

## Ming, Yin, & Chou

A CATALOGUE OF THE CHINESE BRONZES IN THE ALFRED F. PILLSBURY COLLECTION. By Bernhard Karlgren. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 228 pp. \$25.

By KUANGCHI C. CHANG

THE ALFRED F. PILLSBURY collection of Chinese bronzes at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, in the words of the author of this catalogue, is one of the most prominent collections in existence—in the very front rank of collections outside China and Japan. Both the connoisseur and the layman, after turning the pages and examining the full-page plates and the text, will not need further convincing to agree with Dr. Karlgren's statement. Even though these photographs convey only the barest documentary details, and not the brilliant patina and mellowed texture, one is immediately impressed with the selection of bronzes, gathered over a period of two decades by a man who has gone about the business of collecting with a devotion tempered only by unrelenting good taste. If the collection itself is superior, no less is the catalogue compiled by Dr. Bernhard Karlgren, the director of the East Asiatic Collections of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm.

Collecting Chinese bronzes is a comparatively new hobby in the West. Not until the early 1920's, when intensive and highly organized archeological excavations were undertaken on ancient sites in North China, were Chinese and Western scholars alike spurred to study and research in this aspect of Chinese art. Since then, many notable exhibitions of bronzes belonging to the Chinese government and private collectors have been held in the United States and Europe. These exhibitions, together with the writings of archeologists and the activities of Chinese antique entrepreneurs, have promoted a more general understanding and appreciation of this art in the West. Today, many museums throughout the world include in their prized collections some of the best examples of bronze that have come out of China.

Bronzes are the earliest art expression of the Chinese people. The remote beginnings of this art are obscure and will remain so unless or until future archeological excavations bring to light more data on the subject. Bronzes have been found to have been flourishing in an already remarkably advanced state of development more than 3500 years ago. The

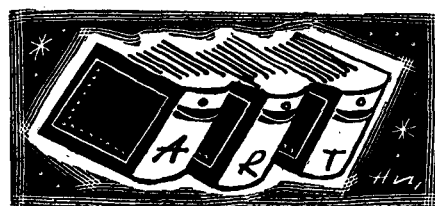
best works are to be found among those cast in the thousand years roughly between 1300 and 300 B.C. All the pieces in this collection, except one, came from that period.

Of this collection of 103 items, including ritual vessels, utensils, Chung bells, implements, fittings, etc., the largest group, sixty-five in number, belong to the Yin (circa 1300-1028 B.C.) and Early Chou (circa 1027-900 B.C.) periods, and the next, twenty-seven in number, belong to the Huai style period (circa 600-222 B.C.). Of the remaining items, ten are works produced in the three hundred years intervening between the two group-periods just mentioned, and only one piece, a toilet box, represents the relatively recent Han era (207 B.C.-A.D. 220).

The most impressive items in this collection are undoubtedly the ritual vessels from the Yin and Early Chou periods. The dating of these vessels has been carefully worked out. Each vessel is assigned not only a period—Yin, Yin-or-Early-Chou, or Early Chou, to which it chronologically belongs—but also a style, A, B, or Mixed, in which it is shaped and decorated.

This system of dating bronzes by their style of shape and decoration is Dr. Karlgren's own. He arrived at this system after painstaking studies of a highly scientific and statistical nature, and has explained and discussed it at length in the bulletins of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm. Unfortunately, he does not mention the nature of these styles in this catalogue. Users of this catalogue who do not happen to be familiar with his system would have profited by a reference, even in the briefest terms, to these styles.

This catalogue contains 228 pages of text, consisting of some preliminary remarks on chronology, description of the bronzes with illustrations, and an index, as well as a foreword by A. F. Pillsbury, the owner-donor of the collection and an acknowledgment by Russell A. Plimpton, the director of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The description of the bronzes and the interpretation of the inscriptions on some of them are detailed and show the same quality of untiring, even unrelenting, thoroughness that characterizes all of Dr. Karlgren's writings, whether on Chinese art or on the Chinese classics.



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## After Kon-Tiki, Before Pizarro

THE ART OF ANCIENT PERU. By Heinrich U. Doering. New York: Frederick A. Praeger. 240 pp. \$12.50.

By HERBERT J. SPINDEN

HERE is a visual anthology of the best that Peru produced before the coming of Pizarro. It is a selection of fine examples in the arts of construction and representation, including architecture, sculpture in different materials, ceramics, textiles, metal objects, and mosaic jewels. Mr. Doering's presentation is unusual in its restraint. Two hundred and forty superb photographs of scenes and specimens, supplemented by five color plates, are merely numbered without comment or identification. Naïve impressions are secured directly upon the eye of the beholder. Then you turn back to some eighteen pages of introduction in which large problems of history are discussed. Next, the plates are covered in numbered paragraphs, with fuller details and comparisons. Similarities are noted and techniques discussed.

The personality of South America's primary civilization, which sets world standards in textiles, and ranks high in portraiture, in strange crafts, in plant and animal domestications, in dyes and medicines, is woefully short on names and dates, except for the red twilight of Spanish contact. "Ancient Peru," says Mr. Doering, "magnificent though its material and spiritual creations are, has remained without a script and for no less than three-quarters of its history there is not a single fact reported on which to base its chronology." It is just as well, perhaps, that the arrangement of subject matter is given in reverse, counting backward from the Conquest.

The Inca Empire extended, at the end of its career, from the Mayo River in southern Colombia to the latitudes of Mendoza in Argentina and Santiago in Chile. But Doering's Peru excludes Ecuador and includes, in Bolivia, only Lake Titicaca and the environs of Tiahuanaco. The Incas, like the Aztecs, were a military end product, practical and disenchanting but retaining skills. At the other end of the vista in Peru was Chavín and its condors. "The Chavín style manifested itself in works of art that vibrate with an almost fierce religious faith. . . . If

there is any style to show the 'tremendum' in the highest degree, it is the style of Chavín. Close to it, that of Tiahuanaco."

Here the counterpart is the brave religious art of the Maya in Central America, a fact which Max Uhle recognized. He tried to link Tiahuanaco to Esmeraldas and Copan, but could not find the clinching evidence. Julio Tello thought the same and shortly before his death he and I compared our transmissions along the Andes

and condors on stone slabs at Chavín. Peru has no dates, but the Jaguar Stairway at Copan says with astronomical compliance, March 27, 511 A.D. Doering follows Uhle and Tello but listens wisely to others. He says: "Three pan-Peruvian styles at certain epochs are almost ubiquitous: the Inca style of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; the Tiahuanaco style of about 500 or more years earlier; and the Chavín style of which we can hardly say more than that it was in vogue before 500 A.D. . . . The intervals between the pan-styles are filled with . . . the Mochica style in



Mother and child from Chicama Valley, Peru; early Mochica culture, about 400 A.D.

between Mexico and Peru, and discussed the transfer of techniques and cosmic concepts. Beeswax from domesticated bees was a common factor in South and North, producing negative painting in pottery, batik on cloth, and the lost-wax process for casting metals. Probably that start was Colombia, we both thought.

But the sun was a rampant jaguar divinity wearing the sun disc as a halo, with serpent rays and ruling with a lightning spear and a thunderbolt scepter. In Peru and Central America similar pictures on early stone monuments unite the two frontiers. The Peruvian data was brought to light by Tello in northern gorges and mountain crests. Stone statues that wear sun disc designs on their tunics, sun gods carved on stone lintels to be finally embodied on great sculptures at Tiahuanaco, and a ferocious symbolism of jaguars, serpents,

the North . . . the Nasca and the two Paracas styles in the South."

Doering approves of but could not avail himself of now published summaries of Carbon-14 dating which show that wandering hunters, houseless and uncultured, lived in Peru for five millennia before settlements were made and plants or herds tamed. The first pottery appears, it seems, about 1250 B.C. along with introduced maize to supplement native squashes. On the meager record the nomads lacked conveniences, but believed in animal helpers and a sentient universe. Peruvian art and Maya art, too, is dominated by animal gods of land and sea, executed it may be with simple realism or overpowering complications. The subject is dynamic. Of one thing we may be sure after sad experience: ideals that make great civilizations cannot be caught effectively by screening kitchen dumps.

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Herbert J. Spinden, former curator of American Indian art and primitive cultures at the Brooklyn Museum, has made extensive explorations for ruined cities in Central and South America.