



CHINESE BRONZE TSUN, ABOUT 1000 B. C.

*A Chinese
Bronze*

THE latest acquisition in the Department of Chinese Art is a very early bronze vessel, about seven inches high. It is a *tsun*, of beaker type, having a band of rich ornament in relief around the body and a plain flaring neck and base [Plate VI].

Such vessels were used in the worship of ancestors from earliest times in China, and this particular shape is one of the most ancient, going back, it is believed, at least as far as the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.). The motives of decoration are characteristic. In front, and also in back, is a great monster face called a *t'ao-t'ieh*, or greed-monster. Eyes, eye-brows, and heavy, sheep-like horns are modelled in fairly high relief with fine gradation of planes. Ears, nostrils, and snarling jaws are in lower relief. The whole is highly conventionalized. Between the horns is a small animal head in high relief, representing the sacrificial victim. On each side of the beaker are two birds in relief, facing each other. They are phoenixes, symbol of warmth and sunshine. These birds are very naturalistic in their design. All over the background in raised threads of relief are the double scroll motives known as 'cloud and thunder.'

The vessel was cast by the *cire perdue* process, in a mould made over an original wax model. The line where two sections of the mould joined is indicated by the vertical thread running between the confronted birds.

Inside, on the bottom, appears a sunken inscription cast in beautifully fashioned ancient Chinese characters reading: 'Shou tso Fu Kêng pao tsun i Kung' that is to say, 'Shou made Father Kêng this precious wine-jar sacrificial-vessel, Kung.' The last character, *Kung*, is the sign of a bow and may stand for a place or be an owner's symbol. Father Kêng was a Shang emperor who ruled about 1200 B.C.

An analysis of the metal shows that it was very crudely refined, and the presence of much impurity accounts for the peculiar spottiness of patination, in patches of dull red and pale grey-green, showing long burial in the earth.

The unique squatness in form of this bronze, the naturalistic design of the birds, the exquisite care shown both in modelling and casting, and the character and technique of the inscription all point to an early date for this vessel. It may be assigned to the Shang group of bronze *tsun* which, if not actually made in the Shang dynasty, belong to the early years of the Chou, about 1000 B.C.

H. E. F.

*A Batetela
Image*

THE wooden figurine of Plate VII, representing a seated female, was once the property of a medicine-man of the Sankuru District of the Belgian Congo. His people are known as the Batetela or Atetela.

The figurine is said to be a goddess of maternity. Probably it would be more correct to say that it is an