



罍钟 Bo bell

Eastern Zhou, 5th century BC, Jin state.

H: 54 cm; w. (max) 40.3 cm.

1965.6-12.1: Brooke Sewell Fund, ex-Adolphe Stoclet Collection.

Literature: Watson 1965.

Bo bells were included with sets of *Yong Zhong*; some researches has suggested that five bells known from Western collections belonged to the same set as this *Bo* bell.

However, these five can only be a small portion of the original assemblage.

HOW TO PLAY THE CHIME-BELL

Bronze Chime-bell was One of the primary musical instruments in china's bronze age. The earliest bell was made of clay. Bronze bells appeared in the mid-late Shang dynasty. They were arranged in groups according to the size, temperament and pitch and hung on wooden frames. They are called Chime-bells. Chime-bells were also the earliest percussion musical instruments with the widest musical range in chain's bronze age. They were performed by striking with a T-shaped wooden drumstick and a round wooden bat.

The sound of Chime-bells is determined by the size of the bells. Big bells give a low, deep and lingering sound. Medium sized ones give a mellow, pure and forceful sound whereas the small ones give a clear, translucent and short sound.

In ancient China, there were five tones in music, namely gong (宮), shang (商), jue (角), zhi (徵) and yu (羽), which is also called pentatonic scale. They correspond to modern music notes, gong – Do, shang – Re, jue – Mi, zhi – So and yu – La. Apart from the traditional five tones, the inscriptions on the Marquis Yi's Chime-bells recorded in detail how to play 'varied gong' and 'varied zhi'. If we add these two varied tones to the five tones, we have a complement of seven tones. Therefore as long as 2,400 years ago, the ancient Chinese had already mastered the music theory of 7 tones and possessed the skills to produce those tones with musical instruments.



Music is strongly linked to ritual throughout the world, and in china, from the Western Zhou dynasty onwards, there were profound political implications in linking ancestral rites and music. As the Zhou ruled through fiefdoms and maintained a strict hierarchy based on a patriarchal clan system, an individual's duties, power and incumbency were confirmed by his respective social status. Confucians maintained that without harmony, society would become discordant. Therefore music was emphasized as a means to regulate people's conduct and to follow the moral and social order.

The Western Zhou was the first dynasty to lay down rules of 'rites' in accordance with 'music'. Rites were for differentiating and regulating order, and music promoted harmonious synthesis.

'Let music attain its full results, and there would be no dissatisfactions [in the mind]; let ceremony do so and there would be no quarrels. When bowing and courtesies mark the government of the kingdom, there would be what might be described as music and ceremony indeed. Violent oppression of the people would not arise; the vassals would appear submissively at court as guests; there would be no occasion for the weapons of war.....then indeed would ceremony [be seen] as power.'

