

*Shih ching* or *Book of Odes*, where 成是貝錦 and 貝冑朱纓 are translated by LEGGE, respectively «... may be made out to be shell embroideries (= looking like a beautiful shell» (*Chin. Cl.*, iv, 346), and «with shells on vermillion-strings adorning their helmets» (*ibid.*, 626); I think that the «shell-embroideries», or, more literally, «shell brocades», were brocades adorned with real shells. In a chapter of the *Shu ching*, 文貝仍几 is translated by LEGGE (*Chin. Cl.*, III, 553) «and the usual bench adorned with tortoise-shell», and further on (III, 554) 大貝 *ta-pei* is rendered «the large tortoise-shell». Although Chêng Hsüan (A. D. 127-200) seems to have said somewhere «The *pei* is now called 瑤瑁 *tai-mei*» (cf. MAO Chin's commentary on Lu-Chi's *Memoir*, 2 B, 43 a), this is either an error, or Chêng Hsüan used *tai-mei* as an equivalent of 玳瑁螺 *tai-mei lo*, lit. «Tortoise spiral shell», a designation of the telline conical bivalve; the bench in the *Shu ching* must have been adorned not with «veined tortoise shell», but with real veined shell (*wên-pei*), and the *ta-pei* too was a sea-shell. Moreover, such is the explanation correctly given in K'ung Ying-ta's sub-commentary (cf. *Shih-san-ching chu-shu*, JUAN Yüan's ed., 18, 21 a, 23 a). The only instance of the use of the word *pei* in the *Shu ching* which is more precise is when officials are reproached with thinking only of hoarding 貝玉 *pei yü*; LEGGE (*Chin. Cl.*, III, 240) translates «cowries and gems», but the literal meaning is «cowries and jade» and we know that, under the Chou, jade too was used as a sort of currency.

Of greater importance are the old rituals, *I li* and *Li chi*. The *I li*, or ritual of the ordinary nobles (士 *shih*), shows that, in the course of the funerary ceremony, three cowries (*pei*) were put into the mouth of the dead nobleman together with some cooked rice (cf. STEELE, *I li*, II, 50, 97; DE GROOT, *The Religious System of China*, I, 275-277; and the discussion in *Shih-san-ching chu-shu*, 35, 15); the *I li* is perhaps the most ancient, and at any rate the most coherent and the most trustworthy of the three rituals. In the collection of treatises of different dates known as *Li chi*, ch. *T'an-kung*, mention is made of the rice and the cowries (*pei*) which were put into the mouth of the dead (cf. COUVREUR, *Li ki*, I, 200; in II, 184, COUVREUR refers to I, 235 and 247, of the same *T'an-kung*, for jade discs being put into the mouth of the dead, but these occur only in his translation, not in the text; the jade discs, and jade simply, are mentioned in another chapter, the *Tsa chi*, II, 145, and several times in the *Chou li*). According to the chapter *Tsa chi* of the *Li chi* (COUVREUR, II, 184), nine cowries were put into the mouth of the Emperor, seven into the mouth of the appanaged princes (*chu-hou*), five into the mouth of the great officers (*ta-fu*), and three into the mouth of the ordinary nobles. Early commentators have explained that this was the rite under the Hsia dynasty, but that, under the Chou, in the middle of the first millennium B. C., pearls were put into the mouth of the Emperor, jade (*yü*) into that of the appanaged princes, jade discs (*pi*) into those of the great officers, and cowries into that of the ordinary nobles (the version of a similar text from the *Po-hu t'ung*, in DE GROOT, *op. cit.*, I, 277, is to be rejected, because 璧 *pi* has been corrupted there into 來 *lai*; *lai*, «to come», makes no sense). Although I do not think that KARLGREN's discussion of these rites (*Some fecundity symbols*, 39-40) carries full conviction, I agree with him that many of the opinions expressed on the subject by Han commentators are mere guess-work. As they are, they seem, however, to betray an historically justified feeling that the importance of the cowry had decreased in China in the course of the two millennia before our era. In regard to