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ASIA

CHARLES HIGHAM
University of Otago



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PREFACE

This book was conceived during a conversation with Robin Derricourt, then in charge of Australian publishing at Cambridge University Press. A previous book of mine, *The Archaeology of Mainland Southeast Asia*, was then looking rather dated and I wished to work on a second edition. He countered by suggesting a new book, and without sufficient thought, I proposed a book on the Bronze Age.

There the idea lay until 1992, when I was able, through my fellowship of St John's College, Cambridge, to enjoy an uninterrupted period for reflection and writing, and access to the University and Haddon libraries. I could never have completed this book without the support of my college, but my debt goes beyond the physical facilities. The range of interests and expertise within the fellowship, and the opportunities to mull matters over, provided me with an invaluable source of help and inspiration. Robert Hinde was able to impress on me the need to communicate one's views unambiguously. I was particularly grateful to Jim Charles for his patience in fielding questions on metallurgy and Peter Matthews for tempering my enthusiasm for the implications of linguistic data. David McMullan and Joe McDermott were always on hand and willing to help with a Chinese caption. Jack and Esther Goody provided their customary insight into social matters and, through their good offices, I was able to enjoy a brief period of writing in their daughters' beautiful farmhouse in Quercy while knowing they were just up the road if I needed help, intellectual or gastronomic.

Many friends and colleagues have been generous in providing me with information and opinions. I would particularly like to thank Ian Glover and Moira Woods in England, and either in person or through email, Robert Blust and Laurie Reid have provided many stimulating ideas on the linguistics. Noel Barnard, Peter Bellwood, Bill Meacham, Elizabeth Moore, Vincent Pigott, Penny Rode, Matthew Spriggs, Magdalene von Dewall, and Peter Wilson have all provided me with advice and help in one form or another.

I shall not forget a train journey I took in the company of Robert Maddin and T. Ko from Beijing to Zhengzhou when I awoke to an early dawn, drew back the curtain in the sleeper and saw that we had stopped at a station labelled Anyang. Not long after, we crossed the Huanghe River and quite apart from the steep learning curve I experienced in my knowledge of Chinese archaeology, I was able to visit the Shang walls of Zhengzhou and stop on the outskirts of the city during evening jogging to watch specialists in a fiery workshop still casting. A few years later, in the company of Wang Dadao and Tong Enzheng, I was able to visit the

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necropolis of Shizhaishan and examine the wonderful bronzes on exhibit at the Yunnan Provincial Museum. In Beijing, I have been welcomed more than once by Han Rubin and Sun Shuyun to their Department to follow their important work on the analysis of Chinese bronzes. Ha Van Tan, Hoang Xuan Chinh, Vu The Long and Pham Minh Huyen were no less hospitable in Hanoi, and took me to Dong Son, Lang Ca, Co Loa and many other key sites in Bac Bo. In Hong Kong, I have had the pleasure of Bill Meacham's company and his patient assistance in summarising the archaeology of Guangdong has been deeply appreciated. Many Thai colleagues have been generous with their time, none more so than Rachanie Thosarat, whose patience has been extraordinary, and Metha Wichakana.

Writing a book which involves so much primary data in other languages has not been easy, and I acknowledge the help of Yun Kuen Lee and Xincan Chen for commenting on my drafts and helping with information, and Yvette Yeung, Vu The Long, Erich Kolig and Nguyen Kim Dung in telling me what others were saying.

A particular and profound acknowledgement must also be given to Francis Allard. While finishing his doctorate on the later prehistory of Lingnan, he has not only been unfailingly helpful, but has provided me with information he has painstakingly acquired and distilled from remote Chinese sources with a degree of generosity rarely encountered in academe.

To my son Thomas, I give my thanks for his patient assistance with numerous time-consuming requests to help with radiocarbon dating. All dates cited are given as 2 sigma ranges, corrected following Stuiver and Reimer, 1993. I am most grateful to Jane Farago of the Cambridge University Press, and Nick Hudson of N.S. Hudson Publishing Services, for their important contribution to producing this book. Finally, I have once again been fortunate enough to call on the services of Leslie O'Neill and Martin Fisher in the preparation of the illustrations.

All those mentioned have contributed to improve this book, but its faults are mine alone.