

the meaning of these rites, and in spite of the almost formal statement in the *T'an-kung* (COUVREUR, I, 200; the passage is less precise in the text than in the translation), I feel almost inclined to think that, at least originally, rice was put into the mouth of the dead as food, and precious things (pearls, jade, and above all cowries) were put there both to prevent the decay of the body and to serve as a sort of currency to meet the wants of the deceased in the nether world.

The shells, or at least the cowries, were pierced to be strung together, sometimes at one or both ends, more commonly by grinding a hole in their back. Strung cowries were called 朋 *p'êng*, but the question is still debated as to how many shells made a *p'êng*; texts and opinions vary from two to ten; the example of Wang Mang's monetary reforms (cf. *infra*) cannot be adduced to any useful purpose, as it seems doubtful that scholars of Wang Mang's time, at the beginning of our era, still had any authorised tradition of the practice of the Shang and the Chou. However that may be, *p'êng* of cowries are often mentioned in the An-yang inscriptions on tortoise-shell or bone as well as in those on ancient bronzes, and the *Book of Odes* speaks of an Imperial gift of a hundred *p'êng* (cf. LEGGE, *Chin. Cl.*, IV, 280; WANG Kuo-wei, *Kuan-t'ang chi-lin*, 3, 17-18; 郭沫若 Kuo Mo-jo, 甲骨文字研究 *Chia-ku wên-tzũ yen-chiu*, I, § 10, 1-4). A problem analogous to that of the *p'êng* of shells is raised by the 珥 *chio* of jade. Moreover, these strung shells or jades were not necessarily intended for hoarding or counting purposes: they were often worn at the neck as ornaments. This is well shown by the character 珥 *ying*, «neck ornament», «necklace», which is made of two *pei* characters and represents the old and correct form, now replaced by the substitute 璆 *ying* (cf. Hsü Hao's *Shuo-wên chieh-tzũ chu chien*, 6 B, 38; Hui-lin, *I-ch'ieh ching yin-i*, ch. 40, in *Tōkyō Tripit.* of Meiji, 爲, IX, 48 a).

I find no trace anywhere of a text which, even misunderstood, would countenance TERRIEN DE LACOUPERIE's statement regarding the suppression of the cowry currency by the prince of Ch'in in 338 or 336 B. C. (TERRIEN DE LACOUPERIE was perhaps misled by the fact that the first Ch'in coinage is said to have been in 318 B. C.; cf. MASPERO, *La Chine antique*, 92, 1^{re} éd.). We are only told that, when Ch'in Shih-huang-ti had become the sole Lord of the Empire, he established a double «currency» (幣 *pi*), one of gold called «superior currency» (*shang-pi*), and the other of copper cash (*t'ung-ch'ien*) of the same sort as had been used under the Chou; «as to pearls, jade, tortoise [-shell], cowries (*pei*), silver, and tin, they were used to adorn objects and were preserved as precious things, but served no [longer] as currency» (*pi*; *Ch'ien-Han shu*, 24 B, 1-2; D. BODDE, *China's First Unifier*, Leyden, 1938, 172). The *Shuo wên* (c. A. D. 100) expresses the same opinion when it says (ch. 6, *pei* «radical»): «In ancient times [people] bargained (貨 *huo*) by means of cowries (*pei*) and used tortoise[-shell] as precious [currency] (寶 *pao*; this word was used by Wang Mang as a technical term for his tortoise-shell currency, and has survived in the legends on cash down to our day). Under the Chou there was copper currency (泉 *ch'üan*); when we come to [the time of] the Ch'in, they abolished the cowries (*pei*) and issued cash (*ch'ien*)». Ch'in is of course Ch'in Shih-huang-ti, the Emperor of the end of the third century B. C., and not a prince of the state of Ch'in a century earlier.

In all likelihood the shell currency had been gradually abandoned, and Ch'in Shih-huang-ti