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**«Chu shu ki nien»¹ — a Note on the Proper Division
into Periods of Ancient Chinese History**

It will be quite safe to assume that much more has been written about the Chinese civilisation which had flourished before our era than about the whole successive period of Chinese history. On the other hand, in spite of all the material so laboriously collected on the subject, we cannot claim to have acquired a correct knowledge of the then Chinese society and its structure².

There are numerous reasons accounting for our scanty knowledge of these facts. In the first place, little if any data may be gathered from the extant texts antecedent to the period of the Warring States (Vth to IIIrd cent. B. C.) that do relate to the development of productive forces or productive relationships at that time. In the second place, quite insufficient is our knowledge of the various elements of the corresponding superstructure. For whatever we may gather from the texts concerns mainly the views held by the ruling class — political, legal, but mostly ethical — while little is recorded as regards respective institutions.

Therefore an historian, who desires to reconstruct upon this scanty information that he finds in the authentic documents a picture of the social system of Ancient China faces the task of building a concrete whole out of scattered and ill-fitting elements. He may be helped to a certain degree by archeological excavations. The data thus established are, however, the source only of general information on the material culture. Another source though least informative will be various ethical writings which furnish however little factual material.

Another difficulty is the still serious problem of correct reading and interpretation of old Chinese texts that would help to understand more accurately all those thinly scattered data.

¹ *Chu shu ki nien*, or the *Bamboo Annals* is incorporated into the collection of writings recorded on bamboo tablets and discovered in the year 279 B. C. in the tomb of a ruler of the Wei dynasty who died in 295 B. C. Soon after, a carefully annotated edition of the chronicles in current Chinese was produced by contemporary scholars.

² Вестник Древней Истории, 4 (42), Москва 1952, p. 158.

To illustrate, let us consider one of the scanty statements made by *Mencius*³ which deals with the manner in which the surplus product of a farmer's labour was appropriated by the ruling class.

In *Mencius*'s work we read: 夏后氏五十而貢殷人七十而助周人百畝而徹⁴.

According to *Legge*'s translation and notes, which in turn are based upon Chinese commentaries, during the earliest dynasty of Hsia (1989—1558 B. C.) the system *kung* 貢 was practised which determined that every holder of a single plot should pay the tenths individually. In the next period during the Yin dynasty (1558—1050 B. C.) the usage of *chu* 助 was followed. Eight families would cultivate nine fields, eight of them separately and the ninth collectively, delivering the crops of the latter to a public official. During the third dynasty Chou (1050—256 B. C.) a new system was adopted, the so-called *che* 徹. This time ten families collectively farmed their tenanted fields and together paid the predial tithes.

The correctness of this interpretation of the quoted fragment must seem very uncertain if we consider that it shows just the reverse picture of the regular evolution of production relationships which through the primary period of collective farming by a kinship group or a village community gradually evolved the system of individual holdings.

The best way out of such difficulties arising from our barely satisfactory comprehension of ancient texts would inevitably lead to the rejection of their traditional interpretation, with the objective of establishing their primary meaning.

For achieving this aim it will be necessary to analyze the texts anew in order to set up a fullest possible list of social functions under various designata of certain selected terms and subsequently to define their respective semantic values.

It is of utmost importance to adopt this methodological principle, especially to-day after the archeological excavations in Anyang and the works of *Karl*. Modern sinology has at its disposal a much more substantial material concerning various questions on ancient China than the XIIth cent. neo-Confucian historiographers, whose interpretation of historic data has been universally accepted by official Chinese scholarship and consequently in a large part also by modern sinologists, especially historians.

The purpose of this study is to re-examine a few terms chosen from one text only. The terms to be analysed are *ti* 帝, *wang* 王, *si yüe* 四岳 and *hou* 侯. The semantic function of each will be determined upon the examination of the

³ *Mencius*, eminent Confucian that lived during the Warring States period, and was mainly concerned with the nature and principles of government. The work *Meng tsı* that is attributed to him was incorporated into the Confucian Canon and has been many times examined and commented.

⁴ cf. J. *Legge*, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. II, Bk III, Pt I, Ch. III.

Bamboo Annals over the period extending from Huang-ti to 769 B. C. i. e. to the time of the fall of western Chou. The choice of this particular text was made because firstly it is authentic⁵, it is not included in the Confucian Canon and till now it has been summarily treated by both the Chinese historiographers and modern sinologists. Secondly, the text under examination covers a sufficiently long period that we may expect changes in social structure and their reflection in the language. Thirdly, the form of the terse entries, referring to the thin stratum of the „rulers” is particularly convenient for this type of research work.

Any such cursory analysis of semantic aspects of a few termes only, especially when they are purposefully chosen from one text cannot, of course, solve the very complex problem of the correct division of Chinese history into distinct periods. Neither should this study be expected to give a fullest information on the functional meanings of the terms here analyzed.

The author's aim has been to bring under notice the method which he found helpful in establishing the meanings of each term. This method makes it possible to trace various functional values of certain words throughout a longer period of Chinese history. Also the author wishes to stress how useful he found it for the period division of history.

The analysis of the ideograms for each term will first be made since in certain cases this may help to establish the primary meaning of the word. Next several qualitative functions from the point of view of semantics will be arranged in chronological order together with the conclusive remarks on the division of Chinese history as it is recorded in the *Annals*.

TI 帝. According to K a r l g r e n the explanation of this graph is uncertain⁶.

The word has several meanings and denotes a ruler, or an emperor or a god. C r e e l quotes after J. M. M e n z i e s his interesting theory that the ideogram *ti* originally was identified with the burnt-offering or the sacred fire, and in later period with the god to whom this sacrifice was offered⁷.

But this refers only to the Shang-Yin period while in the period of Hia and earlier as we learn from the *Bamboo Annals* the word denoted a man.

In the *Annals* *ti* appears in the contexts referring to religious or magic rites, administration of an unspecified territory, fixing of calendar data (tillage?), regulation works on the rivers, court ceremonial and war operations. Only once in the closing period of the Shang-Yin dynasty the word *ti* in the compound noun *Shang-ti* 上帝 denotes a god.

⁵ cf. Charles S. G a r d n e r, *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, Harvard Historical Monographs XI, Cambridge, Mass., 1938, pp. 7—8.

⁶ B. K a r l g r e n, *Grammata Serica*, Stockholm 1940, p. 380.

⁷ H. G. C r e e l, *The Birth of China*, London 1936, p. 182.

In the period preceding the Hsia dynasty, a *ti* „ascended the throne” and the phrase *ti tsi wei* 帝即位 is identical with that used with the term *wang* 王 which appeared in the Shang-Yin period. In this period we find *wang* 王 in the place of the *ti* 帝 (I—1)⁸.

A *ti* offers a sacrifice to the river or on the banks of the river *Lo* 洛 (I—50); he is in charge of calendar calculations (III—3) or requests others to do them (2145—1); he commissions his officials to make wars (IV—16; 2042—35); makes (songs probably of religious character (III—21; 2042—1); appoints his successor (IV—45) or asks *si yüe* 四岳 to appoint his chosen candidate (2145—70); when he actually ascended the throne he „inspects” *si yüe* 四岳 — yet from the text it is not possible to establish the purpose of his visit (2145—12); he orders *kung* 共工 or *po* 伯 to regulate the (river) *Ho* 河 (2145—19; 2145—61); he orders *hou* 后 to banish *ti tsi* 帝子 probably his own son (2145—58); he dismisses or degrades *po* 伯 — in the text we read of a *po* who had been in charge of the regulation works on the Ho (2145—69). A *ti* orders the working out of a system of penalties (2042—3) or conveys a *feng* 封⁹ — in our text the ideogram *feng* refers to the fief in Shang donated presumably to the son of the *ti* (2042—29); *ti* commissions a *hou* to take command of the levy in mass, *shi* 師 (2042—32); the death of the *ti* is recorded with the ideogram *chi* 陟 (I—100) — similarly will be later entered the death of a *wang*.

During the Hsia dynasty the meaning of the word *ti* remains unchanged. The founder of the first dynasty having „ascended the throne” brings into use the special Hsia calendar (1989—1); and again after he has become the ruler he sets out on an „inspection” tour yet this time not to meet the *si yüe* as in earlier days but to meet the *chu hou* 諸侯 — all *hou* (1989—5).

With the first appearance of *chu hou* the *si yüe* or *fang yüe* entirely disappear. The meetings of the *chu hou* are of sumptuous character, the *ti* is entertained at banquets together with his *chu hou* who travel with him throughout the country and feast in various places of his temporary residence (1978—1); the *ti* appoints judges (1978—8); banishes the son of a *wang* (1978—11); he commissions *hou* to set out on a penal expedition (1951—5); nominates a *po* 伯 (1951—6) and when he is slain during a revolt the chronicler records this event with the ideogram

⁸ In the period prior to the reign of *ti* Yao the Roman numerals signify successive sovereigns beginning with the Huang-ti and the arabic numerals the consecutive year of their reign; in the later period I give the year of ascending to the throne and the consecutive year of the reign keeping the chronology of the *Bamboo Annals*. In most cases only the earliest mention of the term in the given context is here quoted.

⁹ The sign *feng* 封 represents the earth upon the earth and a hand with the index finger in the position of the man who is drawing the bow. Lexically the word denotes „elevation of earth”, or „embankment”, „wall” and probably refers to a territory with a fortress.

shī 弑 which means 'regicide' and the slaying of a governor or a master (1942—28); 980—14; 826—2; 826—21); he receives according to the ceremonial of *pin* 賓 a *kung* 公 who sheltered him in time of rebellion and interregnum (1874—1); he commands *hou* to regulate the Ho (1874—11) and leads (personally?) military expeditions in the direction of the Eastern Sea (1851—8), he gives a *feng* 封 to the son of a *shī* 氏 — this is the second mention of the donation of a *feng* 封 till the close of the Hia period—(1832—33). He offers a *pin* 賓 on the banks of (the river) or to (the river) Ho (1788—1); he takes part in a hunting expedition that comes to the sea-shore (1788—13); he grants a certain, not clearly specified mandate *ming* 命 to different eastern peoples (1729—21); he abdicates in favour of his brother (1701—59); makes songs (1641—5); and gives orders to a *shī* 氏 (1600—1); he imprisons and next releases a *hou* 侯 (1588—22 and 23) who is to become the founder of a new dynasty.

During the Shang-Yin period in the place of *ti* appears *wang*. By the close of the epoch *ti* reappears again, but now to denote a god, *Shang-ti* 上帝 to whom a sacrifice is offered by the founder of the successive dynasty (1101—52).

In the Chou period the term *ti* does not appear.

WANG 王. According to K a r l g r e n the explanation of this graph is uncertain¹⁰.

According to C r e e l this ideogram „represents a man standing boldly erect, with outstretched arms, on a line representing the earth, i. e. a piece of territory which he holds against all comers”¹¹.

In the times previous to the Shang-Yin dynasty the term *wang* is used in the passages describing warfare, hunting or invasion of barbarian peoples. Precisely together with Shang-Yin the word *wang* substitutes *ti* and is used in the contexts referring to the administration of a certain territory, life at court, military expeditions, fortifications, hunting and travelling. Occasionally only do we come across the word in the passages which refer to ritual acts. Only once in the last phase of the period of the Western Chou a reference is made to agriculture although from the context we may easily conclude that this function was also performed by him.

In the further part of this study considerable differences observed in the character of *wang* during the Shang-Yin and Chou dynasties will be separately dealt with.

In the records referring to the pre-Hia period we read that a *si wang mu* 西王母 arrives to pay homage *chao* 朝 (2042—9). He reappears once again during the Chou period and we learn that the *wang* led an army in the direction of the mountain K'uen-lun where he met *si wang mu* who in the same year arrives to the *wang*

¹⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 317

¹¹ H. G. C r e e l, *Literary Chinese*, Chicago 1945, Vol. I, p. 61.

to pay homage *chao* and is received in the palace according to the ceremonial *pin* 賓 (961—17). This is all that we may learn from the text about *si wang mu*.

During the Hia period a *wang* commands the army in war time (1978—2); the *wang*'s son is banished and raises a rebellion which is suppressed by a *po* 伯 (1978—11 and 15). A *wang* hunts (1611—3), and towards the close of the Hia period numerous barbarian tribes *i* 夷 — *chu i* arrive to do homage *pin* 賓 at the „gates of the *wang*” (1595—1).

During Shang-Yin a *wang* „ascends the throne” (1557—1); in times of a prolonged drought he offers up prayers (1557—24); he writes songs, organises inspections (yet without assembling the *chu-hou* as the case was with *ti* in the times of Hia), institutes court ceremonies (1557—25); he also appoints a public official *ch'ing-shi* 卿士 to whom Legge attributes the office of prime minister (1545—1); after recovering the throne *wang* offers a sacrifice (or feasts and gives an offering) (1539—10 and 1978—1); he proclaims general praying (1474—11) fortifies a town (1474—58), leads expeditions (1399—6), grants *po* 伯 and *hou* 侯 the mandate *ming* 命 (1371—15); he inspects an old age home (1273—6) and revives the system of penalties of T'ang in the closing phase of the Shang-Yin period (1203—24); he grants mandates to his sons (1203—27), bestows a gift upon a *kung* 公 of a town, land and horses. This *kung* represents a family which would found the next dynasty (1158—3; 1158—33); he goes a-hunting with a special purpose of inspiring fear in the family of Chou that was then gaining in power (1101—10 and 22); he authorizes a *si po* 西伯 (head of the Chou family) to organise punitive expeditions (1101—33).

In the Chou period, a *wang* heading the barbarian peoples of the West *si i* 西夷 and all *hou* — *chu hou* 諸侯 wages war with Yin, the ruler of Shang-Yin (1049—12); nominates his deputy or deputies (inspectors) to govern the conquered people of Yin (1049—12), gives a large *feng* — *ta feng* 大封 to all the *hou* (1049—13), appoints his successor (1049—17), appoints a *kung* as governor of a district (1043—11) and „inspects” the lands of *hou* 侯 and *fang* 方岳; in his tour he is accompanied by *kung* 公 (1043—19); he also decrees various ranks of public officials — *pai kuan* 百官, degrades or dismisses *hou* (1043—19), sanctions hymns, offers up sacrifices to the royal ancestors, instructs agricultural officials (1006—3); through a *jen* 人 he admonishes a magnate who had built a magnificent palace (1006—9); to a *hou* 侯 he grants a mandate *ming* 命 (1006—16); he orders the public announcement concerning penalties (980—1); to a *po* 伯 he grants a mandate *ming* (980—6); he orders a *tsi* 子 to march against the western barbarians, *jung* 戎 (961—14), surveys the territory upon which salines were probably situated (961—15), grants a *feng* 封 (961—16), makes a long journey westward where he meets a *si wang mu* 西王母 (961—17); he enacts penalties (961—51). re-

quests a *hou* 侯 to conduct war operations (859—1); the chronicler calls him *t'ien ts'i* 天子 (852—13); the *wang* orders a *hou* to fortify a town or a territory (826—7) and for the first time he does not perform the symbolic act of ploughing a field (826—29).

SÍ YÜE 四岳 and *FANG YÜE* 方岳. Karlgren asserts that the graph of the ideogram *sí* is not intelligible and its meaning is 'four'. The ideogram *yüe* represents a mountain below a hill — its meaning is 'mountain'. The explanation of the graph *fang* is uncertain — its meaning is 'square, region, quarter, place' etc.¹²

In the *Bamboo Annals* the compound nouns *sí yüe* 四岳 and *fang yüe* 方岳 are used six times. In the pre-Hia period, as soon as *ti Yao* 帝堯 comes to power he inspects (?) *sün shou* 巡狩 — *sí yüe* (2145—5); *ti Yao* orders *sí yüe* to hand the mandate *ming* 命 to Shun from Yü 虞舜 (2145—70); after becoming the de facto ruler Shun from Yü inspects *sí yüe* (2145—74); during his reign Shun appoints as the head of his army *shí* 師 Hia *hou*, the successor of Shun and the founder of the Hia dynasty, and then Hia *hou* in turn goes to *fang yüe* (2042—32).

In the period of Hia and Shang-Yin the terms *sí yüe* 四岳 and *fang yüe* 方岳 do not appear.

In the period of Chou the founder of the new dynasty in the third year of his official reign inspects *fang yüe* (1045—15) and a similar inspection is performed by his successor in 19th year of his reign, who combines this function with the survey of the estates of *hou* — *hou tien* 侯甸 (1043—19).

HOU 侯. For Karlgren this ideogram has an 'arrow' and an unspecified element¹³.

According to Creel this ideogram represents a man who is shooting with arrows to a target, i. e. an aristocrat entitled to take part in solemn archery contests¹⁴.

In the *Bamboo Annals* — *hou* is used in the contexts connected with the court life, wars or regulation works on rivers.

In pre-Hia period a *hou* is mentioned only twice. In the first case he suppresses a rebellion after the death of a *ti* (III—78) and in the second case a *ti* bestows a *ming* upon a *hou* — the future *ti Yao* (IV—45).

During the Hia period the function of *hou* does not change. *Hou*, appearing now in the compound *chu hou* 諸侯 i. e. all *hou* attend feasts and assemblies at court (1989—5; 1978—1); a *hou* is ordered to command a military expedition

¹² *op. cit.*, p. 257, 449, 318

¹³ *op. cit.*, p. 157

¹⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 89

(1951—5); a *hou* shelters the son of a deceased *ti* and later supports him (1951—7). It is the first time that Shang *hou* appears — the *feng* of Shang was given him by Shun. The name of this family will vary according to the places of residence of their members and it will be either Shang 商 or Yin 殷. (Shang) *hou* regulates the Ho (river) and remains in this capacity for 23 years i. e. till his death (1874—11 and 1851—13); (Shang) *hou* moves to another place to reside there (1788—33; 1611—9; 1588—15); the son of (Yin) *hou* travels to a certain tribe or a clan or a district where he is slain; the (Yin) *hou* with the army *shī* 師 of a *po* 伯 declares war against that folk and kills its chief *kün* 君 (1729—12 and 16); a (Yin) *hou* kills a *shī* 氏 (1701—35); a (Shang) *hou* pays homage *chao* 朝 and is first imprisoned and next released by the *ti*. He is paid the tribute *pin* 賓 by all *hou* (1588—22 and 23). (Shang) *hou* convokes *chu hou* and leads them in the strife against the *ti* (1588—28 and 31).

The Shang-Yin period brings with no essential change in the function of *hou*. Several names of various *hou* are recorded in the chronicle of whom Pin *hou* 邠侯 seems to be the most prominent and his clan will next found the new dynasty of Chou. (Pin) *hou* receives a mandate (1371—15), pays the *chao* tribute (1314—7), changes his place of residence and moves to Chou (1158—1). The chronicler calls him (Chou) *kung* 公 (1158—3). He is later appointed military chief and a few years later he is killed by a *wang* (1123—4 and 11); he is again designated as (Chou) *hou* and appears in the chronicles together with other *hou* (1101—1). Beginning with 1101—6 he is called the western *po—si po* 西伯. (Chou) *hou* is kept prisoner by the *wang* and set free through the good service of *chu hou* of whom he is the self-appointed leader (1101—23, 29, 30). He organises a body of broadaxes (?) — *ping* 兵 (1101—31); he fights with *jen* 人 (1101—32, 33), is granted the privilege to command expeditionary forces (1101—33); in alliance with several barbarian tribes he destroys the *wang*'s army and founds the new dynasty (1101—52).

Again in the period of the Chou *hou* designates the same function, though the persons designated with this name seem to be more numerous. It seems also that the *hou* become more and more dependent from the *wang*.

All *hou* appearing as *chu hou* are donated large *feng* — *ta feng* 大封 each (1049—13); a *hou* is ordered to transplant large masses of the population of Yin — *shu Yin* 庶殷 and settle them in eastern districts (1043—8); the title of *hou* is bestowed upon a person (1043—10); a *hou* receives the mandate *ming* (1043—12; 1006—16); together with the army of the *wang* the *hou* fight against the western barbarians, *jung* 戎 (1043—13); a *hou* is deprived of the office or degraded (1043—19); his death is recorded in the chronicles and designated by the ideogram *hung* 薨 — the same term is used to record the death of a *kung* 公 and in one case only the term *tsu* 卒 is used which usually refers to the death of a *tsi* 子 (1006—19; 852—6). When the *wang* is ill the *chou hou* offer up prayers (860—8); the *wang* commands a *hou* to wage war against the western barbarians *jung* 戎 (826—38). Together with *nan* 男 and *tsi* 子 the *hou* elect the new *wang* (780—11).

As we see from these various meanings of the terms here analyzed and from their social functions the Chinese society already in the earliest period showed a social stratification and a developed centralisation. This society in times previous to and during the Hsia dynasty had settled near the river Ho (Huang-ho). This is evidenced by constant references to the regulation works that are to be carried on the river. Under the Shang-Yin no mention is made in the state annals about the regulation works, yet it was then that the Chinese people were settling in the areas not threatened by river-floods. That fact is confirmed by the physiographical condition of Anyang which is the capital of Shang-Yin and the references in the *Bamboo Annals* (1588—29). This society developed among foreign tribes probably of much lower level of civilisation and social organisation. The stress that is laid in the *Annals* upon the relations with the western and eastern barbarians tends to prove that the main danger threatened from the western tribes and that the natural expansion of Chinese civilisation was spreading from the east westward. Agriculture was the main occupation of this society as the frequent mentions of the calendar and the Ho regulations demonstrate quite satisfactorily. The methods of farming were probably highly primitive for in the chronicles we do not find any record concerning other agricultural problems but these of the Ho-floods. The lecture of the records indicates that the floods and hostile neighbouring peoples imposed upon this society the resolution of basic tasks and influenced more or less directly the shaping of its political history.

In the pre-Hsia period the social system was this of primitive community and was showing already distinct traits of disintegration. The classic form of primitive community is characterised besides other features, by the existence of an elected peace-time chief and an elected military chief. The power of the latter is restricted to war operations only while the supreme power in the state both in times of war and peace is held by the council of a clan or of a tribe¹⁵.

In the then social system in China existed these three institutions — a chief-tain in times of peace, a war chief and the council of the tribe, but the most important role was played by the peace-time chief — *ti* — leader and priest. A *ti*, besides such duties as those of ritual ceremonies of half religions and half magic character (sacrifices, the ranks of official to be determined by the reading of augural clouds), is also engaged in the administration of the country and is in charge of all agricultural problems (the calendar and the Ho-regulations), he appoints the officials and makes wars in which he himself cannot actively be engaged because of his attributes as a peace-time chief.

A *ti* himself would appoint his successor or would authorize *sü-yüeh*, the council of the tribe or a similar body to appoint the candidate nominated by himself. A *ti* also appoints the war chief. Both these officials are bound to „an inspection” i. e.

¹⁵ cf. F. Engels, *Origin of the Family, private Property and the State*.

to appear before the tribal council. This act seems to be a remnant brought down from the earlier period when both the peace-chieftain and the war chief were elected by the council and held responsible before it. Under *ti* Shun the power of the war chief who is *Hia hou* becomes so strong that he usurps the title of *ti* in total disregard of the tribal council and its approval. To the increase of his authority had considerably contributed his other function namely that of carrying out the regulation works on the Ho with which he had been entrusted in the lifetime of *ti* Yao (2145—75), as well as the fact that he had taken command over the troops (2042—32). By concentrating so much power in his hands Yü (*Hia hou*) becomes so strong that he endeavours to establish hereditary monarchy, and no longer seeks support of the tribal council but of the chieftains of the clans, the *chu hou*. Yü who thus founded the *Hia* dynasty, establishes himself as a *ti*, introduces the calendar system of his own clan without gaining the approval of *ti* Shun or of the council. When in 5th year of his reign he sets out on „an inspection” he does not appear before the tribal council but before the heads of the clans.

Thus no further mention in later periods is made of the council (i.e. during the *Hia* and *Shang-Yin* dynasties) till it reappears again during the *Chou* period, at that time when the influence of other peoples of lower social organisation becomes obvious. Among these peoples were prevailing the institutions that are proper to the system of primitive community.

Before further propositions concerning the proper division of Chinese history are discussed it is necessary to deal first with a highly interesting fact of the transition from a *ti*, elected and ruling together with the council to a hereditary *ti* who rules in close cooperation and with support of the clan chieftains. The main problem we are concerned with will be to assert what social forces were involved, what or whose interests the *ti* stood for and what changes of productive forces as well as in the production relationships made this change possible. It is no easy thing to find a correct solution of all these problems, as the *Bamboo Annals* passed in silence over them. For the general laws governing the development of primitive society leads us to accept as accurate the assumption that there must have existed in the pre-*Hia* period the constant growth of productive forces and trade relations which consequently led to the rise and development of private property and the disintegration of primitive community. This disintegration is evidenced by the picture of Chinese society during the *Yao* and *Shun* periods. We may therefore quite safely assume that a simultaneous disintegration of early clan organisation also took place at that time so that the interest of the clans came to be identified with those of the most powerful families among them. This is exactly what we mean when we speak on one hand of the clan chieftains and at the other the disintegration of the clan system. This is evidenced by the fact that *Shun* had given a *feng* in *Shang* to his own son.

In effect of the growth of productive forces and the development of private property owned by prominent families of the clan society, the society assumes

a typical antagonistic character, which brings about the welding of the interests of a *ti* with those of the most powerful clan chiefs, adverse to the interests of the whole population. If this thesis be correct it would explain to us the fact that the democratic council which represented the whole tribe was supplanted by the aristocratic *chu hou* and the conditions were propitious for the coup d'état accomplished by Yü (*Hia hou*).

In the *Hia* period nothing certain about the social form may be learnt from the *Bamboo Annals*. It is possible that in this epoch the process of the further disintegration of primitive community proceeded, admitting that the lower social groups still preserved the older forms of clan or village community while the rising aristocracy was developing the system of private property. This assumption seems to be correct because in the *Chou* epoch there still existed primitive communities¹⁶.

In the *Hia* period, of these two capacities — the religious and magic, and the administrative the *ti* loses the former but strengthens more and more the latter. Throughout this whole period he never offers up sacrifices nor does he perform ritual or magic acts. The more active and more prominent on the other hand is his part in the administration of the country. It seems also that in this period the military chief does not appear. Mention is made of the function of *wang* who in this period appears three times, once to make a war, next to hunt and finally at the time of the invasion of the barbarous people. But his most important function if he were a war chief is war which is mentioned only in the first phase of the *Hia* period. On the whole the commentators identify the *wang* with the *ti*. But this must be made clear that the latter had never performed the office of *shuai shi* 帥 i.e. he never acted as a military chief¹⁷ which was in this case performed by the *wang*. During the *Hia* period the *ti* is already an autocrat and seeks support of the lords of whom one group — the chiefs of the clans and the others as the graphic form of the term shows seem to be his relations — *po* 伯.

A prominent part is also played by the *shi* 氏 who act usually as followers of the *ti*. On account of the restricted scope of this study no fuller analysis of this term can be made. We may say briefly that in the *Bamboo Annals* a kind of rivalry may be noticed between *hou* and *shi* for as soon as the *ti* seeks support of the *shi* he is no longer followed by the *hou*. And thus at the time of the collapse of the ruling dynasty the *chu hou* support his successor and during the successive dynasty the *shi* do not appear at all.

In the closing phase of the *Hia* rule one of the *hou*, *Shang hou* with the aid of all other *hou* overthrows the *ti* and establishes his own dynasty assuming the title of *wang*.

¹⁶ We do not know on the other hand whether these primitive communities did not reappear in consequence of the conquest made by *Chou* who represented, especially through his barbarous allies, a lower form of social organization.

¹⁷ The term is still used in modern Chinese to denote the commander-in-chief.

No information whatever is found in the *Bamboo Annals* to account for the fact that the *wang* appears in place of the *ti*. It seems at first that the *wang*'s attributes are similar to those of the *ti* for he also makes songs, several times offers up prayers (yet never a sacrifice), nominates public officials and engages in inspections. Yet here ends the similarity of their functions. In pre-Hia period the *ti* ruled with the support of the representatives of the whole society or its part — the tribal council, in the Hia period with the support of the clan chiefs or the *shī*, while the *wang*'s rule in the Shang-Yin period was of purely autocratic character.

Summing up we may assert that the process of absolute rule, initiated by Yü reaches its climax during the Shang-Yin dynasty. The *wang* still organizes inspections but he does not convoke the *chu hou* as the *ti* used to do before. Also the *chu hou* do not make homage (*chao*) to him which they had done formerly showing their loyalty to their sovereign. That these ceremonies did not cease to be observed is evidenced by the fact that the *chou hou* would pay the *chao* homage to the *si-po* (Chou *hou*), founder of the new dynasty of the Chou.

In the same Shang-Yin period the *shī* disappear while *hou* and *po* seem to be given no special functions though at the close of the reign we read that the *wang* endeavours to win the support of a representative of the powerful family of the Chou *hou*. The offices are given to the individuals whose relations with the powerful lords are not clearly stated in the *Bamboo Annals*. In the closing phase even the greatest dignitary *ch'ing-shi* seems to have ceased to officiate. It may be added that the *Annals* also provide no data regarding the character of the office of *ch'ing shi*. Indirectly we may infer that his import was considerable for he was as a rule appointed immediately after the „accession to the throne” of a *wang*.

The activity of the rulers of the Shang-Yin dynasty was confined to warfare in which the *wang* could take part and to the fortification of towns. They never granted *feng*-lands. In the period of the Shang-Yin dynasty for the first time we hear about the revolts of *jen* 人 the 'people'. The meaning of this term cannot be clearly deduced from the *Bamboo Annals* but indirectly some information may be drawn from the comparison of their social functions under the Shang-Yin and the Chou. For its value and significance, however, this problem deserves a special study. It is nevertheless permissible to presume that in view of the then antagonistic social groups the *jen* represented the oppressed class. All this tends to demonstrate that we have in this period the despotic autocratic rule employing bureaucracy and army. It is probable that in the same period slave system developed though no evidence to this effect may be found in the *Annals*.

Towards the close of this period a strong opposition to the autocratic ruler is raised by the most powerful of the *hou*, Chou *hou*, whom the chronicler also calls Chou *kung* or *si-po*. In detail the records relate the intense civil strife fought by the last *wangs* of the Shang-Yin dynasty against this strong family. The struggle terminated with the victory of the Chou *hou* who had gained support of all the

hou and organised a coalition of several barbarous tribes. He defeats the army of the *wang* and in the end becomes the founder of the new dynasty. The collapse of the Shang-Yin dynasty closes the period of the development of Chinese society from the primitive community to the aristocratic and autocratic despotism and in turn gives way to a new era. The initial phase of the further development of society will be similar but only to a certain extent, to the initial phase of the previous period.

The rising against Shang-Yin is headed by a *hou* who characteristically represents not only all other *hou* but also barbarous tribes of lower social organisation. Significantly, the chronicler places first the barbaric allies and writes „the *wang*, leading the western *i* and all the *hou* attacked Yin” (1049—12). The peoples who were thus falling under the influence of Chinese society must have also introduced certain customs and institutions of their own system of primitive community. And this accounts for the reappearance of *fang-yüe* (*sī yüe*), the tribal council in the earliest period of the Chou. This institution as proper to the earlier and more primitive forms of social structure could not survive amid higher and more developed forms and for this reason it existed for a very short time and ceased to appear at the close of the second millenium before our era.

The Chou society if compared with that of Hia or of the Shang-Yin is more developed and complex. First of all it inhabits a much larger territory.

Although during the Hia dynasty the *ti* expeditions already reach the sea coast (1788—13) yet nothing certain can be asserted from the *Bamboo Annals* about their influence in those parts, both as regards the Hia and Shang-Yin periods. But in the times of the Chou the eastern coastal areas are annexed and become part of Chinese sphere of civilisation and administration. The expansion now proceeds to the southern territory of Ch’u (980—19). Beginning with the 9th cent. B. C. the rulers of Ch’u termed *tsi* 子 by the chronicler are mentioned in the *Bamboo Annals* though they are treated in a different manner from the *kung* or the *hou* as shown by the signs commemorating their deaths.

The social system of Chou in that epoch is not of one distinct character for the Chou rule or have influence over the people who are on diverse levels of civilisation.

The *Bamboo Annals* record the existence of the features proper to the primitive community, perhaps prevailing only among the barbarous tribes, as it is evidenced by the tribal council. It is also believed that after the conquest the people of Yin had lost their freedom for they are frequently moved from one territory to another as well as there are facts of frequent rebellions. It must be added that the existence of slaves is recorded on the bronze inscriptions. The ruling aristocracy was organised on the principles characteristic of the early phase of feudalism, i.e.] decentralized political organization, hereditary titles, hierarchy and land tenure of feudal character as well as by the senior position of the *wang*-sovereign.

This hypothesis is primarily based on secondary features of particular social systems and not on the analysis of the productive forces and production relationships. This results from the fact that the chronicler represents the viewpoints and interests of the ruling class with total disregard of the condition of the „ruled” people.

In some cases though, the chronicler could not pass in silence over certain events involving the ruling class or its part at least, namely the rebellions of *jen*. The risings of *jen* that rarely had broken out under the Shang-Yin period, in the next period were gaining in frequency and violence. The *jen* not infrequently killed their masters *kün* or allied with barbaric tribes raised rebellions on the demesne of the *wang* (852—11 and 12), or even would slay the *wang* (780—11). Their forces became ever stronger and they grew so powerful that after killing their lord they would install his successor of their own choice (826—12; 780—1).

The text is not helpful in establishing the accurate meaning of the word *jen*. Though its several functional elements are mentioned in the *Annals*, yet it is difficult to assert whether *jen* designated a group of people or people in general. For how puzzling is, for instance, the entry telling us that the *wang* sends *jen* to admonish a lord (1006—9)? One fact is certain, namely that the Chou society as well as the communities remaining under the influence of the Chou were definitely of antagonistic character. Also, this may be concluded that the aristocracy was represented by the *wang*, *kung*, *hou*, *po*, *tsi* and *nan* while the „ruled” were *jen* and barbaric tribes. We see also that the *jen* would gradually gain in power and importance and that keeping them in permanent subjection was the source of continual trouble and difficulty. Besides the already specified facts this one should also be added that the rebellion of the *jen* raised in alliance with barbarous tribes, during which the *wang* was slain, brought about the collapse of the authority of the dynasty and the end of the Western Chou (780—11).

This general attempt at the period division of the Chinese history proves that „language is directly connected with man’s productive activity, as well as with all his other activity in all spheres of work without exception. That is why a language’s vocabulary, being the most sensitive to change, is in a state of almost constant change, and unlike the superstructure, language does not have to wait until the base is eliminated; it makes changes in its vocabulary before the base is eliminated and irrespective of the state of the base”¹⁸.

The regularity of this process holds good not only for the whole lexical stock but also for the basic stock words to which belong the terms *ti*, *wang*, *si yüe* and *chu hou*.

The word *ti* appears in the *Bamboo Annals* with various meanings all connected with its most essential meaning of ruling and power. The earliest recorded meaning

¹⁸ J. V. S t a l i n, *Concerning Marxism in Linguistics*, New York 1951, International Publishers, p. 24.

of the *ti* is associated with the ritual and magic functions as well as those of administration and organisation. In the period when the social changes unable the *ti* to perform his religious duties, which he did in the period of primitive community, the term loses this connotation and comes to designate only the functions connected with the administration and organisation. The latter has been retained in the basic lexical stock of the Chinese language. The former function no longer performed by the *ti* does not entirely disappear, it is preserved in the term *Shang-ti* which designates a god.

As to the semantic aspects of the term *wang* the process is quite the contrary, At the beginning the term *wang* denoted only the restricted function of commanding the troops. In course of historic process it had assumed also the function of the term *ti* (from the Hia period!) and in its later development comes finally to denote the specific function of an autocrat. Yet when together with the collapse of the Shang-Yin there takes place a temporary revival of the influences of the primitive community and clan organisation of the society, then the language reflects this change. Thus to the administrative and organisational functions of the term *wang* are added also the religious and magic functions.

In this way, upon the analysis of the contexts in which these few terms appeared, it has been possible to establish their variable semantic values and draw in general terms the picture of the evolution of ancient Chinese society.