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Book Reviews

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The new 2nd edition of the work of the same title, published in 1962 by T.H. Tsien, Professor Emeritus of Chinese Studies and Curator Emeritus of the East Asian Library at the University of Chicago, will be a tremendously popular reference tool on the reference shelves of research libraries of the world and a welcome addition to ever-increasing literature in the history of book.

The first edition went through three impressions before being reprinted in 1969. The various revised editions and translations of the work into other languages were described in detail by Bie Liqian 别立谦 in his 1998 master’s thesis at Peking University, entitled *Lun Qian Cunxun dui Zhongguo shu shi yan jiu de gong xian 论钱存训对中国书史研究的贡献* [On T.H.Tsien’s contributions to the study of Chinese book history]. The first Chinese language edition, entitled *Zhongguo gu dai shu shi 中国古代书史,* was published in 1975 in Hong Kong, based on *Shu yu zhu bo 书於竹帛,* a translation by Dr. Zhou Ningsen 周宁森, and the book had its 2nd edition in 1981. The Japanese language edition, entitled *Chūgoku kodai shosekishi 中国古代書籍史,* was published in Tokyo in 1980 and in 1990 the Korean edition, entitled *Chungguk kodaesōsa 中國古代書史,* was published. A new revised and enlarged Chinese edition was published in 1996 in Taibei, Taiwan, upon which this 2nd revised English edition was based, with numerous additions of new data available since then. In the last three years there appeared four monographs with three revised editions. Along with the present new English language edition, a Chinese one has been published in 2002 in Shanghai, by Shanghai shu dian, and a reprint edition published in the series of *Shi ji wen ku 世紀文庫* [Century library], in 2004 also in Shanghai. Another edition of Prof. Tsien’s work, together with his memoir, is soon to be published by Nanjing University Press.

The structure of the 2nd edition remains the same as that of the first one, but it has incorporated many of recent archaeological discoveries and other information gathered since the late 1950s up till the year 2000, such as the early Zhou oracle bones excavated at the Anyang site, numerous bronzes, bamboo and wooden tablets from the Warring States, Qin and Han dynasties, the Mawangdui silk records, and ancient paper specimens discovered at various sites of the country. The incorporated information includes more recent archaeological discoveries as early as 1970s, such as the finds at Xiaotun Village in 1971, and as late as those discovered in the 1990s, such as Huayuanzhang, south of Yinxu Museum, in 1991. These are recorded both in texts and footnotes, as well as summarized in Appendix A. entitled “Major Archaeological Discoveries, 1899-2000”. A “Chronology of Chinese culture, books, and writing” and an extensive bibliography are also included.

The introduction provides a discussion on the legacy of early Chinese records, their value as the carrier of a civilization in its continuity and a medium of communication, and the social and intellectual factors underlying their development within a chronological framework. The Chinese writing, prior to the time of Confucius, consisted primarily of records used to communicate with the spirits, official documents and collected works. From the Warring States period on institutional reforms and popular education generated various schools, such as the Confucians,
the Taoists, cosmologists, etc. in the form of private writings and collections. And with the far-reaching impact of Buddhism on the Chinese thought, religion and scholarship, religious literature became popular. The increasing demand for religious literature ultimately stimulated the development of printing.

The chapters of the book are arranged by medium. The most commonly used during early periods were bones and shells, metals and clay, stone and jade, silk, and paper. The origin, nature and characteristics of each material, types of the material, methods of inscribing, contents and arrangement of inscriptions are described in detail, with examples of archaeological discoveries. Included is also a chapter on the origin and evolution of the various writing tools and vehicles, explaining the characteristics of Chinese writing, the nature of the materials and tools of writing and physical and psychological factors in writing.

The conclusion summarizes the contents of the work and provides generalizations and interpretations of various topics of general interest, such as types of writing material, transmission of ancient literature, dates of different inscriptions, development of the Chinese book, methods of writing and duplication, styles of Chinese script, growth of vocabulary, order of Chinese writing, and the development of Chinese culture, books and writing was placed in the context of social and intellectual development.

Parts of the book have been re-written and re-edited. Several headings of chapters and subheadings have been revised, such as Chapter 7, which has been changed to “Paper and Paper Manuscripts” from “Quasi-paper and Paper Manuscript.” The text also includes a tract on the character zhi (paper) on a 3rd-century B.C. bamboo tablet. These changes reflect the author’s revised view on the material of early paper and its definition, based on more recent discoveries and scientific examination of old specimens.

Romanization of personal and geographical names and special terms has been converted from Wade-Giles to the pinyin system. Several illustrations of newly discovered objects have replaced older ones. The glossary, the bibliography and the index have been expanded.

The 2nd edition is further enhanced by the 26-page after-word by Edward Shaughnessy. Lorraine J. and Herrlee G. Creel Professor of Early Chinese Studies at the University of Chicago, entitled “Paleographic discoveries in China since 1960,” which serves as a complement to the work and was written in the same framework. It follows the outline of the major media of early Chinese texts, surveys most important paleographic discoveries, by medium, and recent important results of scholarship in the field. Professor Shaughnessy succinctly points out that the significance of this new publication is that while the 1st edition was “perfectly timed to synthesize the results of several decades of discovery and research in the field of Chinese paleography in the first half of the twentieth century,” the 2nd edition is just as “timely in terms of the remarkable archaeological discoveries and scholarly developments that have taken place during the second half of the century,” even though the field has expanded so vastly and it would be impossible to synthesize all the discoveries of recent years in detail.

Li Xueqin, Director of Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in his foreword, welcomes the new edition and affirms its usefulness for researchers for the years to come.
as the 1st edition has become a classic in the study of Chinese civilization, the 2nd edition, a testimonial to the author’s legendary productive publishing activities and prestigious reputation as one of the most outstanding scholars in the history of Chinese books and inscriptions, will similarly provide a significant and useful guidance for researchers of Chinese book history and civilization.

Lily Keeskes, Library of Congress