

Huángdì 黃帝 in Pre-Hàn Bronze Inscriptions

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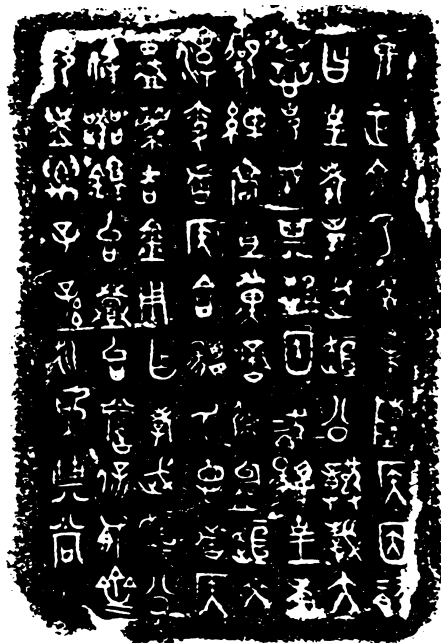
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EDITORS' NOTE: Gil Mattos died on 12 Dec 2002, before he could see this piece through the press. It is printed here essentially as he submitted it.

1. The Title Huángdì in Pre-Hàn Inscriptions

Insofar as pre-Hàn bronze inscription texts are concerned, only one has been discovered to date that mentions the name Huángdì 黃帝 “Yellow Emperor,” namely, the Chén-hóu Yīnzī Duì 鹽侯因資敦 (CYD) inscription. The provenance of this vessel is something of a mystery. We know that it was in the collection of the antiquarian Chén Jièqí 陳介祺 (1813-1884) during the 19th century, and later came into the possession of the Republican era epigrapher Liú Tǐzhì 劉體智, but we do not know when or where it was discovered, nor do we know its present location. Fortunately, however, photographs of the vessel have been published, so we at least know what it looked like. Be that as it may, for a number of very sound reasons, the CYD has long been recognized as one of the bronzes that were cast by members of the Tián 田 clan of Qí 齊.



• Rubbing of the Chén-hóu Yīnzī Duì Inscription (Reduced) •

We know from the received texts that the Tián clan supplanted the Jiāng 姜 clan as the ruling house of Qí during the 04th century – just as had allegedly been prophesied by the woman betrothed to Jìngzhòng 敬仲 (= Chén Wán 陳完), a displaced prince from the state of Chén 陳 who became the progenitor of the Tián clan in Qí (see Zuǒzhuàn, Zhuāng 22). Received texts in some instances have the name of this clan written 田 (eg, Zhànguó cè, Shǐjì) and in others 陳 (eg, Zuǒzhuàn, Lúnyǔ). According to Shǐjì 46 (4/1880), Chén Wán had changed his clan name (shì 氏) to Tián after his flight from Chén and arrival in Qí in 0672. In the bronze inscriptions, the clan name normally occurs written 鹽, whereas the name of the state is written 陳. In the inscription, the maker of the vessel is identified as Chén-hóu Yīnzī 鹽侯因資. It is generally acknowledged that 鹽 here stands for 陳. Phonetically, 田 (OC *din*) and 陳 (OC *drjin*, no doubt phonetic in 鹽) were fairly close, and to some extent would account for the interchange. Yet why Chén Wán changed his clan name is uncertain.

2. The Date of the CYD

By the mid 1930's, most Chinese scholars were in agreement that the CYD had been cast at the behest of Yīnqí 因齊, which was the personal name of King Wēi of Qí 齊威王 (r 0356-0320; see Shǐjì 46, 4/1888). King Wēi succeeded his father Qí Huán-gōng 齊桓公 (r 0375-0357) as ruler of Qí. While the maker's name appears in this inscription written Yīnzī 因資, it has been shown that sufficient contacts between the qí 齊 (OC *dzid*) and cì 次 (OC *tshid*) phonetic series exist to support the claim that qí 齊 and zī 資 (OC *tsid*?) here are simply variant writings of the same word.

Most scholars have speculated that the CYD was most likely cast during the first year of King Wēi's reign, or at least shortly after Huán-gōng's death, as the vessel is dedicated to his deceased father. This dating is reasonable but is by no means certain.

3. References to Huángdì

In addition to referring to his “August deceased father, the filial, martial Duke Huán” in the inscription, Yīnzī also refers to his “High Ancestor, Huángdì.” While such references to one's high ancestors are rather common in Zhōu inscriptions and follow a pattern similar to this one, references to Huángdì or any other mythical beings are most unusual. Here, however, we find Huángdì being treated in the same way ordinary ancestors are treated in other inscriptions. Of course, for Yīnzī, having such a distinguished ancestor as Huángdì, in addition to his August “filial, martial” father Huán-gōng, may have served as a source of legitimation for his rulership. But this is only speculation; any number of other scenarios are possible.

4. A Note on Recent Relevant Sources

So there is really nothing new to report on the CYD that we did not know before. Nor have any other bronze texts containing references to Huángdì come to light since the appearance of the CYD. For a detailed study of this text, along with others of Qí origin, the best source is Darrel Doty's dissertation “The Bronze Inscriptions of Ch'í: An Interpretation” (1982). More recently, the Qí texts have again been studied in Jiāng Shúhuì's 江淑惠 *Qíguó yìqì huì kǎo* 齊國彝器彙考.

The task of tracking down the occurrences of terms such as Huángdì and the like in pre-Hàn bronze inscriptions has been greatly facilitated by the recent publication of the 6-volume Qīngtóngqì míngwén jiǎnsuǒ 青銅器銘文檢索 under the editorship of Zhōu Hé 周何 (1995). This is a full concordance to some 8,500 bronze inscriptions and covers most of the important ones discovered up to the mid 1980s. While its use is trickier than most other concordances, it is a godsend nonetheless. Happy hunting!

Appendix: Translation

After Darrel P Doty 1982

It was the regulated sixth month, guǐwèi day [= 20th day in 60-day cycle], Marquis of Chén, Yīnzī said, “[As for my] August deceased father, the Filial Martial Duke Huán, the way [his] great desire can be achieved is esteemable! May it be Yīnzī [who] extols [his] August deceased father’s effulgence, extends [the line of] the High Ancestor, Yellow Emperor, achieves and succeeds to [the works of Dukes] Huán [of Qí] and Wén [of Jìn], [makes =] brings the feudal lords to court and makes [them] enquire, replies to and extols his [= deceased father’s] virtue.” The feudal lords reverentially presented auspicious metal. Using [the occasion], [Yīnzī] made the Filial, Martial Duke Huán [this] ancestral *duì*-vessel, use [it] to perform the winter sacrifice [and] use [it] to perform the autumnal sacrifice [and] preserve [those] possessing the Qí territory; [for] generations of ten thousand sons and grandsons, eternally [make =] fulfill [this] rule and law.

Comment

E Bruce Brooks (2009)

The Chǎn 陳 family’s surname recalled their foreign origin (see DJ 3/22:1), so that a change to the near-homophonous Tyén 田 is not surprising. When did it occur? Use of Chǎn in the Yīn-dǐ inscription (whose probable date is 0357) would have been sacrificially required, and the name Chǎn Jāng 陳璋 in the Chǎn Jāng Hú inscription of 0314 (he is referred to in literary texts as Tyén Jāng) may be similarly constrained. Mention of Tyén Pàn 田盼 in the Bamboo Annals as leading the Chí force at Mǎ-líng (0343) suggests that the change was made before the Chí Kingship (0342). How much earlier it might be hard to say on present evidence. Whether the choice of 田 (“field”) reflected a special clan interest in rural economy (DJ 10/3:3 is probably retrojective) may also be left to future investigation.

The usurping Chǎn/Tyén could hardly have claimed a Jyāng 姜 ancestor. Their choice of the mythical Hwáng-dì as their clan founder may be echoed in Szmǎ Tán (whose calendrological art derived from the Jì-syà theorists of Chí, active from c0313) and his theory that all the Sinitic or Sinicized peoples are descended from Hwáng-dì. The choice of Hwáng-dì was a unification stratagem: a propaganda of inclusion.

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