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# Han Stone Reliefs From Shensi Province

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THE PROBLEM of regional styles in ancient Chinese art has been most difficult to attack. Despite the profusion of objects preserved in collections over the world, a lack of information as to the circumstances of their discovery, and the rarity of inscribed documentation concerning place and time of production have hampered association of distinct stylistic groups with their particular areas of origin. It has been impossible, under these limitations, to deduce where motifs and styles were conceived and how different groups may have interacted and affected each other's development. With the increased archaeological activity of recent years, though Shang and Chou materials must await further discoveries, the art of the Han dynasty has found substantial and more reliable additions which yield a basis for discussion of such questions. Relief decorations from Han mortuary structures (tomb, offering shrines, ch'ueh<sup>a</sup>, and coffins) are numerous, but among these a group from Shensi has only recently been uncovered and is less known. The Shensi reliefs display special features which distinguish them from more familiar examples of Han relief art. This paper attempts a beginning in study of regional styles through examination of the distinctive aspects of Han reliefs from Shensi.

A publication compiled by the Shensi Provincial Museum reproduces photographs and rubbings of the stones discovered in three districts at the northern tip of the province; an area enclosed by the loop of the Yellow River; and immediately south of the Ordos.<sup>1</sup> The areas of Yü-lin, Mi-chih, and Sui-te<sup>b</sup> abound in Han tombs, but these are now in such damaged condition that the majority of their carved stones were found scattered amidst the fields, and only five structures were officially investigated by the museum representatives. Their general form as revealed in these five tombs betrays some differences from the types discovered in eastern China. The floor plans show a simple arrangement of a squarish front chamber followed by a

long rectangular rear chamber, and the larger tombs also have side chambers of rectangular plan lying horizontally off the former. They are of modest scale, ranging between two and three metres in height, and one to four metres in length and width of individual chambers. The orientation is northward, an unusual feature quite opposed to general Han practice, though there are other such exceptions, notably the offering shrine of Wu Liang.<sup>c</sup> Doors, lintels, and pillars are of stone, while the walls and roofs are of brick; the latter being either domed or pyramidal in structure. This combination of stone and brick materials, with the latter predominating, is rare in Han tombs. Only the sites of Chi-nan and Chang-ch'iu<sup>d</sup> in Shantung

show a similar usage.<sup>2</sup> Fragments of wood coffins were found lying parallel to the long walls in two of the tombs. Despite previous disturbance, three of the tombs also yielded small finds; a number of grey ceramic vessels painted in decorative patterns with red and black lacquer, one lacquer plate, one bronze sword, one bronze knife, fragments of chariot fittings, a bronze piece from a bow, a bronze plaque with pierced decoration of three fish, a hollow lead ball, a stone lamp, black and white stone beads, and coins of bronze and iron. The latter are of types found from the Former Han period through the Chin dynasty; the *wu chü*<sup>3</sup> in large numbers, and one *pan liang*.<sup>4</sup> They are, therefore, of little use in precise dating.

It is, however, the decoration of the tombs themselves which is of major interest. This is generally confined to the area around the door, though a few large structures have wall panels in relief as well as the usual lintel, frame, and pillar embellishment. The lintels are divided into upper and lower panels, with the former functioning as a border, although both are of nearly equal height. The border panel runs down on either side to form the outside of the door frame. The inner strip of door frame is further separated into smaller panels. These lateral divisions often rest on a base panel running the width of the frame. The two leaves of the door form separate decorative units. Pillars and wall panels are also divided into a number of distinct areas. This system of partitioning the decorative surface restricts the scope of expression somewhat. Only the lintel area permits of a continuous scene of action. Such an arbitrary disposition of the decorative surface differs from the usual composition of Han reliefs and paintings which conform to the larger units of architectural components which they adorn, while



FIG. 1—SUI-TE, TOMB OF WANG TE-YÜAN,  
DATED TO 100 A.D., LINTEL RELIEF.

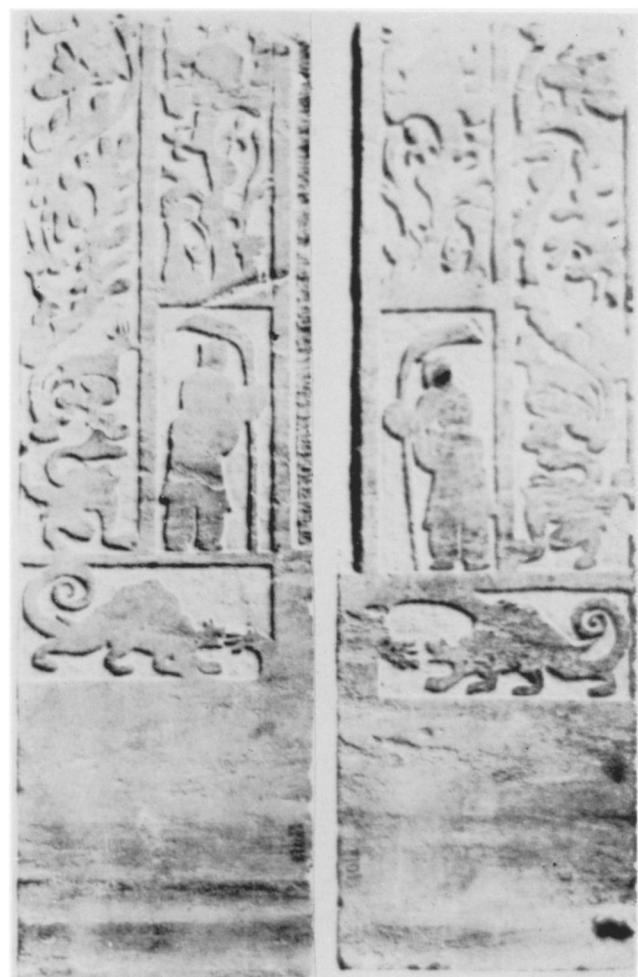


FIG. 2—SUI-TE, TOMB OF WANG TE-YÜAN,  
DATED TO 100 A.D., DOOR LEAVES.

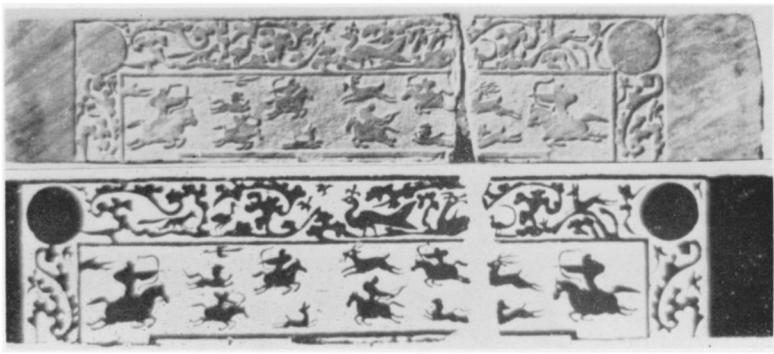


FIG. 3—SUI-TE, TOMB OF WANG TE-YÜAN,  
DATED TO 100 A.D., DOOR LEAVES.



FIG. 4—SUI-TE, RELIEF STONE, DATED TO  
103 A.D.

little in the Shensi reliefs is revealing of the structural parts (Figs. 1, 2, 3).

The decoration is usually shown in a raised plane of slight and uniform elevation. Only two stones displaying extremely primitive draughtsmanship are rendered entirely in engraved line.<sup>3</sup> In some cases, however, details within the figures are drawn with incisions. A more remarkable use of technique can be found in the black brush lines remaining on a few of the stones (Figs. 7, 8, 15, and 16). These appear only within the carved contours of figures. Though each single continuous line is of regular thickness, the drawing of different parts shows variation in the width of the stroke selected. Some of these must have been painted on before the cutting began, for parts of such lines seem to have been gouged out in the course of freeing the contours. Others used in the finer definition of details could only have been applied after the forms had been fixed. This combination of painting and sculpture is unique to the Shensi works, and solves, to some extent, the problem of rendering features too delicate for relief work of limited scale. The mastery displayed in use of brush (as shown in the reconstructions) is equal to the finest examples of Han painting hitherto known.

An examination of the selection and treatment of subject matter within these reliefs will lead more clearly to an understanding of their unusual character. A number of the motifs are familiar ones. Some are determined by their location around the entrance. Guardian figures in the form of warriors carrying halberds, spears, or swords, and more rarely in the guise of officials holding tablets of authority, are placed on either side of the door frame. The leaves of the doors bear monster heads gripping rings in their jaws. These are surmounted by the *chu ch'io*,<sup>4</sup> the red bird of the southern quarter. Such a



FIG. 5—SUI-TE, LINTEL RELIEF.

combination of symbols at the entrance in Han architecture<sup>4</sup> is common as a protective device against evil spirits and demons. It should be noted, though, that the orientation of tombs is usually toward the south. The animals which stand below the ringed masks also show some peculiarities. Elsewhere the green dragon of the east and the white tiger of the west are placed to right and left according to their directions on either leaf of the door. They are so placed on the Shensi doors although the entrances face north. Among these reliefs a strange beast with one horn is more frequent, though occasionally it can be found in conjunction with the usual symbols of the quadrants (Fig. 20), or flanked by two stalks of a stylized plant.<sup>5</sup> The report describes it as resembling an ox,<sup>6</sup> a somewhat unconvincing reading of its appearance. A more likely identification of the unnatural form is that it represents the *pi hsieh*,<sup>7</sup> another apotropaic animal.<sup>8</sup> On one door the dragon and tiger are followed by more normal horned animals. These appear to be a stag and ram, both also symbols of east and west though less frequently used as such.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to decipher the logic behind this use of the celestial directional symbols. In some cases they are repeated in an unnecessary fashion, or the *hsüan wu*<sup>1</sup> (the "dark warrior"), representing the northern quadrant, is added, though this only in one example. This arrangement may be for purely formal reasons of symmetry and decorative variety, and if this is so would in itself constitute a difference of intention from the accepted magical use of symbols. It will be seen that there is a general lack of adjustment to the northern orientation in these reliefs, and in this respect they differ from the decoration of the Wu Liang shrine.<sup>9</sup>

The *hsüan wu* stands more frequently on the base panel of the door frame, and is given a special prominence. Again, the reason for this



FIG. 6—SUI-TE, LINTEL RELIEF.



FIG. 7—SUI-TE, TOMB M2, LINTEL RELIEF.



FIG. 8—SUI-TE, TOMB M2, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.



FIG. 9—SUI-TE, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.

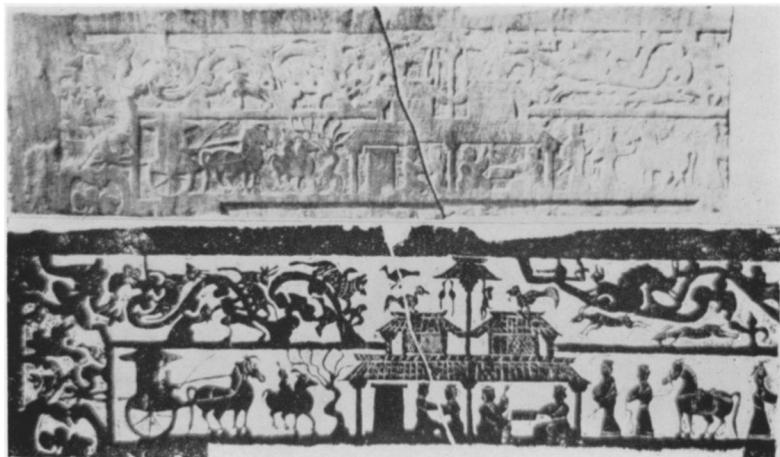


FIG. 10—SUI-TE, PORTION OF LINTEL RELIEF.

placement is not clear. It may stem from a desire to emphasize the north, as the unconventional direction of the entrance tends to suggest. Or it may simply be an attempt to include the fourth and remaining member of the group of directional symbols. There is some evidence to indicate that this panel is of special importance in the decorative complex. Instead of the snake and tortoise, there occurs a hill-censer form in a number of examples. Sometimes this is set in a pedestaled basin, and it may be flanked by the stylized plant stalks already mentioned in the previous paragraph. In one relief it stands by itself with a pigtailed adult figure to either side, and a standing child's figure to the left opposed by a seated child holding a curved rod (a bow?) to the right (Fig. 9). Can this motif be identified with the *Po-shan*<sup>1</sup> of the hill-censers and jars?<sup>10</sup> It is generally executed as an undifferentiated shape, though in two examples the surface is incised with a band in diamond pattern setting off the bulbous part from its stem, and with a series of overlapping petals above, so that the whole resembles a pine cone (Fig. 12). In fact, though the form generally recalls the hill-censer, it is more plant-like, and shows no signs of the landscape and hunt scenes usually associated with the divine mountain. Even more enigmatic is the horse which sometimes stands on this base panel (Fig. 11). It is occasionally accompanied by strange animals, or followed by a servant holding dustpan and broom as if to sweep up droppings. In one case it stands with a chariot behind, and in another, is shown under a tree beneath which is a box-like manger, with again the busy servant following.<sup>11</sup> The animal appears standing, or prancing with a bridle tying it to the frame, or at a gallop. A horn-like protrusion distinguishes this type of horse from those bearing hunters

or drawing chariots. It is clearly not an ordinary mount in appearance. The tree with which it is associated can be identified as the *fu-sang*,<sup>k</sup> the solar arbor with sun-birds perched in its branches, though it is simpler in form than other versions. The horse, therefore, is connected with a cosmic image, and may itself function as a divine symbol.<sup>12</sup>

Similar trees also decorate other less striking panels which are always placed, noticeably, beneath a series of reliefs of smaller scale.<sup>13</sup> One example shows two figures at the base of the tree, one aiming a bow who might be the divine archer Hou I,<sup>1</sup> and the other holding up an unidentifiable object in one hand. However, no birds appear in the branches above. Their absence can be felt in many of the representations, though often the horned horse stands before a manger beneath the tree. The tree is, in such cases, reduced to one or two sparse branches. When birds do appear on the tree their number is fewer than the total of sun-birds in the solar myth. On one panel two long-robed figures stand below the tree, seemingly holding objects in their hands, and bending forward in respectful pose. Their role, too, is a mystery. One is at a loss to explain such scenes from the traditional interpretation of Hou I shooting nine sun-birds on the *fu-sang* tree. Possibly other mythological origins must be sought. Or again, these may be simply mistaken renditions of a legend transmitted in vague accounts.

Similar problems of significance arise when other scenes in the small panels are considered. Most numerous are two or three figures arranged in stiff groups, with only stilted gestures to indicate that action is taking place.<sup>14</sup> These compositions are particularly unrevealing of narrative content, and no identifying inscriptions are given. They may be intended to illustrate his-



FIG. 11—SUI-TE, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.

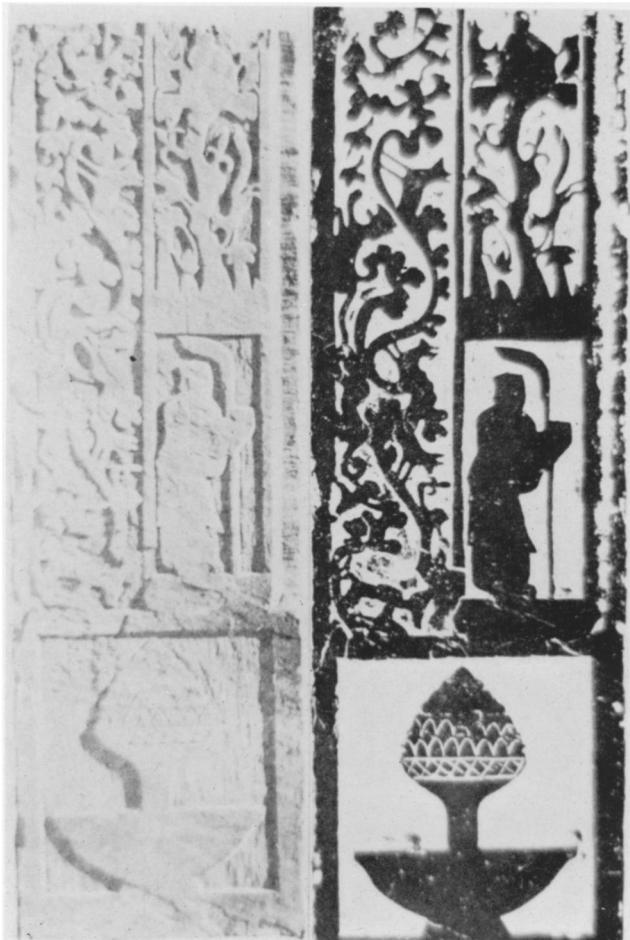


FIG. 12—SUI-TE, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.



FIG. 13—SUI-TE, SQUARE RELIEF.

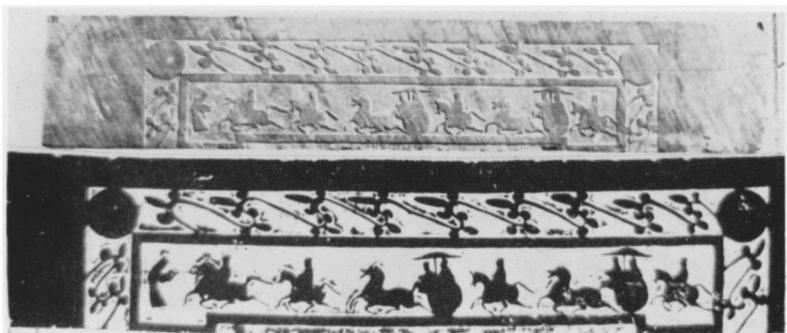


FIG. 14—SUI-TE, LINTEL RELIEF.

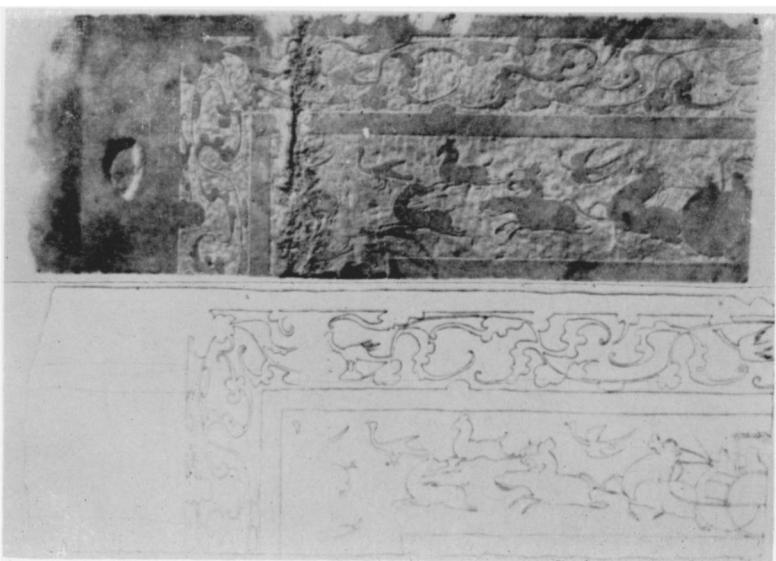


FIG. 15—SUI-TE, PORTION OF LINTEL RELIEF.

torical or legendary episodes such as are popular in Shantung reliefs for didactic representation of Confucian virtues. If so, these are quite unsuccessful, since their meaning is unintelligible. Single figures also appear: seated, standing beside the sacred plant, or in dancing movement.<sup>15</sup> Animals of many kinds, such as geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, dogs, rabbits, and foxes, are rendered with considerable verve. Horses and chariots, as well as horsemen, appear on some of these panels. One would be tempted to assume that these unpretentious depictions function in place of the pottery funerary models commonly placed as offerings to the dead, which are notably missing from the tomb finds, were it not for the presence of other scenes of definite or probable mythological and symbolic significance. The hare pounding the pill of immortality with mortar and pestle appears with winged genii in familiar posture, moving forward with head lifted and one leg raised and bent at the knee while holding a sprig of the same plant already mentioned several times. These sometimes frame a central figure, who must be identified as Hsi Wang-mu,<sup>16</sup> and stand on what seems to be a ledge perched atop a plant.<sup>17</sup> Small animals play about the stem or trunk below. The idea of immortality is implicit in these figures and suggests that the plant, which is repeated so often, is connected with the same concept. This leads to a new view of two scenes standing in panels one above the other. One shows a farmer guiding a plow pulled by an ox, behind which is a tree like those tentatively identified with the *fu-sang* in other reliefs. Below this group, stalks of the plant grow in a decorative pattern over the surface of the panel.<sup>17</sup> The report describes these as genre subjects showing contemporary agricultural activity, with the vegetation representing a ripe

crop of millet. It is more likely that there is a symbolic motivation when both the plant forms, tree and leafy stalk, are connected with mythological figures. On other stones winged genii appear with divine beasts such as dragons, tigers, lions, rams, stags, etc. These animals also stand on panels by themselves, or with the symbolic plant at their sides. The presence of this stiff sprig in other compositions may, therefore, be assumed to cast a more than earthly significance on the objects with which it is grouped. There is no clue as to how these various scenes relate to one another; whether each is conceived in isolation, or whether they form a total symbolic complex, and no exact parallels can be found in the subject matter and compositional schemes of Han tomb decoration from other provinces.

One door frame is organized in a more familiar manner. It is treated as a continuous plane, and groups of figures are placed one above the other with only implied ground lines to demarcate scene from scene (Fig. 21). But again, the content of the relief is strange, and there is no suggestion that the groups combine in one coherent unit. The stone is broken at the top, and the remaining fragment begins with a group of three figures. Two adults face one another, both with elbows bent in respectful pose, and the right figure has a bird perched on his hand. A small child stands between them and holds a stick with two wheels affixed to its lower end. This is a popular group in Shantung reliefs, representing the visit of Confucius to Lao-tzu in a relief from the Wu complex, or the legend of the filial grandson, Yüan Ku<sup>n,18</sup>. It is difficult to attach the version here to either of these two interpretations, and the role of the bird is inexplicable. Even odder are the figures below. One man is attacking another by thrusting a spear in his eye. This bears some resem-



FIG. 16—SUI-TE, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.

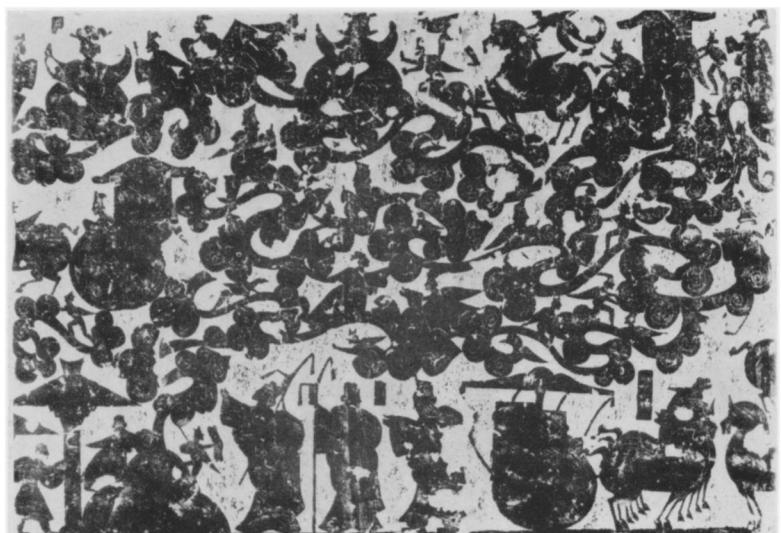


FIG. 17—RUBBING FROM SHRINE OF WU K'AI-MING.



FIG. 18—SHANTUNG, CHIA-CH'IANG RELIEF.

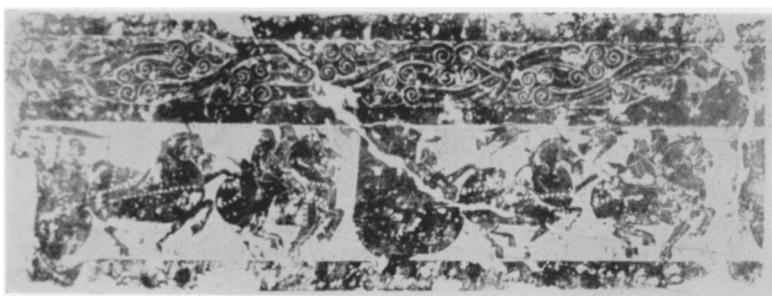


FIG. 19—SHANTUNG, RELIEF OF UNKNOWN PROVENANCE.

blance in movement and grouping to the fight between man and ape (or another man dressed as an ape) in Ssuch'uan reliefs,<sup>19</sup> but the victim is certainly human and not simian in the Shensi scene. The two groups following are unique. These men are engaged in some sort of action, and hold hammer, axe, or stick. They may represent a form of ritual dance or play peculiar to the area, in which a departure from the better known motifs of Shantung and Ssuch'uan would be understandable.

The lintel relief which surmounts this door is more readily identifiable in subject (Fig. 22). The symbols for sun and moon stand to right and left of the panel; a disc with a bird in flight, and another inscribed with an outstretched toad. These must represent the golden crow and the three-legged toad of sun and moon though their forms are more general than prescribed for these symbols. A male figure sits in profile view on a throne by the sun image, and faces a frontally seated figure of equal size on the opposite end by the moon. Among the smaller creatures between, the hare pounding a pill of immortality with mortar and pestle and three birds flying towards the seated female figure identify her as Hsi Wang-mu. The male figure must, then, be Tung Wang-kung,<sup>9</sup> her counterpart to the east.<sup>20</sup> Strange figures carrying bats or crooked sticks, a toad rubbing two rods, a hare carrying two pans, a tiger, another hare, a crow-like bird, and several kneeling or bowing figures (one with wings) also stand between the two deities. The widespread inclusion of Hsi Wang-mu and Tung Wang-kung in funerary decoration and rites is thus attested to within the Shensi reliefs.<sup>21</sup> However, these two stones stand apart from the usual door reliefs. They are not framed by a vine motif, for example, but by a connected pattern of perforated disks, the *bsien p'i*,<sup>9</sup> which occur

very frequently on Han reliefs, and have been identified by Berthold Laufer as a symbol of heaven,<sup>22</sup> and on the outer edge by an extremely simple, linear scroll pattern.

The three most common motifs on Shensi lintel reliefs are a procession of divine animals accompanied by winged genii (Fig. 1), a hunt with archers on horseback (Fig. 23), and a cortege of chariots and horsemen (Fig. 7). In such cases the sun and moon discs are moved to the register above, that is, into the frame with vine pattern. Dragons, unicorns, horned horses, phoenix or pheasant-like birds, flying birds, and winged genii follow one another in movement towards the left or west, this direction often symbolized by the hare with mortar and pestle. Each beast is separated from the next by a stalk of the stylized plant. Lions are sometimes included among the animals, and deer more occasionally. A bullock cart joins the parade in one example. Winged genii act as the end figures on another lintel, and on yet another a three-storied building stands at the center. In every case, the movement of the procession is strongly directed from right to left, that is, from east to west. What determines the choice of these animals, and what does their journey mean? Their numbers are not constant from lintel to lintel, but their variety is limited. Those first appearing in the list occur with greater frequency, and are the same which decorate many of the smaller panels flanking the door. Except for the horned horse, all the beasts are common symbols, many stemming from very ancient tradition.<sup>23</sup> Their selection and combination in this form provoke further questioning, but plausible solutions must await more extensive research in mythology.

Should a supernatural significance be considered in the other subjects of Shensi lintel



FIG. 20—YÜ-LIN, DOOR LEAVES.



58 FIG. 21—SUI-TE, DOOR FRAME RELIEF.



FIG. 22—SUI-TE, LINTEL RELIEF.



FIG. 23—SUI-TE, LINTEL RELIEF.

reliefs? Most of them are common in funerary decoration from the Han to the Six Dynasties, and have not so far been identified with symbolic meaning. In general, scenes such as the hunt are thought to have been prompted by a desire for the dead to continue enjoyment of an activity so valued in contemporary life, as the *fu*<sup>24</sup> or prose poem of the time describes. This topic as treated in Shensi is undoubtedly not an illustration from real life. One striking version, which is on a square stone rather than a lintel, places a mounted archer within a maze of mythological or symbolic animals, all moving amidst tendrils of clouds so stylized as to resemble foliage or floral forms (Fig. 13). The predominance of birds and the positions of the figures on the relief plane show that the locale is not of the earth, but rather of the air or heavens. As a rule, the animals shown are the more customary prey of hunters; stag, deer, fox, etc., but no landscape elements are given to set a natural environment for the chase.<sup>25</sup>

When a suggestion of setting is given, it is placed at the middle of the lintel separating the hunt sequence from a different motif on the other half of the panel. This divider is often architectural: a two-storied pavilion raised upon a platform and enclosing two seated figures.<sup>25</sup> The other portion of the lintel will then bear a cortege of chariots and horsemen moving from right to left, with a stalk of the symbolic plant separating it from the building. A tree and stalks of the same plant separate the hunt from a pastoral scene, but in this case the vegetation clearly belongs to the group of herdsman and goats (Fig. 5). In one unusual case the archers shoot at divine beasts, and are arranged, as in the procession of animals, with each figure alternated with a sprig of the symbolic plant. The context of such a hunt is clearly other-worldly.<sup>26</sup>

Both the pastoral and the cortege motifs also occur independently of the hunt. The former occupies an entire lintel in one example. A mounted herdsman rides behind a group of goats and cattle at the right, and another rider follows a herd of wild horses at the left; the two groups being separated by a pavilion and the symbolic plant.<sup>27</sup> This pastoral subject is entirely new to Han art and must have been inspired by the local life and habits which were exposed to influence from neighbouring semi-nomadic tribes. Its representation on the lintel suggests elements other than pure genre. Again it poses the question of a symbolic meaning. The cortege also covers the whole panel on some stones, while on others it stands next to a group of dancing figures. These are the least bewildering subjects in the repertoire and usually are understood as two stages of funerary rites: the travel to and entertainment at burial festivities. Again, the Shensi renditions do not conform to

standard representations. The two figures posturing before an array of plates must depict the Seven Plate Dance, very popular from the Han to the Chin period,<sup>28</sup> but an eighth object of rectangular shape is added. On one lintel, the cortege is greeted by a bowing figure at the left end (Fig. 14), but on another, it moves off the lintel, the foremost horse showing its hind-quarters only as it disappears behind the frame (Fig. 7). In other Han funerary decoration the cortege is customarily connected with a reception in a storied pavilion. When this is included on a Shensi lintel, many of the details are peculiar. The building itself is an identical pair of double-storied structures with a central pillar topped by capital and roof from which hang two birds and an ape-like figure (Fig. 10). Of the rooms below, one contains a rectangular block set upon and topped by plinths, and two figures embracing one another; and the other is occupied by two figures playing the *liu-po*<sup>r</sup> game. Again a mysterious magical element is imparted to what is usually a conventional ceremonial scene.<sup>29</sup> Another lintel showing the central edifice with two seated figures is filled on either side by a row of long-robed beings, three of whom are in dancing poses; again an enigmatic subject. These games and dances can not be seen as mundane entertainment. The evidence of one lintel relief in which various such acts are being viewed by a figure seated upon a dais to the right, who is distinguished by three strange pronged objects lying before him, the whole terminating in the symbolic plant and two birds of the *feng-huang*<sup>s</sup> type at the left, removes the performance from an earthly context. Can this personage be identified with Tung Wang-kung as the direction suggests, and the activities located in a heavenly sphere?<sup>30</sup>

Confucian elements have been strikingly absent from this discussion of subject matter. However, one very popular historical tale frequently used to illustrate the virtue of loyalty of subject towards ruler by representing its oppo-

site, the attempted assassination of Ch'in Shih-huang<sup>t</sup> by Ching K'o,<sup>u</sup> can be identified on one lintel (Fig. 6). Again there are puzzling elements in the total composition: the birds flying above, and the mounted archers shooting at lion and bear on either end, which have no reasonable place in the story and indoor setting. Could these incongruities have been produced by a mistaken understanding, or are they intentional, thus requiring a fresh reading of the episode?

The contradictions presented by many of these reliefs are less evident in the border designs, though the question of interpreting their symbolism must still arise. These are composed of foliated or floral vines curving up and over the outer frame of the doorway. Often sprigs of the symbolic plant spring from the central stem. Animals, both natural and mythological, and genii emerge in lively motion from the vegetation, which sometimes is itself transformed from a stem or leaf to an animal. The movement again is always directed from east to west, and the circles inscribing bird and toad stand on right and left ends of the section over the lintel; the direction being further clarified in some examples by the presence of the lunar hare on the left. It is, of course, the decorative function which decides the form of such borders, and illustration of a symbolic nature is co-ordinated effectively within these designs. Perhaps, too, iconographic prescriptions for this motif were less rigid. It is probable that the use of foliage interspersed with animals came from foreign sources. The selection of beasts popular in Chinese symbolism, rather than other naturalistic animals, does not interfere with the structure and forms of the vegetal scroll.

Vine patterns became generally popular in the T'ang dynasty, and examples from this earlier period are rare. The origins of T'ang vegetal scrolls in Near Eastern, and especially Sasanian, decoration have been much discussed.<sup>31</sup>

The Shensi versions, however, do not have the grape, palmette, or pomegranate appendages which are typical of the later scrolls. These borders must depend on other proto-types.

Western influences have been hypothesized in Han art, but seldom found. The Shensi finds shed new light on this problem. They show the earliest examples of true vegetal forms in Chinese scroll patterns. When compared to T'ang examples, the structure of these Han vines can be seen to be less geometric, and the flower or leaf forms less regular. Different types can be found within the Shensi borders, and the question of their stylistic evolution arises. Chronological placement of these reliefs is difficult. Only two dated stones have been found, both in Sui-te hsien: one in the tomb of Wang Te-yüan<sup>31</sup> with a dating to 100 A.D. and another isolated stone dating to 103 A.D. The panels so far discussed reveal little in themselves of stylistic changes. Their scope of subject matter is too limited and simplified to permit of much variation in treatment. The border patterns in conjunction with such figural compositions are more helpful in suggesting a sequence of development. The vine pattern used in the tomb of Wang Te-yüan displays one type. Here, the stem is coarse and shows very little modulation in its thickness. It curves with an irregular and energetic rhythm. Leaves with ovoid lobes which broaden at their tops rest on the vine directly, and sprigs of the symbolic plant also spring forth at intervals. Figures and animals move on the stem, and occasionally emerge from its ends. The relief surface is flat and undifferentiated. Roughness in outline and detail holds true for the figural panels as well. These are distinguished by a propensity for having figures overlap the frame to emerge from the relief ground (Figs. 1 to 3). A variation of this type can be found on the stone of 103 A.D. No animals or figures are included, and both the curving of the stem and the shapes of the leaves are more even and

geometric. In reliefs with this type of border the figural subjects often also show a static quality, and the tendency towards stylization can be seen in the block-like foliage of the solar tree motif as well (Fig. 4). Both varieties appear to have undergone changes. In the case of the former the stem of the scroll becomes more refined, and its thickening and thinning more pronounced (Figs. 5 and 6). Foliage and figural forms tend to dissolve into one another, interweaving to knit a more complex pattern. At times the vegetal element could scarcely be distinguished were it not for the addition of painted or incised detail (Figs. 7 to 11). Gradually, however, the animals dominate over the plant form whose foliage diminishes in size and importance. The figural subjects reflect this increased freedom in general composition and greater precision of drawing. The most advanced examples show new elegance of treatment in both plant and figure. A similar trend towards grace and refinement can be seen in the development of the pure vegetal pattern, though here in a stricter and more rigid stylization. The leaves begin to cluster together in definite groups (Fig. 12). At times this results in a foliage of naturalistic appearance. More often it leads to a simplification of the contours and results in a trefoil motif. Again, the stem of the vine becomes thinner (Fig. 14). Two examples carry attenuation and abstraction of scroll and animal to its most advanced stage (Figs. 15 and 16). Both are executed in the technique of combined painting and relief. Their later dating is supported by the drawing of the chariot on the right end of one panel, which is shown in diagonal view with the rear wheel standing above and behind the front one; a consistent view which is not evidenced on other Han reliefs before the second half of the 2nd century A.D.<sup>32</sup> Dissolution of the vegetal motif is not complete for foliated ends are still evident, but the decorative interest rests in linear movement rather than in the pattern of leaf or

flower. These must, then, be descended from the first type discussed rather than the second.

Evidently, the Shensi scroll and animal pattern differs from more familiar forms. In its earlier stage it is most natural in appearance, while its transformations lead to a linearity closer to the cloud-scroll. Its ultimate stylization is free rather than geometric in form. Compare the two later stones to examples of the pattern from Shantung (Figs. 17 to 19).<sup>33</sup> Only the relief from the shrine of Wu K'ai-ming<sup>w</sup> displays a vestigial vegetal form though rendered in spiral endings (Fig. 17), while another, also from the district of Chia-ch'iang,<sup>x</sup> moves closer to geometric rigidity in its use of straight diagonal lines (Fig. 18). A fourth stone of unidentified origin shows freer line, but equally restricted forms (Fig. 19).

Familiar in Han ornament is the cloud-scroll combined with small active figures of animals and genii. It is used mainly on lacquer and inlaid bronze objects. M. Rostovtzeff has described the origin and development of this cloud-scroll from the archaic Chinese maeander. He suggested a Scythian influence for "its tendency to be connected with floral ornaments." The combination of scroll with animals and genii, however, he thought was inspired by Hellenistic decoration, as was the later tendency of the Chinese vegetal scroll towards geometricization. Only with the T'ang dynasty did he see a naturalistic approach brought from the Roman West.<sup>34</sup> M. Rostovtzeff posited that the main influence on the Chinese vegetal scroll with animals was from Graeco-Oriental art in which Hellenistic motifs were "debased and schematized," which would account for the more rigid trend of the Far Eastern version. His analysis can not be applied to the Shensi scroll which begins in concrete description, and only in later stages takes on the abstract play of line most common to the

Chinese tradition. A possible reason for this is that it was very likely subject to more direct influence from foreign sources. The area which yielded these reliefs was at the outer reaches of the Han empire. Its settlement was instigated for military and trading purposes. No Greek objects have as yet been discovered in the area, though finds in the Scythian animal style were many.<sup>35</sup> The derivation of the Shensi vegetal scroll could only have been from the Hellenistic world. No Scythian source could have inspired its high degree of naturalism.<sup>36</sup> No new elements were introduced into the scroll pattern during the course of its development in Shensi, and the range of time during which the reliefs were produced must have been limited for they show a general stylistic unity. Most probably the evolution of the scroll pattern in Shensi was autonomous.

Many of the peculiar elements found on the Shensi reliefs must result from the remote geographical situation. The distance between main centres of Han civilization and this border outpost led to a weakening of native Chinese traditions and susceptibility to outside influences; witness the lack of Confucian subjects and the prevalence of such nomadic scenes as the hunt and the herdsman with his animals. Shensi thus produced a style of mixed origins quite distinctive from those in more civilized areas of the Han empire. What effect it may have had on work in other regions can not as yet be estimated. The neighbouring province of Shansi has had little excavation, and it is impossible to trace a possible migration of elements from northern Shensi to the east. Similarly, very little is known of the art of southern Shensi, so that relations with Honan and Ssuch'uan also remain to be established. It is to be hoped that the future will bring more archaeological finds to help in the study of these regional styles.

## NOTES

1. Shensi Provincial Museum, *Shen pei Tung-Han hua-hsiang-shib-k'e hsüan-chi*,<sup>aa</sup> Peking, 1958.
2. *K'ao ku t'ung hsün*<sup>bb</sup> (1955), no. 4, pp. 48-50, and no. 6, pp. 33-39.
3. *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 118 and 119.
4. The *Han shu*, *Shan hai ching*, *Feng shou t'ung i*, and *Han chiu i*<sup>cc</sup> all mention the custom of painting images of Sheng T'u and Yü Lei,<sup>dd</sup> two legendary demon quellers, on doors. The *Shib i chi*<sup>ee</sup> also gives a legendary origin to the bird as a protector against evil. For the derivation of the mask and ring design, see A. Salmony, "Le Mascaron et l'Anneau dans l'Art sur les Pendentifs et les Appliqués," *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, 8 (1954), pp. 182-186.
5. *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 106 and 107.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
7. The *pi hsieh* is mentioned in the biography of *Pan Ch'ao*<sup>ff</sup> in the *Hou Han shu*<sup>gg</sup> as having arrived in China, together with a lion, as tribute from Parthia. It is described in this account as resembling a female unicorn, but without horns. In a 12th century commentary on the dictionary, *Erb Ya i*,<sup>hh</sup> its form is likened to a stag with a long tail and one horn. The name itself signifies that it is an "avertor of evil." See B. Laufer, *Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty*, Leiden, 1909, p. 237. Schuyler V.R. Cammann further locates its ultimate origin in Persia and says that representations of it show a "cat-like" body embellished with wings and horns. See "The Lion and Grape Patterns on Chinese Bronze Mirrors," *Artibus Asiae*, 16 (1953), p. 270. The Shensi animal does not conform strictly to any of these descriptions but exhibits some features of each.
8. *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 47 and 48. Carl Hentze, in "Le Symbolisme des Oiseaux dans la Chine ancienne," *Sinologica*, 5 (1956-1958), pp. 148-149, demonstrates that the stag, and later the horse, is opposed to the ram as directional symbols of east and west.
9. Wilma Fairbank, "The Offering Shrines of 'Wu Liang Tz'u,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 6 (1941).
10. The *Po-shan* (being one of the Isles of the Blest), is imbued with connotations of immortality, and is thought to be located in the Eastern Sea. See B. Laufer, *op. cit.*, and note that the hill censers and jars described were all found in Shensi.
11. *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 94 and 97.
12. See B. Karlgren, "Legends and Cults in Ancient China," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 18 (1946), p. 269 for the formulation of the myth. R. Edwards, "The Caves at Ma Hao," *Artibus Asiae*, 17 (1954), pp. 187-195, discusses the heavenly horse as a solar symbol imbued with the *yang* element. Note also that this divine beast is said to travel to the gates of heaven which are placed in the north polar region.
13. *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 8 and 9.
14. *Ibid.*, figs. 18 and 19.
15. *Ibid.*, figs. 95, 96, and 102.
16. See Karlgren, *op. cit.*, p. 270-272, for her attributes. Also compare this composition to that of the Hsi Wang-mu on the famous lacquer plate of 69 A.D. which is very very similar; see Y. Harada, *Lo-Lang*, Tokyo, 1930, pl. 57.
17. *Shen pei . . .*, fig. 15.
18. See *Corpus des Pierres sculptées Han*, Peking, 1950, Vol. I, no. 11, and Vol. II, no. 195. The little boy is more easily explained as the grandson holding the wheeled litter, but the famous Wu stone clearly uses the same figures and has its subject identified by inscription.
19. See Richard C. Rudolph, *Han Tomb Art of West China*, Berkeley, 1951, pls. 40 and 41.
20. There is no literary source for a visit by *Tung Wang-kung* to *Hsi Wang-mu*. Therefore, it seems unlikely that a journey is shown in this relief, as the text, p. 29, suggested. Chou Mu wang<sup>ii</sup> is reputed to have called upon Hsi Wang-mu. There is no reason to identify the male figure with him, however.
21. Homer H. Dubbs, "An Ancient Chinese Mystery Cult," *Harvard Theological Review*, 35 (1942), and A. Bulling, "Die Kunst der Totenspiele in der östlichen Han Zeit," *Oriens Extremus*, 3 (1956), Heft 1, discuss the popularity of these deities.
22. B. Laufer, *Ancient Chinese Jades*, New York, 1927.
23. See Florence Waterbury, *Early Chinese Symbols and Literature: Vestiges and Speculations*, New York, 1942.
24. M. Rostovtzeff in his *Inlaid Bronzes of the Han Dynasty*, Paris, 1927, pp. 29, 44-45, suggests that the hunt motif represents "the chase in the Nether World," but gives no textual source for this interpretation. Note that the only bronze, a foot-measure, for which a definite origin is claimed, is said to have been found in the Yü-lin area of Shensi. See pl. XIII(1), p. 20. Hunts in landscape settings are most usual on pottery vessels and tiles from Shensi.
25. The same kind of edifice occurs on reliefs with the animal procession and a pastoral scene; see *Shen pei . . .*, figs. 7 and 11.
26. *Ibid.*, fig. 84.
27. *Ibid.*, fig. 11.
28. See *K'ao ku . . .* (1955), no. 2, pp. 12-16, for a study of this dance as it is represented in other reliefs. *Shen-pei . . .*, fig. 84.
29. Lien Sheng Yang, in "A Note on the So-called TLV Mirrors and the Game Liu-Po," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 9 (1947), and "An Additional Note on the Ancient Game Liu-Po," *Ibid.*, 15 (1952) shows that the game is concerned with divination.
30. *Shen pei . . .*, fig. 16, and 60.
31. Bo Gyllensvård, "T'ang Gold and Silver," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, 29 (1957), pp. 122-130.
32. See my article, "I-nan and Related Tombs," *Artibus Asiae*, 22 (1959), pp. 298-304, for a brief survey of how such devices are used to suggest spatial recession in Han reliefs and painting.
33. See *Corpus des Pierres . . .*, Vol. I, nos. 197, 198, 264, and 265, which are obviously related to the style of the Wu shrines, Vol. II, nos. 111 ff., and therefore must be placed in the second half of the 2nd century A.D.
34. Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 52-54.
35. For finds in the Scythian animal style, see M. Rostovtzeff, *The Animal Style in S. Russia and China*, Princeton, 1929, pp. 89, 111. A small nude figure with wings and necklace of beads, in bronze, was found near Sian, and greatly resembles a Greek *amorino*. Its general form and nudity indicate that it is either of foreign origin, or inspired by a foreign source. See *K'ao ku . . .* (1957), no. 4, p. 41.
36. Very little attention had been given to the development of the Greek and Roman scroll pattern at the time of M. Rostovtzeff's publication. Doro Levi, in *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, Princeton, 1957, pp. 489ff, surveys the transformation of motifs combining vegetal scrolls with animals from the Hellenistic through the Roman period in architectural ornament as well as mosaics. In his analysis, though the Hellenistic treatment is stylized in general scheme, it displays considerable veracity in the depiction of individual elements. A major change, beginning about the 1st century A.D., brought about freer and more flexible movement both in vine and animal. This continued into a concern for greater plastic and pictorial variation in the 3rd century A.D. The Shensi pattern is much closer to the Hellenistic than the Roman examples. When more is known of Greek textiles and metalwork, closer resemblances may be found.

## Chinese Characters

a	米脂，綏德
b	榆林祠
c	梁南碑
d	濟武碑
e	朱博碑
f	五半碑
g	朱辟碑
h	玄扶碑
i	西原碑
j	東銜賦
k	王母碑
l	穀公碑
m	璧賦

r	博皇始軻德開祥
s	皇元明
t	始軻德開祥
u	嘉
v	嘉
w	嘉
x	嘉

aa	陝北漢畫象石刻選集
bb	考古通訓
cc	漢書，山海經，風俗通儀，漢舊儀
dd	神荼郁壘
ee	拾遺記傳書
ff	班超傳書
gg	漢雅移
hh	爾雅
ii	周易