period, I am quite satisfied after prolonged study of this matter to assert that inconstancy is not a characteristic of Chinese calligraphy, whether ancient or modern; where it is found in archaic style writing it is merely due to ignorance on the part of the writer of the principles of Shang and Chou period calligraphy. It is quite permissible to regard inconstancy as a definite proof of forgery. (3, 29)

It is interesting to note that this new principle was first conceived because the author has noted the absence of inconstancy of character structures in the inscriptions of the newly excavated bronze vessels. He has applied this principle to *all* the attested and unattested texts, including *all* the archaic inscriptions in existence, and has finally become so self-confident that he is ready to extend it to cover modern writings and to declare that inconstancy of character structures is a definite proof of forgery.

This is indeed revolutionary as well as challenging. Revolutionary because inconstancy of character structures has always been regarded as a natural characteristic of Chinese writing, the new principle would upset our well established knowledge and practice; challenging, because it would mean that all the scholars who took part in the study of *Mao-kung ting* were all ignorant. They include such great scholars as Hsü T'ung-po 徐同柏, Wu Shih-fen 吳式芬, Sun Yi-jang 孫詒讓, Wu Ta-ch'en 吳大澂, Liu Hsin-yuan 劉心源, Wu Pao-wei 吳寶煒, Chang Chih-kang 張之綱, Kuo Mo-jo 郭沫若, Wang Kuo-wei 王國維, Yü Hsing-wu 于省吾, Wu Ch'i-ch'ang 吳其昌, Jung Keng 容庚, Kao Hung-chin 高鴻縉, and Tung Tso-pin 董作賓. The whole discipline of *Chin-shih hsueh* 金石學 Chinese epigraphical studies would be shaken to its roots. Then the famous *Mao-kung ting* would have to be dethroned from its prominent place in the Palace Museum. This is a very serious matter indeed. As *Mao-kung ting* and *San-shih p'an* are the treasures of the Palace Museum it is the duty of the museum authority to defend them when their authenticity has been questioned, but in a general book like *Chou China*, I consider it my duty to caution my readers who are mostly unfamiliar with Chinese epigraphy against the validity of the new principle.

On "the principle of constancy of character structures"

In contesting the new principle in *Chou China* I have raised three points. They are: 1. inconstancy of character structures was a common, natural feature in ancient Chinese writing; 2. it is present in some fully attested texts; and 3. it has always been a common characteristic in Chinese writing, ancient or modern. Let us review in this section Barnard's reactions to these objections –

1. The inconstancy of character structures in ancient Chinese writing may be manifested in *Chin wen pien* (14), a standard dictionary on bronze inscriptions of the Shang and Chou periods. It has been carefully prepared by Jung Keng, each of the 1894 characters in its various forms being accurately copied by the great scholar himself. Based on this work I made the following observation:

> A rough estimate shows that there are 745 inscriptions containing each a character that is written in two different forms; 96, three; 26, four; 12, five; and 3, six. And in the case of *Chu k'e ting* the same character *wei* "to make", appears on the vessel in seven different ways. (9, 287)

Barnard could not accept these cases of inconstancy as contrary to his principle in three respects:

a. Some of the characters, for examples the five *kueis* 敦 on *Chi-po kuei* 杞伯簋 (4, 409) and the seven *chus* 鑄 in *Chu k'e ting* 鑄客鼎 are not from one individual document. He points out that the principle does not apply to the same writer or maker of the vessels who was ordered to cast a series of vessels for the same occasion each bearing the identical text. Not even the lid-inscription and the body-inscription of the same vessel could be regarded as one document. His principle could only be applied to a "single individual inscription". It is true that a number of these cases in *Chin wen pien* in which the same character is written in two different forms are drawn from two different vessels or the lid and the body of the same vessel. It is also possible that some of the two different forms could be identical in structure but different in shape. Yet there are still hundreds of others which are definitely not similar in character structures on the same inscription. How could Dr Barnard justify his new principle in the remaining hundreds of cases? He tries to brush aside Jung Keng's hand copy of the characters as of secondary source and prefers to use only ink-rubbings or his own hand copies which, ironically, are both secondary in nature.

b. Dr Barnard emphasizes the distinction between "structure" and "shape or form". He claims that "*structures* do not vary although *shape* differences are to be noted". Inconstancy "is an aspect of structure not of shape" (4, 422). He seems unable to appreciate the fact that shape is determined basically by structure, i.e. structure produces shape.

c. Dr Barnard accepts that there are certain degrees of inconstancy, but they are to be attributed to the human element, the physical nature of the documents and some calligraphic mishaps of the writer. The former may be caused during the process of transferring the text into an entirely different medium (4, 434), by corrosion or obliteration by the ravages of time (4, 409, 428) or heavy ink used in making the rubbing (4, 409). The omission or addition of one stroke, contrary

to his rigid definition of numbers of strokes, is to be regarded as having no bearing upon the principle. It is no more significant than the propensity of western writers to omit the dotting of "i"s or the crossing of "t"s. (4, 418)

2. *Chou China* quotes one of the recent examples of attested inscription, *Shu-ssu-tzu ting*, which is composed of 27 characters (Pl. 1a). It has (a) "six characters each composed of a *mien* 'roof'. Among these two are written in two strokes, one in three, and three in four strokes. (b) The character *pei* 'cowrie' (the seventh word) is written in its common form, but the 'cowrie' element in the character *pao* 'precious' (the fifteenth) is in a very much simplified structure. (c) The place name, which is undeciphered, occurs twice in the text as the tenth and twentieth word, but is written in two different ways, the former with a complex and the latter a simple form of the radical *yüeh* 'moon'." (9, 288) All these three cases of inconstancy in an individual text are definitely variations caused by character structures, involving the numbers of strokes which have effected the shapes of the characters. But sticking to his principle Barnard tries to rationalize by insisting on that –

a. All the *mien* elements are structurally identical, "but in slight respects the shapes differ" (4, 426). It seems he is unable to appreciate the fact that some of these elements are written in three strokes. He notices the difference in one of them and guesses that "perhaps it is the character *pao* in line 3, which is a little indistinct because of corrosion?" (4, 426) But as a matter of fact *pao* appears in line 2, not line 3.

b. The difference in the *pei* element and the *pei* character is similarly dismissed by Barnard. He says, "It is not inconstancy according to my definition". (4, 426) But he has to admit that "in the archaic inscriptions, elements which are too complex to write in reduced size are *often* abbreviated." (4, 426) This is in fact one of the many reasons for the inconstancy in Chinese writing as we shall review later on.

c. As to the *yüeh* element, he attributes the omission of the central stroke in the second character to the scribe's or foundry artisan making "too small a space to allow it to be incised in the clay master pattern." (4, 426)

There is no doubt that Barnard is a good scholar, diligent and conscientious and is privileged in having all the materials that he requires in his research. But he seems to be handicapped by having ignored some basic training in writing itself. He can copy the archaic script mechanically with either the single-line copying or the double-line *shuang-kou* 雙鉤 tracing. But being unfamiliar with the manipulation of the brush and lacking in calligraphic practice he does not appreciate the sequence of strokes in character structure as well as the shape and quality of the strokes. These account for some errors in his hand copy texts. Look at the hand copy of *Shu-ssu-tzu ting* which he has made (Pl. 1b). Apart from the weakness in some of the strokes, the same element 束 has been traced as  in line 1.10,  in line 2.6 and  in line 3.2; 門 as  in line 1.10 and  in line 3.2; and the character 魚 in line 3.9 as , which looks more like a flying bird than a fish. From the structural point of view how different these hand copy characters are from those in the rubbing! It is an irony for a scholar who traces the archaic script with such inconstancy to advocate

the principle of constancy of character structures and to regard inconstancy as a definite proof of forgery. Barnard has probably relied too much on his own hand copy.

Dr Barnard's analytical diagram of idiosyncracies in the element 佳 in various characters of the *Mao-kung ting* (P1. 2b) seems even more fantastic. He uses three types of lines, bold, blank and spotted, which cross and connect with each other in fanciful messes to illustrate the inconstancy of the character structures. No Chinese or Japanese scholars would ever analyze the ancient script in such a brilliant fashion. The diagram was published in Japan and Mr Lee Yim inclines to think that "Because the Japanese are the most modest and polite people, naturally they do not like to embarass an honorable speaker, particularly since he is a western scholar. It is likely too that they do not want to discourage any young and inexperience student in this field." (20, 31-32)

3. It is not necessary, as a matter of fact, to give any example for the inconstancy of character structures in post-Han writings. They can be found in practically every type of text. But Barnard prefers to uphold his generalization by giving three examples. Let us review the explanations which he has given in these three cases:

a. *Chou Wang Yi mu chih ming* 周王義墓誌銘 (P1. 3)

This inscription is dated 702 A.D. in the Chou dynasty which was established by Empress Wu Tse-t'ien 武則天 during the T'ang times. There are two types of inconstancy of character structures in this document (4, 429). The normal script like the characters 於 and 有 are written either in *k'ai-shu* 楷書 or in *hsing-shu* 行書, two completely different scripts. Barnard dismisses them as constant character structures with some shape variations. But to take the three characters 德 in which one of the radicals is written in three strokes 彳 (line 6.22), in two 氵 (line 20.12) and in one 亻 (line 6.4) respectively as merely shape variations seems a bit far-fetched. Any beginner of Chinese knows that the first radical (no. 60 in *Mathews*) reads *ch'ih*, meaning "a step with the left foot"; the second (no. 9) reads *jen*, meaning "a man"; and the third may be taken as a presentation of the radical in *hsing-shu*. This is definitely a case of inconstancy of character structures even in Barnard's restricted definition.

The irregular characters in this inscription, such as ⊙ for 日, 匣 for 月, 生 for 人, 囻 for 國, etc. are new characters introduced during the short dynasty of Empress Wu. Barnard calls these "invented" characters. As they are used here in place of the regular script they have no bearing on the principle in question. It goes only to prove that new characters could freely be created, as in this case by a new government. This is in fact another reason for the inconstancy of character structures in Chinese writing.

b. *Lan-t'ing hsu* 蘭亭序

This is a well-known masterpiece of Chinese calligraphy and Barnard has quoted the observation of the text by Baien Hōchiku 梅園方竹 which reads:

> The whole text comprises 28 lines, 324 characters,but where any character is repeated two or more times it is constructed on each occasion in different form, the character 之 appears just on 20 times and each varies in some respect.

with the following comments:

> Investigation shows, however, that the structure is constant throughout the 20 characters and it is merely *shape* that differs – I have selected this example to illustrate the general lack of distinction between the concepts of *structure* and *shape* which greets one in most writings in this field. (4, 431)

Barnard's definition of character structure is limited to "numbers of strokes, position and intrinsic features of stroke combinations" only. Consequently he is unable to appreciate the general understanding of Chinese and Japanese writers with regards to the structures and shapes in Chinese writing. Of course, they know the difference between *shape* and *structure*, but they also realize that the shape of a Chinese character is determined not only by the number of strokes and on the ways in which they are combined, but, more important, by the shape and movement of the strokes employed in the construction. They are given various names as we shall see in a later section. In the analytical diagram mentioned above Barnard has introduced his own strokes, so no wonder that he has found himself face to face with the general lack of distinction between the concepts of structure and shape, which he has created with his incomplete understanding of the Chinese character structure. As a matter of fact the variation in strokes and the constructions of strokes provide more reasons for the inconstancy of character structures.

c. *Meiji Tennō Seichoku* 明治天皇聖敕

This is an Imperial Rescript of Emperor Meiji written by a famous Japanese epigrapher, Takata Chūshū 高田忠周. Barnard reproduces four pages of it to show that the characters 皇 are written differently as follows:

"In the four pages," he remarks, "the graph 皇 *kō* or *ō* (*huang*) has been executed in five distinct structural variations. We have here, therefore, a single document, written by a person, and with three characters constructed differently – there are many more in the complete text." (4, 432) The document reproduced contains actually six characters but Barnard does not explain why "the graph has been executed in five distinct structural variations" and why only "with three characters constructed differently." According to Barnard's own definition all these six characters are constructed differently. He admits that this is a case of inconstancy but he prefers to rationalize that the variant structures have been "purposely selected and copied from well known inscriptions or other sources. Inconstancy is premeditated and thus is not comparable to its unconscious manifestion in the *Mao-k'ung ting* and *San-shih p'an*." (4, 432) What an explanation! How does he

differentiate premeditation from unconscious manifestation? Actually, purposeful selection and unintentional deliberation of characters of different structure are two more common reasons for the inconstancy of Chinese writing.

Dr Barnard's incomplete understanding of Chinese writing and calligraphy may be illustrated by the conclusion which he has drawn from the study of the post-Han calligraphy. He says:

> The search for vagaries, variant forms, variant structures, idiosyncracies, etc. leads us almost exclusively to the writing of master calligraphers from whom calligraphy was an end in itself. It draws us irresistibly away from every day writing, the work of professional scribes. In pre-Han inscriptions there are very few instances of calligraphy that might be postulated to be the work of a master; for the most part ... the writing ... was simply the work of a scribe to whom the writing ... was merely a means to an end. (4. 433-34)

To regard most of the anonymous writers of ancient China as only professional scribes seems a bit forgetful in Barnard's part. How many of the ancient inscriptions have been selected as standard masterpieces in such authoritative collection as *Shodo zenshu* (1) which he knows so well! It is a common knowledge that post-Han epigraphical calligraphers were required to practise the art with ancient inscriptions as models. The celebrated Takata is no exception.

In view of the discussions above, it seems evident that Barnard's principle of constancy of character structures has been conceived with incomplete understanding of the nature of Chinese writing. His concepts of structure and shape are restricted and personal. The principle is further confined to one individual document by itself. Any general inconstancy of character structures, even by the same writer, can be trumped with the fact that they are not in "one document" or a "lack of distinction between the concepts of structure and shape." They are dismissed triumphantly: "These are not inconstancy according to *my* definition." However, the inconstancy of character structures has always been a common, natural feature of Chinese writing, and it is sad to find that the new principle cannot stand even on its own limited ground. In the several cases discussed above, the author is obliged to resort to other explanations. Some are attributed to human negligence such as the addition or omission of one stroke by the writer, the mistakes in transferring the text to the clay mould or in casting, and the heaviness of ink used in making the rubbing; others are said to be caused by the physical nature of the documents themselves, the presence of spacers in the inscribed area, the corrosion of the bronze itself and the unsatisfactory condition of cleaning; and still others are labelled as "invented" characters or "premeditated" inconstancies. A fundamental principle must be capable of univeral application. It would be a mere fancy if it has to be supported at every turn with tedious argumentations. Barnard's principle of constancy of character structures belongs clearly to the latter catagory.

Inconstancy of character structures in Chinese writing

In formulating the principle of constancy of character structures Barnard claims that he has studied: (1) *all* the fully attested, scientifically excavated documents, which include *all* the texts engraved in bone, bronze and stone and cast on bronze as well as seal impressions and ink writings on silk and on bamboo, and has found not a single exception among them; (2) in a total of some

20,000 unattested oracle bone texts, he has found about 20 cases of slight inconstancy; (3) of some 10,000 unattested bronze inscriptions about 50 cases of inconstancy were noted; (4) amongst some hundreds of miscellaneous material, e.g. Stone Drum text, pottery inscriptions, etc., practically no definite cases were found; and (5) inconstancy is not a characteristic in ancient or modern Chinese calligraphy, meaning presumably the entire post-Han writings. This is indeed an enormous, big claim, covering the whole literature of China and Japan for over 3,000 years. To suggest deliberately that all the known Chinese and Japanese writings have been consulted seems preposterous, because it would be physically impossible for any one to do so in a life time.

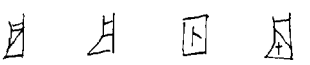
The study of hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of Shang and Chou documents – "the whole corpus of inscriptions" – would be possible, but they require a closer scrutiny. Students of the archaic inscriptions are familiar with the facts that the oracle records are all in fragmentary condition, many of them having just one or a few characters; the great majority of the bronze inscriptions are merely personal names and clan symbols, consisting again of one or two characters; and seal impressions are almost all proper names and official titles and the inscriptions seldom exceed four characters each. To take these as "texts" and "documents" is probably just to be impressive. Take for instance the 616 inscriptions published by Yü Hsing-wu in his last book, *Shang Chou chin wen lu yi* (31) cited by Barnard. A rough count shows that there are 160 inscriptions with one character, 505 with 1-10 characters, 43 with 11-30 characters, 24 with 31-50 characters, 17 with 51-100 characters, one with some 126 and another with 206. As there is hardly any duplications of characters or elements in inscriptions with less than 10 characters, it is evident that some 80 per cent of this collection would not be serviceable as source materials for the research in question. Furthermore, owing to the corrosion of the bronze in burial and other human mishaps a large number of the usable inscriptions are far from being complete. With such a situation in view the number of perfect and clearly readable inscriptions attested and unattested together would be just a few hundreds. The statistical foundation in formulating the principle seems highly inflated.

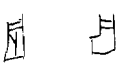
One of the inscriptions, *Yi-hou Nieh kuei* 宜侯矢簋 (no. 167 in Yü's collection), used by Barnard in his study has roughly 126 characters (Pl. 4a). The physical condition of the document is so poor that less than 40 characters, roughly 30 per cent, are perfect with all the strokes clearly in place. Five transcriptions and commentaries by Ch'en Meng-chia 陳夢家, Ch'en Pang-fu 陳邦福, Kuo Mo-jo 郭沫若 and T'ang Lan 唐蘭 have been published. They furnish the basis for Barnard's reconstruction (Pl. 4b) in 122 characters, several of them being compound characters. In his comment of Yü's rubbing, Barnard writes: "It is particularly clear and shows definitely the existence of the 'eye' element in the obscured eighth character in line 1." (2, p1.3). But the eighth character in line 1 of his reconstruction which he fills in himself is 畜 and it does not call for an 'eye' element. How faithful and accurate are Barnard's reconstructions to their originals remain therefore wide open for discussion! And yet the author proceeds with his own reconstructions to formulate his fundamental principle. If Dr Barnard has his own reconstructions carefully checked or uses a large number of better preserved inscriptions in his study he probably would never have hit upon such a fanciful idea as the constancy of character structures. He has apparently relied too much on his own hand-copied reconstructions. (cf. Pls. 1 b, c and 2) It would therefore be worthwhile to re-examine at this point a few of the fully attested documents which Barnard has claimed to have enlighten him.

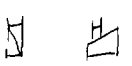
1. Oracle records

Mr Lee Yim's article "On the variants of the character 'Ho' (何) appearing on the same oracle bones" (19) may be cited as a concrete proof that inconstancy of character structures constitutes a common feature in the Shang oracle records. In this case it is a diviner writing his own name in 48 different forms which may be grouped into five types. On a number of individual pieces two or more forms have been noted. Recently Mr Lee has sent me a duplicated copy of another article entitled "Structural and calligraphical inconsistencies of Chinese characters as found in oracle inscriptions."(20) More cases of inconstancies have been found by him. A few characters, three from the attested and the unattested texts each may be given as examples:

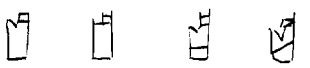
a. Attested text: *Hsiao-t'un* II –

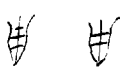
i. 田 :  – *Chia pien k'ao shih*, pl. 048.

 – *I pien*, 3212.

 – *I pien*, 4611.

 – *I pien*, 8888.

 – *Ping pien*, 235.

ii. 西 :  – *I pien*, 3471; *Ping pien*, 50, 171.

iii. 田 :  – *Chia pien*, 607, 1036, 2858.

b. Unattested texts: *Catalogue of the Kyoto Collection* –

i. 秋蟲  – No. 2362

ii. 庚  – No. 3099

iii. 貞  – No. B2401

2. Attested bronze inscriptions

It would be superfluous to go over all the attested bronze inscriptions published in the last few decades. Take the three small monographs on my shelf for examples. Four inscriptions with definite cases of inconstancy may be observed:

a. Shih-shih kuei 師旋簋 (Pl. 5a) : Five cases –

i. 師： line 3.5;  line 4.8.

ii. 旗：  line 3.6;  line 4.9;  line 7.6.

iii. 册： line 4.4;  line 4.6.

iv. 命：  line 4.7;  line 8.9.

v. 貝：  line 7.8;  line 9.6.

b. ***Yu-fu kuei*** 𠂤父𣪘 (P1. 5b): one case

i. 寶：  line 1.4;  line 2.6.

c. ***Han-huang-fu kuei*** 函皇父𣪘 (P1. 6a): 4 cases

i. 𣪘：  line 2.2;  line 3.1.

ii. 兩： line 3.3;  line 3.5.

iii. 娟：  line 1.6;  line 3.8.

iv. 阜：  line 2.7;  line 1.9

d. ***Shih-k'e hsü*** 師克𪏭 (P1. 6b): 4 cases –

i. 顯：  line 1.7;  line 12.8.

ii. 佳：  line 1.10;  line 4.8.

iii. 余：  line 4.7;  line 5.8.

iv. 先：  line 4.11;  line 5.5.

3. Unattested bronze inscriptions

For this group the well-known ***Nieh Ling yi*** 矢令彝 (P1. 7a) of the Freer Gallery of Art (27, p1.22), which Barnard has studied in several occasions, may be taken as an example. Four cases of inconstancy at least may be found in this inscription:

i. 周：  line 1.10; line 5.3.

ii. 舍： line 5.6;  line 7.3.

iii. 册:  line 12.7;  last character.

iv. 貝:  line 13.7;  line 14.3.

4. Miscellaneous attested materials

For this group three famous long inscriptions, also evidently known to Dr Barnard, may be examined:

a. The Ch'ang-sha *ch'ien-ts'e* 簡册 bamboo book (P1. 7b): Strip 1 – 3 cases –

i. 新:  2;  14.

ii. 智:  3;  7.

iii. 纕:  4;  8; 15.

Strip 3 – one case –

i. 金:  1; 9.

Strip 5 – one case –

i. 齒:  2;  4;  8.

The document consists of 43 strips and when they are taken as an individual entity, the number of cases of inconstancy may easily be multiplied. The character 金 appears here in as many as 8 forms as follows:

 6.6;  6.8;  7.7;  8.10; 16.4;  21.5; 24.2; 26.3.

The writing of this character in many forms on one single document is not limited to the bamboo book. One of the *mao* 矛 spear-heads unearthed at Ch'ang-sha (P1. 7c) has also a long inscription. Although most of the characters in this text has yet to be read, a series of four characters 金 in a row are actually written in four different ways, as follows:

 ,  ,  ,  .

b. *Oh-chun-ch'i chieh* 鄂君啟節 (P1. 8ab)

This is in the form of a strip of bamboo in bronze, one in a collection of four. It has an inscription of 165 characters in nine lines, and according to Yin-and-Lo's (30) hand copy, six cases of inconstancy may be noted:

i. 陵：  line 1.11;  line 6.11.

ii. 大：  line 2.12;  line 9.13.

iii. 金：  line 4.1;  line 8.3.

iv. 易：  line 1.4;  line 5.7;  line 6.5.

v. 佳：  line 3.1;  line 5.2;  line 5.9;  line 7.11.

vi. 水：  line 4.18;  line 5.2;  line 7.11.

c. The *Ch'u tseng-shu* 楚繒書 silk manuscript

This is the famous Ch'u manuscript with roughly 980 characters. It has been studied by many scholars and published no less than 20 times. In his latest research on the text Yen Yi-p'ing observes casually that the character *ssu* 四 "four" appears in two forms (29, 18) and the variations of the character *wei* 爲 "to do" occurs in the largest number (29, 20). His hand copy of the document shows many more cases of inconstancy which may be listed below:

i. 佳：  A1.1;  A7.3;  A10.30;  B4.25.

ii. 夏：  A1.14;  C2.31.

iii. 星：  A1.22;  A7.26.

iv. 可：  C1.1.2.6;  C3.3.28;  C4.2.2.10.

v. 陵：  A2.20;  A12.11.

vi. 次：  A2.4;  A2.23; A5.22;  C3.2.1.

vii. 閏：  A3.21;  B7.17.

viii. 四：  A4.6;  A9.5.

ix. 域：  A4.21;  A4.33.

x. 爲：  A6.29; B2.25; B2.27; B3.21; B4.6; B7.1.

xi. 百： A11.13; B4.33; B7.22.

xiii. 叟:  B5.1;  B6.34.

xiv. 青:  B5.24;  B5.35; B4.14.

xv. 復:  B5.17;  C2.3.2.10; C3.2.2.15.

xvi. 義:  C4.1.2.12;  C4.2.2.21.

xvii. 冬:  C4.3.1;  A1.16.

5. Miscellaneous unattested materials

For this group two well-known inscriptions may be taken as examples.

a. *Ch'in tsu Ch'u wen* 秦詛楚文

The original stone had long been destroyed, but three copies of the text have survived and passed through a number of transmissions. According to the most easily accessible text in the *Shih-so* 石索 **(11)**, at least seven cases of inconstancy may be noted:

i. 玉:  line 2.2;  line 22.2.

ii. 使:  line 2.5;  line 48.4.

iii. 其:  line 2.6;  line 22.5.

iv. 顯:  line 4.4;  line 34.5.

v. 親:  line 13.6;  line 22.1.

vi. 邊:  line 43.6;  line 55.2.

vii. 我:  line 7.6;  line 32.5;  line 38.1.

b. Edict of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti on an oval pottery measure 秦橢量詔文 (P1. 8c)

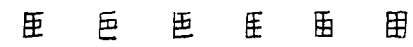
This is one of the many inscriptions of the famous edict on weight-and-measure issued by Ch'in Shih-huang in 221 B.C. It is rather unusual to find any inconstancy of character structures on this type of official document, but a definite case may be given:

壹:  line 9.1;  line 10.3.

6. Han bronze inscription

A few more examples of inconstancy may be found in Han bronze inscriptions, taken from *Ch'in Han chin wen lu* mentioned above:

a. *Yung-shih Ch'eng yü ting* 永始乘輿鼎 (P1. 9a) –

臣: 

b. *Yun-yang ting* 雲陽鼎 (P1. 9b) – 6 cases –

i. 雲: 

ii. 陽: 

iii. 斗: 

iv. 六: 

v. 斤: 

vi. 兩: 

c. *Yen-shih tsao tso hsi* 嚴氏造作洗 (P1. 9c) – 3 cases –

i. 亻:  line 1.1;  line 2.4.

ii. 子:  line 1.2;  line 1.3.

iii. 口: 

7. *Post-Han materials*

To complete our brief survey of inconstancy of character structures in Chinese writing some post-Han materials may also be examined. For the Six dynasties, a few examples may be drawn from the inscriptions on tomb stones studied by Chao Wan-li (5) –

a. *Shih Wan mu-chih* 石婉墓誌 (P1. 10a) -- 7 cases –

i. 魏:  line 1.1;  line 2.14.

ii. 氵:  line 1.4;  line 2.9.

iii. 言:  line 1.13;  line 6.12.

iv. 象： 豫 line 3.2; 豫 line 3.13.

v. 木： 桂 line 10.5; 機 line 6.20.

vi. 艹： 墓 line 1.12; 荆 line 3.1; 若 line 13.14.

vii. 口： 吐 line 12.11; 唯 line 23.5.

b. *Yuan Siu mu chih* 元秀墓誌 (P1. 10b) – 4 cases –

i. 使： 使 line 1.22; 使 line 5.2.

ii. 刺： 刺 line 1.17; 刺 line 7.16.

iii. 將： 將 line 1.13; 將 line 4.8.

iv. 翮： 翮 line 13.5; 翮 line 15.25.

c. *Chang ch'iang mu chih* 張姜墓誌 (P1. 11a) – 5 cases –

i. 德： 德 line 1.14; 德 line 8.3; 德 line 14.3.

ii. 壽： 壽 line 9.14; 壽 line 10.6.

iii. 年： 年 line 9.16; 年 line 11.2.

iv. 維： 維 line 7.11; 維 line 14.7.

v. 無： 無 line 14.3; 無 line 16.14.

d. *Kuo Hsiu mu chih* 郭休墓誌 (P1. 11b) – 6 cases –

i. 之： 之 line 2.1; 之 line 2.7; 之 line 7.11.

ii. 濟： 濟 line 6.12; 濟 line 6.13.

iii. 辶： 遂 line 7.3; 遂 line 7.4.

iv. 山： 山 line 6.5; 山 line 7.10.

v. 無： 無 line 7.7; 無 line 9.12.

vi. 金： 金 line 15.11; 金 line 15.13; 金 line 15.15.

e. ***Wang-shih mu chih*** 王氏墓誌 (P1. 12a) – 5 cases –

i. 州:  line 1.10;  line 4.4.

ii. 劉:  line 2.3;  line 2.10.

iii. 亻:  line 3.13;  line 8.1.

iv. 辶: line 7.12; line 8.2; line 9.11.

v. 哉:  line 14.13;  line 17.7.

f. Inscription on a ***Lu jen shih p'an*** 六壬式盤 (P1. 12b)

This is a diviner's plate of the Six Dynasties, now in the Shanghai Museum. It is composed of two pieces of bronze, a square plaque, roughly 11.4 centimetres in size, in the bottom, serving as the Earth and a semi-spherical disc, 6 centimetres in diameter on top symbolizing Heaven. They are both inscribed and are connected to each other with a pin in the centre so that the round Heaven can be rotated on the square Earth in the process of divining. The inconstancy of character structures in this document may be listed as follows:

i. 南:  ,  on Earth square.

ii. 吉:  ,  on Heaven disc.

iii. 心:  on square;  on disc.

iv. 亢:  on square;  on disc.

v. 徵: on disc;  on square.

vi. 魁:  on back of square;  on disc.

vii. 虺:  on square;  on back of square.

g. ***Kuan-yin ching*** 觀音經 (P1. 13a)

This is a T'ang Buddhist manuscript brought back by Stein in the British Museum. It was published by Prof. A. Fujieda (12). The text was written with a wooden pen and retouched to give the effect of brush strokes. Some cases of inconstancy may be noted. On the page reproduced here the character 世appears as  in five strokes in line 2.4 and 世 in six strokes in line 4.3.

h. Labels of Buddhist images (P1. 13b)

This is Frame 99 of a long scroll of Buddhist images of the 12th century in the Palace Museum in Taipei. The section published by Helen B. Chaplin (6) has two labels. The character 世 are written in two ways: 世 and 丗.

i. *Pan jo po lo mi to hsin ching* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (Pl. 14a)

This is attributed to Shih T'ao 石濤. The first page has four cases of inconstancy as follows:

i. 艹:  line 1.2;  line 2.5.

ii. 異:  line 4.5;  line 4.9.

iii. 即:  line 4.12;  line 5.3.

iv. 無:  line 7.12;  line 8.1.

j. Inscription on a bamboo painting by Cheng Hsieh 鄭燮 (Pl. 14b)

Cheng Hsieh was a leading painter and calligrapher of the eighteenth century. Here the inscription is written from left to right, contrary to the common practice in writing from right to left. The inconstancy of character structures in this inscription is most evident –

i. 南:  line 1.8; line 19.5.

ii. 畫:  line 8.8; line 9.4.

iii. 種:  line 1.10; line 18.7.

iv. 之:  line 3.10;  line 5.7.

v. 窗:  line 4.12;  line 6.6;  line 10.5.

vi. 紙: line 5.8; line 6.7; line 10.4.

vii. 風:  line 5.11;  line 17.6.

viii. 影:  line 7.10;  line 14.7.

ix. 片:  line 7.8; line 14.1;  line 19.7.

x. 年:  line 16.8; line 20.4.

xi. 春:  line 17.5; line 20.6.

The number of cases may be increased by taking the various elements of the characters into consideration.

k. Seals of Chinese painters and collectors (P1s. 15, 16a-d)

A corpus of the seals used by the Ming and Ch'ing painters and collectors has been published by Wang Chi-ch'ien and Victoria Contag. Among the literary phrases adopted for some of the seals, a few examples of inconstancy in character structures may also be found:

i. Seal of Hung Wu 弘旿: 苟日新又日新 (P1. 15a)

日:  ,  ; 新:  , .

ii. Seal of Hung Wu: 愛石不拜 臨流不漱 (P1. 15b)

不:  ,  ; 氵:  , .

iii. Seal of Li Shih-cho 李世倬: 赤壁煙雲 雪堂風月 (P1. 15c)

雨:  ,  .

iv. Seal of Chin Nung 金農: 努力加餐飯 (P1. 15d)

食:  , .

In one of his personal seals, 金吉金 (10, 201.7)

金:  ,  .

v. Seal of YaoShou姚綬: 米於山美可茹 釣於水鮮可食 (P1. 15e)

於:  ,  (*Shuang-kuo* style); 可:  ,  .

vi. Seal of T'ung Yü 童鈺: 萬幅梅花萬首詩 (P1. 15f)

萬:  ,  .

vii. Seal of Min Chen 閔貞: 自家冷煖自家知 (P1. 16a)

自:  ,  ; 家:  ,  .

viii. Seal of Yang Chin 楊晉: 墨池淺淺深如海 (P1. 16b)

氵:  ,  ,  ,  .

ix. Seal of Shih T'ao 石濤：善果月之子，天童文心之孫原濟之章 (P1. 16c)

之：  ，  ，  ；　　子：，  ；

x. Seal of Emperor Ch'ien-lung 乾隆：繪月有色水有聲 (P1. 16d)

有：  ，  ．

8. Modern writings

In going over the publications which Dr Barnard has studied in discussing the problem in question two modern calligraphies have been encountered. They are the handwritings of two leading scholars in Chinese epigraphy.

a. *Chiang nan Ch'un* 江南春 by Tung Tso-pin (P1. 16e)

This is a poem written by Tung Tso-pin for Prof. Kaizuka Shigiki 貝塚茂樹, the Kyoto scholar of the oracle records. It appears first in the oracle script and is followed by a transcription in *hsing shu* 行書. There is no need to point out that the character structures in these two systems of writing are different from each other. Two cases of inconstancy may be noted in the oracle script text alone:

i. 共：  line 1.4;  line 2.6.

ii. 口：  line 1.1;  line 2.1;  line 2.5;  line 3.1;  line 4.3.

b. *Ch'in Han chin wen lu* 秦漢金文錄 by Jung Keng (13)

It is well-known that Prof. Jung Keng usually writes his own texts for lithographic reproduction. In the three pages of the preface of *Ch'in Han chin wen lu* the following cases of inconstancy in his writing may be listed:

i. 之：  p.1a, line 1.4;  p.1a, line 12.17.

ii. 促：  p.1a, line 6.9;  p.1b, line 1.14.

iii. 所：  p.1a, line 1.14;  p.1b, line 10.8.

iv. 彳：  p.1a, line 5.13;  p.1a, line 5.18.

v. 刻：  p.1a, line 7.23;  p.1b, line 2.11.

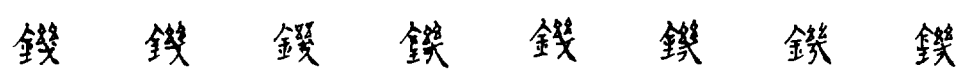
vi. 能：  p.2a, line 4.21;  p.2a, line 5.4.

vii. 示: 示 p.3a, line 6.11; 礻 p.2a, line 9.5.

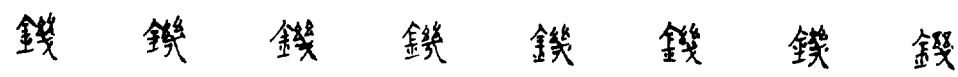
viii. 與: 与 p.1b, line 14.24; 與 p.3a, line 10.16.

The text is written in *k'ai-shu* but abbreviated structures are occasionally introduced in the writing. Moreover, in the section on *lu chi* 弩機 cross-bow mechanism (chapter 6), the characters 機 are written in the following variations:

665 666 667 668 669 671 673 674



675 676 677 678 679 680 681 687



688 689 690 691 692 693 696 697

698 699 700 702 703 704 705 712

It is interesting to note how a character with two radicals or a handful of elements can be fitted to give more than 30 forms. Jung Keng is far from being an ordinary student in epigraphy. Neither could we place his *Ch'in Han chin wen lu* among the forgeries.

With all these examples which I have gathered at random above it is evident that inconstancy of character structures has always been a prominent characteristic in Chinese writing. A writer has always been free to do so intentionally or unintentionally. The foundation for such a practice is laid not only in the nature of the writing itself but also in the long development. We may keep these examples in mind when we discuss the development of Chinese writing in the following section.

The evolution of character structures in Chinese writing

In discussing the evolution of character structures in Chinese writing one must bear in mind at least five facts. First, China has always been a country of many nationalities. At present there are still some 50 peoples living together. They have each retained a language of their own but most of them speak the *kuo-yü* 國語 national language and use the same type of writing. Numerically, the Chinese writing is the most widely used writing in the world. Secondly, like the language, the Chinese writing is a living art. It changes with the progress of time. Thirdly, like the Chinese people and their culture, the Chinese writing is developed in self-contained seclusion and it forms a unique development quite different from any other system in the world. Fourthly, the Chinese writing is not alphabetical, each character stands for a syllable and represents an idea. It is monosyllabic and isolating, hence each character is a graph by itself. The uniqueness of the writing has determined the course of its development. Fifthly, the study of Chinese writing has a long history. Its beginning may be traced to the Chou dynasty before the 3rd century B.C. The post-Han development has been reviewed by T'ang Lan in five separate disciplines (**26**, 12-25), namely, *Su-wen-tzu hsueh* 俗文字學 on the un-conventional characters; *Tzu-yang hsueh* 字樣學 on the standard characters; *Shuo-wen hsueh* 說文學 on the *Shuo-wen* characters; *Ku-wen-tzu hsueh* 古文字學 on the archaic characters; and *Lu-shu hsueh* 六書學 on the six classes of characters. They have each a tradition of its own. It is evident that the evolution of Chinese characters constitutes a complicated affair, attracting the attention of Chinese scholars throughout the centuries.

The Chinese writing, like all other systems of writing in the world began in pictorial forms. At first these were merely visual symbols which appeared either as pictures in solid forms or as drawings of lines and dots and could be called pictographic from one point of view and ideographic from another. This type of early symbols has been found on the pottery of Neolithic period long before the beginning of history. They were painted with a hair brush or incised with a sharp point (**33**, 166-68; 197; **35**). These implements were known respectively as *pi* 筆 brushes and *tao* 刀 knives in the historical times. It might have taken a long time, perhaps several thousand years for these early symbols to be used as characters in writing.

By the time of the Shang dynasty a fully developed system of writing was in service. A large number of ancient bronze inscriptions and oracle records have been preserved. There are some marked differences between these two types of writing. In the bronzes the characters usually resemble closely the original objects and are often solid in appearance, while those in the oracle texts are rather simplified and abbreviated, written with thinner lines and dots. Besides, many of the characters in the oracle script for animals which are drawn horizontally on the bronzes are turned to stand erect with the head on top. Tung Tso-pin holds the opinion that the bronze script should be regarded as a Shang archaic script and the oracle writing a Shang modern script (**8**, 187-88). It is interesting to find that even in the modern script a character may appear in many forms, some as many as forty different ways of writing. This shows that the symbolic characteristic of a character was still predominent because the meaning was more important than its form. The Shang writer was free to write a character in whatever way he pleased, either in the archaic or in the modern script or in his own way, provided that the meaning of the characters was not impaired.

This accounts for the inconstancy of character structures in the Shang script mentioned in the foregoing section.

The Shang modern script was undoubtedly a very advanced type of writing. Most of the *lu-shu* six principles, normally used to create Chinese characters, were already in service. Among the 1226 deciphered characters of the oracle records studied by Li Hsiao-ting 李孝定, 277 are *hsiang-hsing* 象形 pictographs, 20 *chih-shih* 指事 indicative symbols, 396 *hui-i* 會意 logical combinations,334 *hsing-sheng* 形聲 phonetic compounds, and 129 *chia-che* 段借 borrowed words (**34**, 91-95). The data show clearly that the Shang writing was still dominated by the pictographic and ideographic script, but it had began to introduce a new system with the phonetic writing as the basic principle of creating new words. The change occurred by putting the existing symbols into different use. Two existing symbols were combined, one indicating the meaning and the other, the sound. In this way the new character came to represent language which was the sound symbol, rather than the original idea. The process shows that the original pictographs which was based on a direct link between the idea and the script was broken and a direct link between writing and language was established. Thus the stage of mere picture drawing was left behind. We may call this type of writing a "linguistic script" though it was not alphabetical. This method was in fact quite risky and when employed to a large extent it would inevitably lead to confusion. Subsequent developments show that it could be improved by using a sound-indicator which would serve as a sense-indicator at the same time. The phonetic compound takes advantage of the logical combination to signify a clearer meaning. The great majority of Chinese characters were destined to be created in this fashion. The change from the pictorial to the linguistic script was actually far more complicated than what has just been described. The process was also responsible for the inconstancy of character structures because a writer was free to create new characters for his own use.

The discarding of picture drawings did not standardize the written characters. In the Chou dynasty a large number of them were simplified but elaborate forms continued to multiply. The construction of a character with dots and lines remained a complicated affair. A dot could be large or small and its shapes ranged from circular or square to triangular, rectangular or semi-lunar. A line could be bold or fine, long or short, straight, curve or bent, or in various degrees of inclination. The dots and lines in varying numbers could be freely fitted with one or the other in all sorts of combinations. The variations were indeed innumerable.

The Western Chou script was known as *ta-chuan* 大篆 which was characterized with elaborate combination of structural elements. The development was further complicated by the decline of the Chou central government and the expansion of the feudal states. Most of the latter created new characters and new types of writing of their own. Apart from the common system which used only lines and dots there were the *niao-shu* 鳥書 bird script, the *ch'ung-shu* 蟲書 worm script and the *k'e-tou wen* 蝌蚪文 tadpole script as well as all sorts of curious structures serving their respective purposes. The writings of Chan-kuo 戰國 were full of local characteristics. Their deviation from the common system became so wide spread that there rose a popular demand for a unified writing. The general tendency was directed at the simplification of each character. The characters in the incised texts tended to reduce the number of strokes while those of the brush written documents became restricted in the variation of strokes. This led gradually to the introduction of the *li-shu*

隸書 which was unorthodox but easier to write. Meanwhile, Ch'in Shih-huang succeeded in unifying the country and proclaimed the writing of his own state, known as *hsiao-chuan* 小篆, as the official writing of the land. But Ch'in dynasty was short-lived and the official script failed to take roots. It is evident that throughout the Chou dynasty there was never a standardized script for the entire country and writers were free to write in their own respective fashions. This again accounted for the inconstancy of character structures and styles of writing which occurred so frequently in Chou writings.

The whole collection of the Chou scripts was finally handed down to the Han dynasty. There were at least eight systems of writing: the *ta-chuan, hsiao-chuan, ch'ung-shu* and *li-shu* represented four different scripts while the *k'e-fu* 刻符, *mo-yin* 摹印, *shu-shu* 署書 and *shu-shu* 殳書 were four styles of writing invented to serve their respective purposes. They enjoyed various degrees of popularity and calligraphers were obliged to learn as many types as possible. By the time of Wang Mang 王莽 four types were still in circulation, known at that time as *chuan-shu, tso-shu* 佐書, *miu-chuan* 繆篆 and *niao-ch'ung-shu* 鳥蟲書. They were further enriched by four new ones: *ku-wen* 古文, an archaic script which was brought to light by the discovery of some ancient texts; *ch'i-tzu* 奇字, a curious script introduced by such mischievous scholars like Yang Hsiung 揚雄; *ts'ao-shu* 草書, a cursive script adopted for quick execution in writing; and *k'ai-shu* 楷書, a formal script reputed to have been invented by Wang Tz'u-chung 王次仲. However, only *chuan-shu, li-shu* and *ts'ao-shu* were in common use. Shortly after Han, when the Wei 魏 government tried to standardize the Confucian classics, three scripts, *ku-wen, chuan-shu* and *li-shu* were used simultaneously on the same text. They were known collectively as *San-t'i shih ching* 三體石經. It is clear that there was not a single standard script in the Han times and writers were free to write in whatever style they pleased or created.

The diversity of Chinese characters became a rage in the Six Dynasties. Calligraphers began to invent their own way of writing. 120 forms were noted by Yu Yuan-wei 庾元威 in *Fa shu yao lu* 法書要錄. They included those that were written in colour as well as various scripts of the minorities. There were 24 types of *chuan-shu* in miscellaneous forms because mischievous writers took pride in their recklessness. These accounted for a large number of strange characters used in the writings of this period as we have seen in some of the *mu-chih* mentioned above.

The reckless development of Chinese writing during the Six Dynasties was partly checked in the following period. The T'ang scholars exerted great effort to standardize the script mainly under *k'ai-shu*. Many books were written in favor of the movement and *k'ai-shu* became in time the official script ever since. For daily use, it was supplemented by the cursive forms of *hsing-shu* and *ts'ao-shu*. These three common scripts were structurally quite different from one another and apart from the official documents and printed works, scholars were free to use them at random in their writings. It was also common for them to include characters in *chuan-shu* and *li-shu* as they pleased. Many examples have been reproduced in the preceding section.

The freedom in Chinese writing was not the privilege of the scholar class who were versed in various types of classical scripts. The rural population in the countryside had always been free to

act independently too. They preferred simple abbreviated characters which were widely circulated outside the élite or official circle. With the popularization of printing in the post-T'ang times a large number of folk literature were published in the simplified script which was known as *su-tzu* 俗字. They matched very well with the vernacular literature and began to attract the attention of the literary class. It is interesting to note that the study of the *su-tzu* script was quite popular at the beginning of the Republic and scholars like Ch'ien Hsuan-t'ung 錢玄同, Liu Pan-nung 劉半農 and Jung Keng did not hesitate to use them in their writings. The simplified character movement, championed by the People's Republic nowadays has actually a history of at least a millennium behind it. The inconstancy of character structures has always been a common feature in Chinese writing.

The development of the various types of Chinese writing through out the ages constitutes a continuous process. The scripts evolved one after another without much interruption. In most cases the characters are structurally quite different from one another and they are easily distinguishable. Moreover, they can also be differentiated from the calligraphic point of view. Ever since the Shang dynasty, Chinese characters are composed of dots and lines, and as they are written with a hair brush, they are generally described as brush-strokes. The brush can be made to produce strokes of widely varying thickness and the flexibility makes it possible to explore its possibilities fully. The art of brush manipulation has progressed with the introduction of the various types of writing.

In the beginning the Shang calligrapher used the brush only in a very limited way. The stroke, whether bold or fine, appears always with a point at each end. This shows that the brush touches the writing surface first with the tip, a slight pressing gives the thicker part in the middle, and finally the brush is lifted gradually, ending again with a point. It seems that there is only a one way movement with the brush and most of the strokes stand independently by themselves.

This style of writing continued to be in fashion in Western Chou. Most of the bronze inscriptions of this period were written in the Shang manner with strokes which begin and end with a point. The size of each character varies according to the number of strokes used in the construction, smaller characters having fewer strokes while large ones being more complicated. There was yet no principle regarding the spacing of the character.

By the beginning of Eastern Chou there evolved a tendency to arrange all the characters in similar spaces and to write the strokes without the points, giving a smooth line from end to end. This needs a proper control of the brush with a steady hand. It became the standard style of writing for *hsiao-chuan*. The calligrapher began to do a stroke continuously in several directions and to make each character an entity by itself in the prescribed space, usually a square.

When *li-shu* was introduced the calligraphic strokes assumed a new way of expression. There are more variations in one stroke and the circular, curved, rounded lines of *chuan-shu* was changed into a square and polyangular form, firm and decorative. An ordinary stroke is usually done by pressing the tip of the brush to form a dot at both ends while a characteristic stroke also begins with a dot

but the brush is dragged on and pressed harder towards the end and finally lifted to form a sharp point. In this way the point of the brush plays its part again in calligraphy in a deliberate fashion. The writer enjoys now a freedom in applying the writing implement and, therefore, it is easier and less tiring in writing.

At a glance the writing of *k'ai-shu* is again quite different from the *chuan-shu* and *li-shu*. There is an inflexible regularity of design and the characters are constructed, sometimes compressed to form a square block of uniform size. The types of strokes, however, are further increased, each having its own way of execution. By the time of the Six Dynasties paper was common and calligraphers were eager to improve their art. Many of them tried to analyse and classify the strokes. In the Han dynasty Emperor Chang-ti 漢章帝 had differentiated fourteen basic types of strokes, but now Wei Sho 衞鑠, better known as Lady Wei 衞夫人, recognized as many as seventy-two. One of her pupils, the celebrated Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之 settled finally with only eight. He advanced the theory that eight basic strokes would be necessary in Chinese calligraphy as embodied in the character *yung* 永. This has been more widely studied than any other system of classification. The eight strokes of *yung* are *tse* 側, le 勒, *nu* 努, *yo* 趯, *ts'e* 策, *liang* 掠, *cho* 啄, and *chieh* 磔, each requiring its own way of manipulation. This is, of course, basic, but in general a student would need a wider training. It is only after the mastery of the *k'ai-shu* that he is allowed to wander into any other styles including the *hsing-shu* and *ts'ao-shu*. It has been common for a master to do a piece of calligraphy in several styles involving various types of character structures as we have noted in Cheng Hsieh (Pl. 14b) mentioned above.

There is no need to go into the diversities in the shapes and structures of *hsing-shu* and *ts'ao-shu*. Every calligrapher is free to develop his or her way in the cursive scripts. Apart from the official documents and printed materials, calligraphic works are usually written in several styles and character structures so as to enrich its artistic qualities, rhythmic, carefree and spontaneous. They may be further enriched with the display of ink ranging from intense black to *fei-pai* 飛白 "flying white". The beauty of Chinese calligraphy is a beauty of graphic movement, not a designed motionless shape and no calligrapher would ever be restricted by the constancy of character structures.

The evolution of character structures in Chinese writing occurs either gradually or drastically. Gradual evolution is usually effectuated without deliberation. For example, a dot may be written as a circle, and a circle may become a square or an oval or an oblong. Some would appear with projections at the two upper corners and some other forms. This is done unintentionally and before long the resulting structure or shape of a character or element in a character may turn up to be totally different from the original. But historically the sequence of the changes may usually be traced.

Drastic evolution of Chinese characters, on the other hand, is mostly accomplished deliberately by the writer. It may also be enforced as a government policy. The development is more complex than the gradual changes just mentioned. It moves continuously between two poles, complexity on one hand and simplification on the other. The former serves to give a character a clearer meaning as well as a wider scope for artistic treatment, while the latter usually aims at fascilitating an easier learning and writing. They play their respective role like partners, complementing each other in the entire process. In this way most Chinese characters have undergone a series of compli-

cating as well as a series of simplifying process. Many examples are given in T'ang Lan's *Ku wen tzu hsueh tao lun* (**26**, 22-51; cf., **32**).

History witnesses three major cycles of this development. First, the elaborate picture writing of early historical days was succeeded by the simple Shang oracle script, then the cumbersome structure of *ta-chuan* was reduced into the *hsiao-chuan* of Ch'in and the *li-shu* of Han, and finally, *k'ai-shu* was supplanted with the *chien-tzu* 簡字 simplified script of the present day. Being symbols of writing which may be freely manipulated by the writer, the Chinese characters have enjoyed a continuous evolution. Moreover, most Chinese calligraphers are usually well versed in most of the scripts of ancient times and various types of character structures and writing styles would often pass into their works at random. Despite the historical process that one style succeeds another, nothing that ever gets into the Chinese calligraphy ever gets completely out. The inconstancy of character structures in Chinese writing is only to be expected because it is one of the most unique features of Chinese writing. By limiting the scope to a single document by one individual writer will not be able to alter this basic practice throughout the ages.

Conclusion

With the discussion on the new principle of constancy of character structures advanced by Dr Barnard, the review of the various single documents with some inconstancy of character structures and a brief introduction to the evolution of character structures and of calligraphic manners in Chinese writing it is plain that inconstancy of character structures has always been a common feature in Chinese writing. Therefore, the conclusion which I have reached in *Chou China* – "It is evidently not 'quite permissible to regard inconstancy as a definite proof of forgery.' " – should be upheld.

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Plate 1

a. *Shu Ssu-tzu ting* 戍嗣子鼎. **4**, fig. 28.

b. Hand copy of *Shu Ssu-tzu ting* by Dr Barnard. **4**, fig. 28.

c. *Shuang-kou* 雙鉤 double-line tracing of some characters in *San-shih p'an* 散氏盤 by Dr Barnard. **3**, p. 26.

Plate 2

a. *Shuang-kou* double-line tracing of some characters in *Mao-kung ting* 毛公鼎 by Dr Barnard. **3**, p. 25-6.

b. An analytical diagram of idiosyncracies in the writing of the element 隹 in various characters in *Mao-kung ting* by Dr Barnard. **3**, p. 30.

Plate 3

Chou Wang Yi mu chih ming 周王義墓誌銘 **4**, fig. 29.

Plate 4

a. *Yi-hou Nieh kuei* 宜侯矢簋 **31**, No. 167.

b. Hand copy of *Yi-hou Nieh kuei* by Dr Barnard. **2**, fig. 2.

Plate 5

a. *Shih-shih kuei* 師旗簋 **18**, pl. 8.

b. *Yu-fu kuei* 友父簋 **17**, fig. 15.

Plate 6

a. *Han-huang-fu kuei* 函皇父簋 **21**, fig. 64.

b. *Shih-k'e hsü* 師克盨 **21**, fig. 102.

Plate 7

a. *Nieh Ling yi* 矢令彝 **27**, pl. 22.

b. *Ch'u chien* 楚簡 **24**, pl. 4.

c. *Ch'u mao* 楚矛 **28**, pl. 12.

Plate 8

a. *Oh-chun Ch'i chieh* 鄂君啟節 **16**, pl. 27a.

b. Hand copy of *Oh-chun Ch'i chieh* by Yin and Lo. **30**, 9.

c. *Ch'in t'o liang chao wen* 秦橢量詔文 **13**, 1. 27b.

Plate 9

a. *Yung-shih Ch'eng yü ting* 永始乘輿鼎 **13**, 2.1.4b

b. *Yun-yang ting* 雲陽鼎 **13**, 2.1.7a.

c. *Yen-shih tsao tso hsi* 嚴氏造作洗 **13**, 2.5.64a.

Plate 10

a. *Shih Wan mu chih ming* 石婉墓誌銘 **5**, pl. 77.

b. *Yuan Hsiu mu chih ming* 元秀墓誌銘 **5**, pl. 95.

Plate 11

a. *Chang Chiang mu chih ming* 張姜墓誌銘 **5**, pl. 401.2

b. *Kuo Hsiu mu chih ming* 郭休墓誌銘 **5**, pl. 408.2

Plate 12

a. *Wang-shih mu chih ming* 王氏墓誌銘 **5**, pl. 413.

b. *Lu jen shih p'an* 六壬式盤 **7**, 134.

Plate 13

a. Calligraphy, *Kuan-yin ching* 觀音經 **12**, pl. 36.

b. Calligraphy, Buddhist scroll. **6**, fig. 1.

Plate 14

a. Calligraphy of Tao Chi 道濟 **23**, 3. 1.

b. Calligraphy of Cheng Hsieh 鄭燮 **15**, 13.

Plate 15

a. Seal of Hung Wu 弘旰 **10**, 87. 71.

b. Seal of Hung Wu **10**, 90. 149.

c. Seal of Li Shih-cho 李世倬 **10**, 147. 71.

d. Seal of Chin Nung 金農 **10**, 201. 21.

e. Seal of Yao Shou 姚綬 **10**, 206. 29.

f. Seal of T'ung Yu 童鈺 **10**, 378. 45.

Plate 16

a. Seal of Min Chen 閔貞 **10**, 385. 14.

b. Seal of Yang Chin 楊晉 **10**, 409. 48.

c. Seal of Tao Chi 道濟 **10**, 427. 30

d. Seal of Emperor Ch'ien-lung 乾隆 **10**, 587. 141.

e. Calligraphy of Tung Tso-pin 董作賓 **1**, 16. fig. 23.

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