

中國歷代璽印藝術

THE ART OF CHINESE SEALS THROUGH THE AGES

浙江省博物館·香港中文大學文物館

THE ZHEJIANG PROVINCIAL MUSEUM AND
THE ART MUSEUM, THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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前言

古代璽印，是當時人們作為昭明信用的憑證，劉熙《釋名》說：“印者，信也。”其應用範圍相當廣泛。同時，它也是國家行政機構施行職權的工具。

中國歷代璽印特別是古璽印中，涵有種種官名、地名、人名，從而具有多方面的學術價值，是研究古代官制、歷史地理、姓氏譜系及民族關係的第一手可信資料，歷來受研究者所重視。傳世和出土的歷代璽印實物，又是書法、雕刻及冶鑄相結合的工藝美術品，自然得到人們的青睞，其在中國美術史上的價值也是不言而喻的。特別是明清流派印章，更使篆刻發展成為一門獨立的藝術，以至敢與以毛筆所建立的中國傳統書法文化，分庭抗禮。至於鑄刻於方寸之間的璽印文字，尤其是先秦、兩漢璽印文字，更是研究中國古文字和漢字形體演變的一份十分重要的寶貴資料。“爛銅破玉好光輝，多謝神斤大匠揮。”（曹荔帷《酬丁敬治印詩》）有鑒於斯，中國歷代璽印素為公私藏家所珍重。

浙江省博物館對中國歷代璽印的蒐集非常重視，收藏有豐富的古代璽印實物。其古璽部分，主要來自當代藝術大師黃賓虹先生的藏品，就中精品迭呈。五十年代以來，浙江省各地陸續有歷代印章的出土，有不少重要的發現。例如1958年於紹興出土唐“會稽縣印”，1968年於安吉出土唐“金山縣印”，兩印出土時均置於銅質蓋頂印盒中，唐印傳世十分少見，此次發現了兩方，還使人們第一次目睹了隋唐官印的保存形式。又如1978年於海鹽澉浦開挖出海排澇工程時，出土了八方南宋時期的水軍印（同出尚有一方北宋軍印），為研究宋代水軍提供了一批新資料，同時也彌補了《宋史》關於水軍記載的失誤和缺遺。再如1955年於杭州

疏濬西湖時，先後出土三方元“昏爛鈔印”，是專門用來注銷回收的流通紙幣，這對研究元代的鈔幣管理制度，是一項重要的實物見證。杭州是浙派篆刻的發祥地，由於得天獨厚的地理條件，浙江省博物館度藏有一批西泠八家及趙之謙、吳昌碩等藝術大師的篆刻作品，成為館藏璽印的又一特色。

香港中文大學文物館自1971年建館以來，即致力於中國古代璽印的徵集。在北山堂所贈歷代璽印藏品的基礎上，最近二十年新獲尤多，藏品逾千，其中不少是內地新出土而流入香港市肆中的精品，有賴王人聰先生慧眼得以入藏。中國歷代璽印已蔚然成為中文大學文物館藏品的一大特色。

浙江省博物館與香港中文大學文物館有著友好關係，兩館學者時有交流。1997年至1998年，我作為訪問學者兩度赴港，在中文大學中國文化研究所從事研究工作。在與中文大學文物館的同寅朝夕相處的日子裏，對文物館的璽印藏品有了更深的了解，遂萌發出合兩館藏印之精品共同舉辦一個《中國歷代璽印藝術展覽》的想法，此設想很快便得到利榮森博士的首肯。林業強館長主政後，此議迅即得以落實。經過雙方的努力，現在展覽終於實現，這是一件令人興奮的事。相信是次展覽能給香港文物收藏家及篆刻藝術愛好者帶來美的享受。借此機會，要特別感謝利榮森博士及香港中文大學文物館同寅，為此展覽的舉辦所作出的辛勤努力。

曹錦炎

浙江省博物館副館長

前言

璽印是古代人們在交往過程中的一種憑證信物，《釋名·釋書契》云：“所以封物為信驗也。”外國文獻也認為“印章的作用在於取代誠信。”據考古資料所見以及文獻記載，世界璽印歷史，源遠流長。中亞巴比倫兩河流域，距今七千年前，已出現了押捺式印章，用以檢壓陶封泥團；在埃及尼羅河流域以及印度河流域，都有自己獨特的璽印使用傳統和實物流傳於世。中亞地區的早期押捺式印章發展成圓柱式滾筒印，表面陰刻各類圖案，能滾印出連續花紋。埃及地區則流行蜚螭形聖甲蟲鈕式印章，下刻花紋，其作用不單只作為印信，埃及人相信這種印章還具有辟邪和護身符的功能。由於這些地區的印章印文以花紋為主，印章質料以各種不同紋理的彩石為之，所以西方印章又發展成為寶石工藝的一個分支，至今不衰。

中國印章全為押捺式，其肇始年代，眾說紛紜，但最遲至春秋戰國時期已普遍使用。與世界其他古文明地區比較，中國璽印較為晚出，但自始至終中國印章有其獨特的面貌，印文也一直以文字為主，與日本、韓國、越南等鄰近國家相連，形成一個亞洲地區獨有的璽印文化傳統。中國古代璽印是傳統金石銘刻學中的一個重要分支；自元明以來，書畫家融合書法和契刻技藝，將治印發展成為篆刻藝術，把印章從生活中的實用品，轉變為一種具有很高欣賞價值的藝術品。中國古代璽印也為歷代典章制度、地理沿革、民族關係、古文字學、姓氏學等提供了極其珍貴的原始材料，可補訂文獻的錯誤和闕佚，是中華傳統優秀文化中的一份珍貴遺產。

香港中文大學文物館自一九七一年開館以來，即注重古代金石文物的蒐集和收藏。一九七三年利氏北山堂惠贈古璽印二百七十八鈕。該批印章原為香港胡氏花深碧濃館舊藏，內中有不少為清末收藏家端方陶齋及廣東近代篆刻家關寸草益齋的舊物。此項捐贈奠定了館藏古璽印的基礎。此後，自八十年代中至九十年代末，由於大量古璽印於香港文物市場出現，經過歷年的徵集，館藏璽印種類遂得以補充及增益，至今

館藏古璽印及近代印章總數已接近二千方。古璽印的入藏主要得到北山堂的支持；此外並得徐展堂博士、文物館館友會、胡少雲先生、汪宗衍先生、陸奉儀夫人、潘熙夫人、丘琳女士、翟仕堯先生、承訓堂、黎來先生、匯寶閣、聯齋等資助購藏及惠贈珍藏；今藉此展覽機會，謹對各位人士的熱心支持，敬致謝忱。

館藏璽印的研究，自一九七三年已展開。早期聘得著名篆刻書法家馮康侯先生為名譽研究員，從治印角度，剖析館藏璽印的藝術風格；馮文湛先生負責拓鈐印譜；物理系莊聯陞博士為銅印作合金成份分析。一九七九年王人聰先生加入文物館以後，璽印研究工作得以全面開展，王先生並就璽印藏品的徵集，主持鑑別、遴選工作；二十年以來，著述不輟，迄今已出版專著及藏印著錄六冊、論文多篇；他一手建立璽印豐富的收藏，使文物館成為海內外知名的璽印研究重點單位。

此次浙江省博物館與香港中文大學文物館聯合舉辦《中國歷代璽印藝術展覽》，精選兩館珍藏歷代璽印五百方，兩館出展品各佔一半，年代自戰國至明清，綿延二千餘年。為配合展覽，先後於香港及杭州兩地分別召開學術研討會，就古璽印及明清流派印等課題展開研討，以期促進印學研究的深度和廣度。展覽的籌劃，端賴浙江省博物館全人全力協辦，曹錦炎副館長出力尤多。圖錄的編寫，展品拍攝、鈐印工作等由兩館各自分擔；文物館則負責全書編譯及裝幀設計，整項工作是在王人聰先生指導下完成，王先生並為圖錄撰寫學術長文，探討中國古璽印的源流及其發展，為展品的欣賞提供了豐富的參考資料。展覽於籌備過程中，蒙中央人民政府駐香港特別行政區聯絡辦公室鼎助，又得中國文化研究所陳方正所長及文物館管理委員會利榮森主席多方指導，於此一併致謝。

林業強

香港中文大學文物館館長

二零零零年二月一日

Foreword

Ancient people used seals as an evidence of promise or trust. Liu Xi in *Shi Ming* (Interpreting Names) says, 'Seals represent promises.' Seals had a wide usage and were tools for exercising authority in national administration.

Seals from the various dynasties, especially the ancient ones, contained names of various official posts, places and individuals. They have a high academic value because they give first-hand reliable information for the study of official hierarchy, history, geography, family pedigree, and tribal relationship. Researchers often attach great importance to them. The seals that are found from the various dynasties are also works of art that blended calligraphy, carving, and casting together. Thus, they have won the favour of many people. Seals also have played an important role in the history of Chinese Arts. It is especially so when seals of the Ming and Qing Dynasties contributed to seal carving being regarded as an independent art form, which competed directly with traditional Chinese calligraphy. The characters cast or carved on the seals are also valuable sources of information on the evolution of structure of ancient Chinese characters — especially those from early Qin or Han. As Cao Liwei says in a poem dedicated to Ding Jing, 'The magic brush of outstanding artists can turn broken bronze and rotten jade into something glamorous'. Because of that, the seals of various dynasties are valuable objects in the eyes of collectors, be they private individuals or public organizations.

The Zhejiang Provincial Museum has put much emphasis on seals from various dynasties and has maintained an important collection of them. The core of the collection on ancient seals mainly came from the late Mr. Huang Binhong. Since the 1950s many important seals have been discovered in various places in Zhejiang Province. For instance, a Tang Dynasty seal *Hui Ji Xian Yin* was found in Shaoxing in 1958 and another Tang Dynasty seal *Jin Shan Xian Yin* was discovered in Anji in 1968. Both of them were inside a bronze seal covered box when they were found. Not only is that two rarely

found Tang Dynasty seals have been discovered, but also they have shown to people the first time how official seals were kept during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Apart from the above, the eight Navy seals of the Southern Song found in 1978 at Ganpu, Haiyan County during evacuation work of a drainage project have also provided some new information for the study of Song Dynasty Navy. They have helped to fill up gaps and correct some mistakes about the Navy as what was recorded in *Song Shi* (History of Song). Other examples are the three Yuan Dynasty seals *Hun Lan Chao Yin* found in 1955 during the dredging work of Xihu (West Lake) in Hangzhou. The seals were used to cancel the paper money that had become nullified. They are important material for the study of the currency system of the Yuan Dynasty. Hangzhou is the cradle of the Zhejiang school of seal carving. Because of favourable geographical location, the Zhejiang Provincial Museum has a good selection of masterpiece of seal carvings from the renowned "Xiling Bajia" (Eight Masters of Xiling), Mr. Zhao Zhiqian and Mr. Wu Changshuo. This pieces have been a special feature of the seal collection of the Museum.

The Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong since its inception in 1971, it has devoted in collecting ancient Chinese seals. Based on the seals donated by Bei Shan Tang, the collection of seals in the Museum has increased significantly during the last two decades, and has now amounted to over a thousand. Many of them are exquisite pieces newly unearthed from the Mainland and imported to Hong Kong. They entered the Museum collection through Mr. Wong Yan Chung's discovery and identification. The collection of Chinese seals from various dynasties has now become an important feature of the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The Zhejiang Provincial Museum and the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong have long maintained a friendly relationship. There are frequent exchanges between scholars of the two museums. I had been to Hong Kong twice between 1997 and 1998 as

visiting scholar at the Institute of Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. During my stay I have acquired a deeper understanding in the collection of seals at the Art Museum through my contact with colleagues there. The idea to hold a joint exhibition on Chinese seals was initiated and quickly got the endorsement of Dr. J. S. Lee. The proposal got off the ground immediately after Mr. Peter Y. K. Lam assumes the Directorship of the Museum. After much effort from both parties, the exhibition has finally become a reality. It is hoped that this exhibition can give an enjoyable experience to Hong Kong collectors and those who love the art of seal carving. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. J. S. Lee and fellow colleagues at the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong for their hard work in preparing for this exhibition.

Cao Jinyan
Deputy Director
Zhejiang Provincial Museum

Foreword

Seals have been a mark of authenticity, authority, possession or prestige. Thus, in an Eastern Han (AD25-220) dictionary *Shi Ming*, seals have been defined as 'something for securing objects as a sign of trust'. In the West, seals were likewise described as 'devices to make honesty unnecessary'. As can be seen from archaeological excavations and historical records, seals have all along fascinated mankind and have a long history. The stamp seals of the Ancient Near East in the Fifth Millennium BC were probably one of the earliest to appear. Impressions of these seals were often found on clay sealings and *bullae*, while regional variations of the seals appeared in Ancient Egypt and the Greater Indus Valley. The early stamp seals developed into cylindrical seals, with a design in intaglio and generally pierced longitudinally. These seals were rolled out over a piece of clay leaving behind a continuous impression of the design. Cylindrical seals and stamp seals were used side by side in Ancient Egypt, but for the latter category, and peculiarly for Egypt was the scarab. The Egyptians worn them as amulets and talismans, and believed that they had magical properties. Seals are works of art in miniature and those from the above regions have been mostly carved from stone, at times, rare or semi-precious stones from the lapidary workshop. They have been known as gems and are therefore jewels in their own right. The practice continued in the West into nowadays.

All Chinese seals belong to the stamp type, and cylindrical seals and scarabs are unheard of in China. While the exact date for the first appearance of seals in China is still a hotly debated subject, by the Eastern Zhou period (770-256 BC) at the latest, seals were already in popular use. As such, it is significantly later than the other early civilizations in the Ancient Near East, Egypt and the Indus Valley. But the Chinese seals have all along maintained their own unique characteristics and features. The seal legend has always been calligraphic, and together with Japan, Korea and Vietnam they form a distinct seal tradition in Asia. Chinese art historians, paleographers, and historians have regarded ancient seals as a branch of *jinshixue* (study of ancient inscriptions on bronzes and

stones). The contents of the legends often provide useful information in the study of government institutions, administrative practices, geography, tribal relationships, paleography, historiography, and ancient names and surnames. Since the 14th century with the introduction of soap-stones as a media for the seals, the Chinese literati blended seal carving with calligraphy and painting, and successfully transformed a practical utilitarian object into an *objet d'art*. It has been customary for artists and calligraphers to carve their own seals, and seal inscriptions began to be viewed as an art in their own.

Since its inception in 1971, the Art Museum, as one of its earliest collecting policies, has set an objective to build up a collection of ancient bronzes and stones with inscriptions. Seals naturally fall into this category. In 1973 an important group of 278 ancient bronze seals was given to the Museum by the Bei Shan Tang Foundation. This group was formed by the late Mr. Wu Shiu Wan, master of Huashen Binong Guan, and some items were originally in the collections of the prominent collector Duan Fang (1861-1911) and the modern Cantonese calligraphist and seal carver, Guan Cuncao (1903-1948). The group has become the basis of the seal collection in the Art Museum. With the generous sponsorship of Bei Shan Tang, the Art Museum had been able to make substantial purchases of important and rare seals during the influx of archaic seals in the dealers' market from the mid 1980's to late 90's, thus filling in a lot of gaps in our existing collection. To date, the seal collection in the Art Museum grows to nearly two thousand pieces. Through these years Bei Shan Tang has been our most generous benefactor. The Art Museum is also grateful to Dr. T. T. Tsui, The Friends of the Art Museum, Mr. Wu Shiu Wan, Mr. Wang Tsung Yen, Madam Lu Fengyi, Madam Pan Xi, Miss Betty Yau, Mr. Jat See Yeu, Cheng Xun Tang, Mr. Lai Loy, Wui Po Kok and Luen Chai for their support and donations.

As from 1973, the Art Museum has inaugurated a series of researches on archaic seals. The late Mr. Feng Kanghou (1901-1983), a renown calligraphist and seal

carver was appointed honorary Research Fellow for a year to conduct studies on the art of these seals, while his son, Mr. Feng Wenzhan made vermilion impressions and arranged the seals in order. At the same time Dr. L. S. Chuang of the Physics Department launched a research project on the chemical composition of the seals by neutron activation analysis. The study came into full fledge when Mr. Wong Yan Chung (Wang Rencong), formerly of the Palace Museum, Beijing joined the staff of the Art Museum in 1979. Mr. Wong has been instrumental in the selection of the new acquisitions. He was an extremely industrious author as well, having written or edited six monographs and catalogues, in addition to some twenty papers on the subject, making the Art Museum the most active centre in the study of archaic Chinese seals in both China and overseas.

The present exhibition of *The Art of Chinese Seals through the Ages* has been jointly organized with the Zhejiang Provincial Museum in Hangzhou. A total of 500 seals dating from the Warring States period to the Qing dynasty, spanning more than two millennia will be on display. The exhibits have been selected equally in number from the two museums. To coincide with the exhibition in Hong Kong and Hangzhou, two symposia will be organized in both venues respectively, to discuss topics on archaic seals and literary seals of the later periods. The Art Museum has enjoyed full support and co-operation from the Zhejiang Provincial Museum in the preparation of the exhibition. Mr. Cao Jinyan, Deputy Director, in particular was most helpful in various capacities. The writing of the entries, and making of seal impressions and rubbings of the seals were shared by both Museums. The Art Museum staff was responsible for the editing and translation of the manuscripts, as well as the design and layout of the catalogue. The entire project was ably supervised by Mr. Wong Yan Chung, who also contributed a scholarly essay which serves as an introduction to the catalogue. The exhibition would never have been possible without the strong support of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. We are also

indebted to Mr. J. S. Lee, Chairman of the Art Museum Management Committee, and Dr. F. C. Chen, Director of the Institute of Chinese Studies, for their valuable advice. To all of them we offer our sincere appreciation.

Peter Y. K. Lam
Director, Art Museum
1st February, 2000

年表 Chronology

新石器時代	Neolithic Period	c. 7000-1600 B.C.
商	Shang	c. 16th-11th C. B.C.
西周	Western Zhou	11th C.-771 B.C.
東周	Eastern Zhou	770-221 B.C.
	春秋 Spring and Autumn	770-476 B.C.
	戰國 Warring States	475-221 B.C.
秦	Qin	221-206 B.C.
西漢	Western Han	206 B.C.-A.D. 25
東漢	Eastern Han	25-220
六朝	Six Dynasties	220-589
	三國 Three Kingdoms	220-265
	晉 Jin	265-420
	南北朝 Southern and Northern Dynasties	420-589
隋	Sui	581-618
唐	Tang	618-907
五代	Five Dynasties	907-960
北宋	Northern Song	960-1126
南宋	Southern Song	1127-1279
遼	Liao	916-1125
金	Jin	1115-1234
元	Yuan	1271-1368
明	Ming	1368-1644
	洪武 Hongwu	1368-1398
	建文 Jianwen	1399-1402
	永樂 Yongle	1403-1424
	洪熙 Hongxi	1425
	宣德 Xuande	1426-1435
	正統 Zhengtong	1436-1449
	景泰 Jingtai	1450-1456
	天順 Tianshun	1457-1464
	成化 Chenghua	1465-1487
	弘治 Hongzhi	1488-1505
	正德 Zhengde	1506-1521
	嘉靖 Jiajing	1522-1566
	隆慶 Longqing	1567-1572
	萬曆 Wanli	1573-1619
	泰昌 Taichang	1620
	天啟 Tianqi	1621-1627
	崇禎 Chongzhen	1628-1644
清	Qing	1644-1911
	順治 Shunzhi	1644-1661
	康熙 Kangxi	1662-1722
	雍正 Yongzheng	1723-1735
	乾隆 Qianlong	1736-1795
	嘉慶 Jiaqing	1796-1820
	道光 Daoguang	1821-1850
	咸豐 Xianfeng	1851-1861
	同治 Tongzhi	1862-1874
	光緒 Guangxu	1875-1908
	宣統 Xuantong	1909-1911

中國璽印的起源與發展

王人聰

中國古代璽印是中華民族優秀傳統文化中的一份珍貴遺產，具有重要的學術價值和藝術價值。中國的璽印起源於何時？這是仍在探討的問題。在古代文獻中，有的把璽印出現的時間追溯得很早，說在黃帝或堯舜時代就已有璽印了，如《春秋運斗樞》說：“黃帝時，黃龍負圖，中有璽章，文曰天王符璽”。又如《春秋合誠圖》：“堯坐舟中與太尉舜臨觀，鳳凰負圖授堯，圖以赤玉為匣，長三尺八寸，厚三寸，黃玉檢，白玉繩，封兩端，其章曰天赤帝符璽”。這些記載都是漢代方士的編造，屬於荒誕不經的傳說，是不能信據的。有的文獻則認為璽印最早出現於夏商周三代，或是說夏代已有了璽印，如《後漢書·祭祀志》說：“嘗聞儒言，三皇無文，結繩以治，自五帝始有書契，至於三王，俗化雕文，詐偽漸興，始有印璽，以檢奸萌”。文中所說的三王，即是指夏商周三代。可是，三代的歷史前後相距一千多年，年代跨度長，說璽印起源於三代，過於籠統，究竟是哪一代呢？並沒有說清。《逸周書·殷祝篇》載：“湯放桀而復薄，三千諸侯大會，湯取天子之璽，置之天子之座”。這是說商湯放逐夏桀，取了夏桀的天子之璽，說明夏朝已有璽印了。《逸周書·殷祝》這篇文章不古，絕非周人所作，這段記載應是戰國以後人依據戰國時期使用璽印的情況而加以附會臆造的，所以也不可為據。

史籍中比較可信的關於中國最早使用璽印的記載是《左傳》和《國語》。《左傳·襄公二十九年》說：魯襄公“還及方城，季武子取卞，使公治問，璽書追而與之”。《國語·魯語》所記亦同，云：“襄公在楚，季武子取卞，使季冶逆，追而予之璽書”。韋昭注：“璽，印也，古者大夫之印亦稱璽。璽書，璽封書也”。璽書就是用璽印按壓封泥封緘的文書。魯襄公二十九年為公元前544年，相當於春秋中期。以上記載說明春秋時期已經使用璽印了。

春秋時期既然已經使用璽印，那麼璽印最初的出現，是否可以往上追溯更早一段時間呢？這是必然會考慮的問題。近世以來，一些研究中國古史、古文字、考古學以及古璽印學的學者，對中國璽印起源的問題，曾作了許多有益的探討。歸納起來，大致有以下兩種具有代表性的意見：

第一種意見認為中國的璽印起源於春秋，到戰國已經普遍使用。這種意見是根據《左傳》、《國語》中關於中國使用璽印的最早記載以及考古發現和傳世的璽印實物資料，從璽印的本質並結合春秋戰國時期由於經濟、政治制度的變革所形成的歷史條件，加以分析而作出的。¹

第二種意見認為中國的璽印起源於商代。這是根據黃浚《鄴中片羽》初集和于省吾《雙劍謠古器物圖錄》所著錄的傳在三十年代出土於安陽殷墟的三件類似璽印的小件銅器（圖一）所作的推論。²另外，由於八十年代以來，在陝西、湖北的西周遺址中出土了類似璽印的器物，如1980年陝西扶風黃堆鄉雲塘村一處西周中晚期灰坑中出土的一件，器為銅質，其形制為上部作三角形，下部為圓角長方形，中間由一絞索狀橋形鈕聯結，三角形與圓角長方形部份分別鑄有鏤形或雲紋圖案。³（圖二）又如，八十年代初，扶風縣法門鄉莊白村一處西周中期灰坑中出土一件，亦為銅質，器作圓角方形，橋形鈕，器面鑄鳳鳥紋。⁴（圖三）再如，1988年湖北長陽縣香爐石遺址第四層西周文化堆積中出土了兩件陶質長圓體的器物，一件底面作圓形，另一件為長橢圓形，面上分別有類似刻劃的符號。⁵（圖四）以上這些考古資料，一些考古學者判定為璽印，並據此認為璽印在西周時期已經出現。⁶

我們認為探討中國璽印的起源，首先必須對璽印的性質應有清楚的認識，也就是說對中國的璽印要有個明確的定義。其次應考慮和說明產生璽印的社會歷史條件。中國古代的璽印是一種憑證的信物。《說文·卩部》：“印，執政所持信也。從爪、卩”。段注：“凡有官守皆曰執政，其所持之卩信曰印，古上下通曰璽。《周禮·璽節》注，今之印章”。又《土部》云：“璽，王者之印也”。段注：“印者，執政所持信也。王者所執曰璽”。《釋名·釋書契》：“印，信也，所以封物為信驗也”。應劭《漢官儀》：“璽，施也，信也。古者尊卑共用之”。蔡邕《獨斷》：“璽，印也，信也。天子璽白玉螭虎鈕，古者尊卑共之”。由以上所引，可知古代的字書和一些文獻對璽印所下的定義都說是一種憑證的信物。這個定義不僅是符合中國古代璽印的本質，也是符合當時人們對璽印的認

識的。在傳世的戰國秦漢璽印和封泥中常見有信鈐(璽)、信印等稱謂,如“子栗子信鈐”、⁷“瘞慶信鈐”、⁸“左司馬聞鉤信鈐”、⁹“宋連信鈐”、¹⁰“皇帝信璽”、¹¹“宋赦信印”、¹²“王羊信印”¹³等等,這些璽印在璽或印字之前冠以信字,正說明當時人們即認為璽印是一種憑證的信物。又如居延漢簡常見有“以印為信”的語句,也是說明璽印為憑證信物的確證。¹⁴這種作為憑證信物的璽印,在中國古代並不是一開始社會就有這個需要因而產生的。它和兵符、貨幣等一樣,是一定社會歷史條件下的產物。在前文引述的第一種意見中,一些學者從歷史發展的觀點,分析春秋戰國時期社會經濟、政治變化的情況,認為由於這一時期商品經濟的發展,商業活動的頻繁,需要有一種憑證的信物來檢驗通關的貨物;在國家徵收貢物入庫收藏時,對物品檢驗後,也需要用憑證的信物來封緘收存。《周禮·掌節》:“貨賄用璽節”;《司市》:“凡通貨賄以璽節出入之”;《職金》:“受其入徵者,辨其物之媿惡與其數量,揭而璽之”,鄭司農云:“揭而璽之者,揭書其數量以著其物也。璽者,印也,既揭書擯其媿惡與其數量,又以印封存”。這些記載即是上述情況的反映。在政治上,由於宗法制度的瓦解,世官世祿的廢除,士階層的興起,官僚制度的形成,國君與所任命的官吏之間也需要有一種憑證的信物來表明相互之間的從屬關係,同時也作為官吏的身份和行使職權的憑證。如《史記·張儀傳》載,楚懷王拜張儀為相,“以相印授張儀”;《魏公子列傳》:魏安釐王拜信陵君為將,“以上將軍印授公子,公子遂將”。官吏被免職或辭官,需將璽印收回或上繳,如《韓非子·外儲說左下》:“梁車為鄴令,其姊往看之,暮而後,門閉,因踰郭而入,車遂刖其足。趙成侯以為不慈,奪之璽而免之令”。《戰國策·秦策》:“應侯因謝病,請歸相印”。官吏行使職權,需要璽印作為憑證,如《韓非子》載,西門豹“請璽以治鄴”。中國古代的璽印就是在這樣的歷史條件下,適應社會客觀的需要而產生的,它的出現最早應在春秋時期,到戰國逐漸普遍使用。這種認識,我們認為是符合歷史實際的。

中國的璽印作為憑證的信物,這是它的本質,在實際使用中,它可以複製印文,這是它所具有的實用功能。由於並不是所有的憑證信物都具有複製文字的功能,如符節也是一種憑證的信物,但它卻沒有複製文字的功能;同樣,也不是所有能夠複製文字或花紋的器物具有憑證信物的性質,如打印陶器花紋的印模以及鑄造銅器銘文的字模,雖然它們可以複製花紋或文字,但並不具有憑證的作用。因此,對中國的璽印,我們認為可作如下的定義:即具有複製印文功能的一種憑證信物。根據這個定義,在考察一件器物是否為璽

印時,如果不是從這一器物是否具有憑證作用這種璽印的本質特點來分析,而是片面地強調它的可以複製文字或花紋的功能,那就必然要導致混淆璽印與印模的區別,也就會把製作陶器時捺印花紋的印模或鑄造銅器銘文所用的字模都當作璽印了。在考察中國璽印起源的問題時,我們可以說璽印複製印文的功能導源於印模,但絕不能說印模就是最早的璽印,這是必須辨明的。

前文提到的傳在安陽殷墟出土的三件小銅器,其中一件有田字格的所謂奇字璽,已有學者指出它與戰國時期的巴蜀璽印類似,不是商代的遺物,¹⁵這是很正確的。另外兩件,究竟作何用途?至今仍缺乏確鑿的依據可以說明。至於上述陝西、湖北西周遺址出土的類似璽印的器物,器上鑄刻的為花紋或符號,均非文字,其意義不明,要將它們說成是可以作為憑證的信物,同樣是缺乏依據的。其次,在商代和西周時期,根據目前所見的史料,尚未能說明究竟由於甚麼樣的社會歷史條件促使需要使用璽印,在一些認為商周已出現璽印的論著中,也未見有具體的說明。由以上兩點,我們認為那種主張商代和西周已出現璽印的說法,是很難成立的。

中國古代的璽印,最初是作為憑證的信物而出現的,但在其歷史發展的過程中,逐漸出現了印文為吉語、箴言、肖形等的內容,這類印並無憑證的作用,實際上是不屬於嚴格定義下的璽印的。但由於它們是由作為憑證信物的璽印衍生出來的,並具有璽印的形式與複製印文的功能,所以仍可作為璽印的分支而歸入璽印類中。這正如元明以來所出現的以詩詞等閑文入印的篆刻作品,雖無憑證的作用,但也可歸入璽印類中,其道理是一樣的。

根據目前所見的資料,可以明確斷定年代的最早的璽印實物,絕大部份均屬戰國時期,春秋時期的實物,至今仍未能確指。戰國的璽印,當時稱為璽,寫作“尔”、“𡗗”或“鈐”。尔為璽之初文,沈兼士云:“璽之得名,緣於古代封物之制,以璽抑埴(《淮南子·齊俗訓》云:‘若爾之抑埴’,)制止之使不得輒開露耳(故其字從土)。今以所見之古代封泥證之,便可釋然”。¹⁶古璽文“尔”即爾字,爾與尼古音近義通,尼有止義,取尼止之義表示璽印這種器物具有制止所封檢的文書或物品開露,以及防止他人開拆的作用,故以“尔”為名。𡗗與鈐則為後起的形聲字,𡗗即小篆之璽,璽印因用以按壓封泥,故𡗗或璽字從土,璽印用銅鑄造,故鈐字從金,璽印或用玉製作,故籀文璽字從玉。¹⁷

戰國璽印的質地,衛宏《漢舊儀》說:“秦以前民皆佩綬,以金銀銅犀象為方寸璽,各服所好”。但根據目