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Didactic Art in Han China

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As is usual in texts which were composed more as panegyrics than as strict historical records, the epitaph inscription for Wu Liang 武梁, who died at the age of 74 in A.D. 151, tells of his virtues and his qualities as a scholar. But in common with a number of famous men of ability and learning of his time, such as Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139), Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) or Wang Fu 王符 (*c.* 90–165), Wu Liang showed a persistent reluctance to serve in an official capacity, preferring to devote himself to a study of history and philosophy. In all probability he felt, like the others, that in the prevailing political circumstances, it was not possible both to embark on an official career and to retain a measure of personal integrity. Be that as it may, other members of his family evidently felt no such scruples; his nephew Wu Ban 武斑, for example, was appointed to be chief clerk at Dunhuang.

Before his death, Wu Liang had collaborated with his three brothers in the work of erecting a memorial shrine for their mother, who had died in 145. When his own turn came, his three sons and one grandson together saw to it that a suitable shrine, built with stone of the best quality, was constructed and dedicated to his memory. There now survive parts of no less than four shrines that had formed the large complex that eventually took shape. These are by no means the only examples of the small memorial edifices that were set up in the Later Han period for religious purposes, mainly in Eastern China; that they have nevertheless drawn the attention and interest of antiquarians, scholars and art historians since the time of Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) is perhaps due to the unique nature of the monument. For a very high proportion of the stone slabs with which the shrines had been constructed had been carved in low relief with a rich series of sculptured figures and scenes, many with inscriptions that identify the subject that was depicted. Comparable examples may well indeed have been constructed, but they have yet to be found; and the series of carvings at the Wu Liang Ci is of unparalleled size and complexity.

In studying the scenes and their inscriptions, scholars of the Song period worked largely from rubbings. They were interested more in the texts that accompanied the carvings than in their subjects or artistic merits; and they included facsimiles of some of the rubbings in the catalogues which they were beginning to have printed. Some centuries later, in one of the first planned exercises in antiquarianism or even archaeology, Huang Yi 黃易 had a special hall built in which the slabs could be preserved. This was in 1787, and the 39 pieces that had been available to Huang Yi were later supplemented by other pieces that could

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be identified as belonging to the same set of monuments. Many of the inscriptions and sculptures were included in the fine catalogue of stones and bronzes published by the two Feng 馮 brothers, in 1821.

More recently still, attention has been paid to other aspects of the stones than their value as epitaph inscriptions or funerary monuments. Édouard Chavannes was the first western scholar to bring them to the attention of the west. In works which were published in 1893 and 1913, he attempted to relate their subjects to literary references. Writing in 1941, Wilma Fairbank, who had been able to inspect the stones personally, examined the construction and artistic aspects of the stones, and succeeded in reconstructing the original positions that they had occupied in the building. Other scholars involved in this type of work included Sekino Tei 關野貞. Even more recently, scholars such as Soper and Powers have been subjecting the whole complex to the canons of art criticism, within their historical setting. Wu Hung's recent monograph[1] is the most complete work to be devoted exclusively to the monument, in an examination of its religious purpose, its place in art history and its function in social terms. His argument is supported by reference to earlier studies of the subject, and by extensive citations from Han and other literature; and he has been able to call on a whole corpus of material which has been excavated in recent years, and which makes it possible to distinguish chronological and regional developments far more accurately than previously. A lengthy appendix sets out a study of the textual inscriptions and relates their themes and their wording to literary sources.

Interpretations of the figures and scenes of the carvings hitherto have depended on a variety of attitudes. Some specialists have sought to associate them with the career of the deceased person whom the monument commemorates; some have seen symbolical portrayals of the virtues of emperors or historical heroes; others have recognised reminders of major events of state, such as the annual Great Exorcism or rituals of purification (e.g. Berger). Yet others interpret the scenes in terms of their value as symbols designed to assert social superiority; other scholars such as Cheng Te-k'un have looked to the intellectual background, or to the social and economic conditions for reasons why the particular subjects were chosen for reproduction, on a material that was intended to be permanent. In concluding that the design of the monument was the work of the deceased man himself, and that it was intended as a purview of the history of human development as this had worked out within a cosmic context, Wu Hung maintains that the result forms "an epic representation of human thought, comparable to the Sistine Chapel and Chartres Cathedral" (p. 70).

As with some of the interpretations of the famous funerary banner from Mawangdui, of 168 B.C., so here the motifs are regarded as forming three parts, being concerned in this case with heaven, paradise and the human world. Possibly, in both instances, such a rigid distinction should not be pressed too far, in view of the underlying belief of the time in the unitary character of the universe; and in the case of Mawangdui such a strict division would raise a number of questions. But certainly distinctions of motif may indeed be

[1] Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: the Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art*, pp. xxiii, 412, 151 figs, map. Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, 1989. US $60.00.

recognised in the Wu Liang Ci. The vault, or ceiling, was decorated with a whole set of omens, mainly auspicious but in some cases inauspicious. It is suggested that the source for the illustrations of the auspicious omens may have been found in some of the *rui tu* 瑞圖, now lost, but known to have been available for consultation in Han times; and some of the subjects of the inauspicious omens may be traced to passages in one of the earlier parts of the *Shanhai jing*. From a large number of subjects which might have been chosen for the purpose, the designer of the monument chose those which could be seen as proving the legitimacy of Han's right to rule. It is suggested that Wu Liang himself, who is known to have paid attention to some aspects of the occult, may well have selected the subjects personally, in accordance with the *Jin wen* school with which he was well versed. As a man who had opted out of office at a time of general corruption, he had deliberately chosen to display a set of warnings, by way of criticism of public life and its iniquities.

The main scenes that are depicted in the gables of the monument are those of the Queen Mother of the West, with some, but by no means all, of her attributes. The author traces the development of the portrayal of the Queen, from the tomb of Bu Qianqiu 卜千秋 (first century B.C.), the carvings at Xiaotangshan 孝堂山 (first century A.D.) to those at the Wu Liang Ci. He believes that the dominant characteristic of the Queen was that of a representative symbol for Yin; and that this is complemented at the Wu Liang Ci by a figure that is identified as the Ji 箕 star, which stands for Yang. This combination follows that of Nü Wa 女媧 and Fu Xi 伏犧, who appeared as symbols of partnership in Western Han; and it precedes the emergence of that of the Queen with Dong Wang Gong 東王公.

On the basis of the considerable evidence on which he calls, Wu Hung insists, quite rightly, on the separate nature in Western Han of the two myths of the Queen and of Kunlun; and he traces the connection between the two, and its impact on the cult of immortality. He also discusses the role played by the Queen as a protective figure in popular religion, possibly with the help of shamanist practice; and he believes that it is possible to distinguish between two major ways in which the Queen and the cult were depicted. In one, the earlier, the treatment is episodic and dynamic, showing pilgrims engaged in worship or prayers for the Queen's gifts; in the other form of treatment, which is iconic and static, the Queen is centred as a focus of worship, flanked by other persons; and he believes that the emergence of the new style owed its origin to Buddhist influence and forms of Buddhist worship that were being introduced and practised during Eastern Han.

The walls of the shrine carry a series of figures that are set out in horizontal registers, which should be followed in deliberate order from right to left, and in descending order of the lines. In this way they will be taken in chronological sequence. As with the omens that are depicted on the vault, these figures are likewise identified by descriptive labels, inscribed within a cartouche. The figures include sovereigns of the pre-historical, or mytho-historical ages; eminent women, virtuous men and loyal subjects. By exception, the central scene that forms the focus for all observers is not identified by label. It includes a pavilion and tree by its side, with all figures converging on the central personage, and thereby enacting an abstract idea of sovereignty.

The author sees the choice of mythical and historical personages that are depicted as reflecting the same attitude to history as that of Sima Qian, whose influence he believes to be detectable. In analysing the eleven figures of the rulers of mankind, he shows how a distinction into three groups is suggested by the choice of robes and types of gesture. He interprets the series of scenes as an attempt to show the development of man from a state of barbarism to one of civilisation, with the help of culture heroes and thanks to the introduction of forms of leadership or kingship. He further interprets the 33 figures of eminent women, virtuous men and loyal subjects as representing the social and ethical relationships that derived from the "Three bonds" (*san gang* 三綱), whose significance had been stressed by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 and others. These concerned the duties between ruler and subject, father and son and husband and wife.

The figures of the eminent women, known for their specific moral virtues, may be related to works of literature. Some may be identified as subjects treated in the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳; some may be related to references to portraiture of women in the histories, or even to a very few surviving examples of painting from Northern Wei and Tang. The motives for their inclusion are purely moralistic, as are those which governed the choice of figures well-known for their *xiao* 孝 or other ethical ideals. Some of the figures in the stones are of historical personages of Eastern Zhou, selected to illustrate the performance of the proper duties of a minister of state; and examples of just such portraiture were known during the Han period. The central pavilion scene and its tree have been interpreted in various ways. The author explains it as an example of an early format used to depict emperors, which can be seen in later works, such as those of Yan Liben 閻立本 (seventh century); on the walls of the Wu Liang Ci, the format was used to depict one of the Han emperors.

This scene of homage perhaps derived from the practice of erecting large numbers of shrines to the memory of the emperors and their kin. Possibly paintings were included therein which, in the early stages, would have been on wooden, and therefore perishable, surfaces; in the present instance they were engraved on the more durable medium of stone. The frequency of these scenes of homage on a large number of monuments in Shandong is explained as being due to the proximity of the family home of the Liu house, at Peixian 沛縣.

Finally, the carvings include a scene in which a retired gentleman, being driven in a carriage, is being greeted with the respect that is evidently his due. This is interpreted by Wu Hung as a self-portrait of Wu Liang, the countryman who refused calls to office in order to retain his integrity. The scene thereby takes its place in the whole assembly of personages, ranging from the time of Nü Wa and Fu Xi down to the present, and intended to exemplify the Confucian ideals of service that Wu Liang espoused. It was Wu Liang himself who designed the monument; his choice and arrangement of subjects was a means of expressing his own sense of mission and duty.

The shrine was built as an abode for the *hun* 魂 of the deceased person, and may be contrasted with the banner from Mawangdui, which was intended as a means of conveying the soul away from the tomb. As perhaps the earliest example that can be identified of an individual artist's personal design, the shrines should be set against the

contemporary practice, for which there is plenty of evidence, whereby funerals were marked by opulence, in an attempt to enhance social status or to demonstrate the extent of a family's material wealth. So far from being an exercise in social climbing, the Wu Liang Ci were intended to inculcate Confucian virtues such as that of *xiao*, at a time when such ideals were more clearly obvious in the breach than in the observance.

The following remarks may be added by way of comment to Wu Hung's clear exposition that is summarised above.

(1) *Engraved designs and their purpose*

As far as may be told there are few, if any, examples of stone engravings of figures or scenes of activity which are to be dated for certainty before the later Han period; and indeed epitaph inscriptions, in text, are far from frequent before then. Possibly wood may have served as a medium for decorative representations to be placed within a devotional shrine, but no examples survive. In any event, the stone engravings of Later Han must be distinguished from the very few examples of paintings which were executed in silk and which date from the Zhanguo or Former Han periods. For while these were evidently intended as talismans to bring relief or to provide an escort for the soul of the deceased person, different motives lay behind the stone engravings or designs on brick of the Later Han period.

In very general terms three principal styles may be distinguished among the stone engravings of Later Han, deriving from Sichuan, Nanyang and Shandong respectively. In all three types, the subjects include religious motifs, episodes of history or mythical history and scenes of everyday life. In both Sichuan and Nanyang they are treated in a far more lively and dynamic fashion than in Shandong; and it is within the context of the work of the artists of Shandong that the scenes and subjects of the Wu Liang Ci must be set.

Very few of the examples from Shandong succeed in portraying movement in a lively or vivid manner. The medium of low relief, as used here, lends itself to static rather than to dynamic treatment; relatively few subjects were chosen for depiction; and as many of the scenes (e.g. of a banquet, or a team of horses and carriages) recur with little variation, the results often appear to be dull or flat, as compared with the energetic movements depicted by the artists of other regions.

The prime purpose of the carvings from Shandong in general, and Wu Liang Ci in particular, was didactic. They can hardly be judged as works of art made for beauty's sake, or as attempts to capture the more permanent aspects of a fleeting moment and hold it for eternity. The major themes or groups of subject, of the omens of heaven, the worship of the Queen Mother of the West, the rendering of service and the practice of sovereignty must be considered in the light of the political and social climate of the second century; the intellectual trends of the times; and the prevailing contradiction between an ostentatious attention to Confucian doctrine and the purposeful, or even unscrupulous, practices of those who sought to exercise power.

The failure of the Confucian ethic that forms part of the background of the Wu Liang Ci engravings had followed deep and irreconcilable changes of religious and intellectual

outlook, as compared with Former Han.[2] The work of the artists here is to be judged as an example of didactic art born from the imposition of a purposeful intellect on convictions that sprang from faith. Such a process, so far from being unique, had been occurring in other respects, such as the ceremonies to invoke rain or the approved means of conducting divination. Two fundamental questions arise in respect of art produced in this way.

It may be asked how far the observers for whose benefit the scenes were engraved were familiar with their subjects and their implications. The evident need to identify many of them by means of written inscriptions might suggest that, so far from being symbols of a living belief, many of the scenes or objects may have been unrecognisable to the beholder. Intellectual persuasion or demonstration was taking the place of immediate and unmistakeable reference to religious experience or heartfelt emotion.

In the second place, but perhaps of wider significance, it may be asked what type of aesthetic appreciation may be seen in the Han outlook on life, and what evidence may be cited to show how artists were endeavouring to create work simply as an expression of beauty. The same question also applies to some of the characteristic creations of the Han men of letters, i.e. the *fu* 賦, with their inbuilt purposes of either pleasing a patron or criticising a practice thought to be unjust. While the Nineteen Old Poems may well be seen as attempts to express emotion recollected in tranquillity, those *fu* that describe the glories, or protest against the extravagances of the imperial city or the joys of an imperial hunt must be judged on other grounds, such as the value or success of their didactic criticism.

(2) *The political background*

The record of the *Hou Han shu* for the middle part of the second century hardly makes pretty reading; and even when due allowance is made for the bias of the writers, it must be recognised that the times were marked by political instability, social corruption and a violence born of ambition. Full accounts of this period of history are available easily enough, thanks to the work of Professor Bielenstein and others. It is sufficient here to note, by way of recapitulation, that the seven years which preceded Wu Liang's death in 151 had witnessed incidents such as the desecration of Shundi's tomb, a mere few months after that emperor's death in 144; the rise of a number of self-styled "emperors" between then and 150; outbreaks of rebel activity in Yangzhou and Xuzhou; and a raid mounted by the Xianbi peoples. Meanwhile real power was being exercised by the Liang family, and the imperial succession had been subject to manipulation. Two infants, known as Chongdi and Zhidi, had each been enthroned for a few months, following Shundi's death and before the accession of Huandi, as yet under age, in August 146. The low point to which the imperial personage had been reduced had by no means been left unnoticed. When Liu Tao 劉陶, a student at the Imperial Academy, was bold enough to comment on the state of affairs in writing (155), he knew that his protest would be ignored.[3]

[2] See Michael Loewe, "The failure of the Confucian ethic in later Han times", forthcoming in Peter M. Kuhfus (ed.), *China: Dimensionen der Geschichte. Festschrift für Tielmann Grimm anlässlich seiner Emeritierung* (Tübingen, 1990).

[3] *Hou Han shu* (Peking, 1965), pp. 1843f.

(3) *Intellectual and religious change*

As compared with the days of Dong Zhongshu (?179–?104 B.C.) whose memorials had pointed the way to new concepts of imperial sovereignty, a number of changes had transformed the religious and intellectual face of China. Much had been done to engender and strengthen the scholastic tradition, now marked more by the practical down-to-earth exegesis of the *Guwen* school than by the mystical inclinations of the *Jinwen* commentators. Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) and Wang Chong 王充 (27–*c.* 100) had expressed their forceful protests against the blind acceptance of some of the more fanciful interpretations of scriptural texts and natural phenomena. The assembly and catalogue of books for the imperial collection which had been made by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. A.D. 23) had resulted in an orderly idea of the literature of the day and laid the foundation for a systematic classification of Chinese thought. Astronomical calculation had developed a new degree of accuracy; new ideas were being accepted regarding the shape of the universe and the place of the earth therein.

In terms of religious belief and practice, the prevailing hope of achieving life everlasting now focused on the Queen's Paradise of the West, rather than the route through the Blessed Isles of Penglai 蓬萊 in the East. The imperial cult of worshipping Tian and the ascription of the emperor's position to Tian's specific charge had been invoked after some centuries in which these ideas had been in eclipse. In political terms they accompanied the adoption of the kings and institutions of Zhou as the ideals to which Han emperors and officials would look, in place of the material success and military strength of Qin to which the founding rulers of Han had sought to be heirs. Buddhism had reached China by the time when the Wu Liang shrines were being erected; Daoist religious leaders and communities were about to emerge.

Many of these developments had resulted from long drawn-out processes, that may have lasted for several centuries. By the time of the Wu Liang shrines they had reached fruition and were exercising a commanding influence on the way in which political ideas were being expressed or officials and others were seeking to assert their claim to be conforming with approved standards of private and public conduct. Simultaneously intellectual change was influencing art forms and styles no less than political circumstance or social ambition were doing so, and it is possible to interpret the carvings of the Wu Liang monument in terms of a reaction. Rather than explain its main themes within the three categories of heaven, paradise and the human world, it is perhaps possible to go a little further than Wu Hung and to see them as exemplifying the three principal lessons that Dong Zhongshu had sought to link together, i.e. the inescapable part of imperial sovereignty within the operation of the universe; the essential link between Heaven's messages and the conduct of government; and the overall value of the ethical ideals preached by Kong Fuzi and his immediate followers.

In designing the monument, Wu Liang or his artist was appealing to the values of Dong Zhongshu's message, at a time when it had been forgotten. As against the current tendency to follow the *Guwen* line of thought, the monument was stressing the importance placed

on omens in the world of *Jinwen* belief; for it was clear that those who dominated public life needed a reminder that political power carried responsibility no less than privilege. The designs of the Wu Liang shrines and their purpose form a conspicuous contrast with many others from Shandong, which concentrate on a display of material wealth in order to proclaim the social superiority of the deceased person and his clan.

A further contrast may be seen in the evident need to identify so many of the omens in writing; elsewhere there are found spontaneous displays of other symbols whose meaning was evidently recognisable immediately (e.g. the goat's head, painted or carved, as a means of conveying good fortune). However, overt identification of a theme is not as isolated as might at first appear to be the case. The figures on the periphery of the Chu Silk Manuscript (of *c.* 350 B.C.) likewise bear labels, as do the pictures of comets or climatic phenomena of the large silk manuscript from Mawangdui (*c.* 168 B.C.). It may even be suggested that parts of the formulae inscribed on mirrors, such as those of TLV pattern, should also be regarded as a means of identification of the symbols reproduced thereon. It cannot thus necessarily be assumed that the addition of labels to the objects and figures at the Wu Liang shrines must betray the need to counter an ignorance of their symbolical significance. An open question nonetheless remains. Such labels were of no use to the illiterate; but if anyone could be expected to read them, he could also be expected to be familiar with their subjects and to have no need of guidance. We cannot say for certain for whose benefit these descriptive captions were engraved.

(4) *The Queen Mother of the West*

The decorative scenes of the gables are interpreted as portraying the Queen Mother of the West with some of her attributes.[4] According to Wu Hung, the east is symbolised by the Ji 箕 star, Lord of the winds; but it may perhaps be questioned whether this identity, and that figure's association with Yang, is necessarily proven. In so far as the Wu Liang shrines bear a distinct date, of 151, they serve a highly valuable purpose in tracing the iconography of the Queen Mother. There are indeed other clues to this development than the portrayals at Bu Qianqiu's tomb and in the Xiaotang Shan shrine. Unfortunately the famous brick from Sichuan, replete with all the symbols and emblems, fully developed, is of undetermined date. The Queen and her partner appear together on a number of bronze mirrors, which include some genuine examples dated from A.D. 160 (with possibly one example from 105). The only two genuine TLV mirrors whose inscriptions mention the Queen are probably of this somewhat late date. A small screen of jade (from Hebei) in which the two figures are shown is to be dated after A.D. 174; and the famous figures from the tomb at Yinan 沂南 are later.

In this connection a word of caution is perhaps necessary. The author cites, and reproduces in part, a mirror whose decor includes an incomplete version of the Queen and her emblems; and he dates it at A.D. 8. The inscription in fact mentions the year which corresponded to A.D. 10; but there are so many errors and inconsistencies in the

[4] For a recent study of the Queen Mother and her iconography, see Hayashi Minao 林巳奈, *Kan dai no kamigami* 漢代の神神 (Kyoto, 1990), pp. 97–126.

iconography of the mirror, that there can be little doubt that it was of far later manufacture, being made in the hope of claiming great value as a particularly early example of a Han mirror.[5]

It may perhaps be added that some scenes of Han art may conceivably call for interpretation as a series of actions in which a figure, or set of figures, is depicted in a succession of postures or positions, thus illustrating a process of movement. This treatment may be seen on a representation of a scene of worship and arrival in the world to come that was found at Yingchengzi 營城子 (north-east China); it is open to question whether some of the portrayals of the Queen Mother of the West should be interpreted in this way (e.g. on the stone from Jiaxiang 嘉祥 which is reproduced as fig. 47 in Wu Hung's volume). Such considerations may have a bearing on the distinction that is drawn between an episodic and an iconic treatment of the subject.

The stages whereby the myth of the Queen Mother was handled in itself forms an excellent example of a process which is seen elsewhere; a figure of worship was transformed into a symbol that did duty for intellectual theory. Being provided with a partner for this purpose, a goddess became a figure of Yin, duly matched by one for Yang. Such a process, in which intellectual or theoretical considerations are imposed on beliefs or practices that were originally acts of faith is witnessed elsewhere, e.g. in the formulation of prayers and ceremonies to invoke rain, the conduct of rites of divination, and the reliance on instruments (*Kanyu* 堪輿) almanacs or catalogues (e.g. from Shuihudi 睡虎地) to serve a purpose hitherto met by the visionary seer.

(5) *The leaders of mankind in myth and history*

In discussing the choice of historical and other personages whose figures were engraved on the stones, Wu Hung writes (p. 155): "Because of the same concern for space, the history of the Three Dynasties is represented only by the Xia, the first dynasty in Chinese history; the existence of the Shang and Zhou is explicit. This pattern is repeated at another level: the Xia dynasty is represented only by its founder, Yu, and the last king, Jie".

This view deserves comment. At a time when the Zhou dynasty was taking pride of place in so many statements of political ideals, it is odd that those kings should be entirely unrepresented, even though the space available to the engraver was limited. What is even more odd is that, at a time when one of the main points of protest may well have centred around the conduct of the Han regency, there is no representation of that famous scene, in which the Duke of Zhou showed to all subsequent generations how selflessly a true regent would behave. The scene is by no means lacking in other examples of Han art.[6]

[5] For representations of the Queen on Han mirrors, see Michael Loewe, *Ways to Paradise: the Chinese Quest for Immortality* (London, 1979), pp. 101, 151, notes 74, 75, 163, 168 and 186, *s.v.* X 1004. A photograph of that mirror appears in *Shodô zenshû* 書道全集 vol. 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1958) no. 29. Its features differ from those of regular TLV mirrors of Wang Mang's time in the following respects: the centre is circular rather than square; there are 7 in place of 12 central bosses; the TLV lines are incomplete, with no Ls; there is no representation of the animal symbols of the four *shen*; only one side of the Queen Mother's *sheng* is depicted; the outer inscription is in archaised style, rather than the usual *li shu*; and the inscription reads in an anti-clockwise direction. In addition, specification of a particular year is highly suspect.

[6] E.g. see no. 182, from Jiaxiang嘉祥, in Shandong bowuguan and Shandong wenwu kaogu yanjiuso (ed.), *Shandong Han hua xiangshi xuanji* 山東漢畫像石選集 (Qilu she, 1982).

(6) *The scene of homage*

The interpretation of the central focal point of the gables as a scene of homage that was being rendered to a Han emperor is highly consistent with the view that one of the intentions of the monument was to evoke a proper respect for imperial sovereignty. It was during the first century of Later Han that the concept of imperial sovereignty became fully linked with the authority of heaven. Already in Former Han there had been a move to strengthen the imperial cult of worship to Tian, and some officials had been referring to the *Tian ming* during the last few decades of Former Han. But it was not until Later Han, thanks partly to Wang Mang's example, that the link was finally accepted.

Certainly the provision for worship at the imperial shrines had been subject to reduction during Yuandi's reign (49–33 B.C.); but these changes had been introduced solely as a measure of economy, along with a number of other bans on extravagance. While worship of Tian was restricted to the emperor alone, it had been only right that members of the lower social orders should show their loyalty by devotion to memorial shrines of their emperors, both in the capital city and in the provinces; but with the growth of the imperial family the expense of maintaining the necessary services and offerings had proved prohibitive. It can easily be understood that a critic of Later Han times who was nostalgic for an earlier and somewhat discarded practice of imperial sovereignty would choose to show the observers of his monument that he himself knew where loyalty was due.

Wu Hung's study of the Wu Liang shrines marks a new stage in bringing the major themes of the engravings to notice and in supporting their interpretation from the primary sources of the Chinese traditions. It will not detract from the appreciation that the book so richly deserves to raise a few questions of detail.

(a) p. 73; it is possible to interpret the expression *Ren huang jiu tou* 人皇九頭 not as the "Nine Rulers", but as the "Sovereign of mankind with his nine heads"; this description appears in the *Shiyiji* 拾遺記, late as that text is.

(b) p. 79; one of the figures in the mural from Wangdu is described as a rabbit. Probably this should be identified as a hare, as is correctly recognised in other contexts (e.g. pp. 112, 116f.). The distinction needs to be maintained, in view of the physiological differences of the two animals, and the part played by the hare in the mythology of both China and other cultures.

(c) p. 99, and elsewhere; references are made to the *Chunqiu fanlu*, without the *caveat* that parts of that work can hardly derive from Dong Zhongshu's own times.

(d) p. 102; Dong Zhongshu never held a post higher than that of chancellor (*xiang* 相) of the kingdom of Jiangdu 江都.

(e) pp. 104, 240; reference to a *bi* 壁 of glass, rather than jade, requires support, in view of the comparative ignorance of the appearance of glass in Han times.

(f) p. 112; the assumption that Yin and Yang are symbolised by the moon and the sun in the famous banner from Mawangdui should perhaps be treated with caution. Although the fusion of the *wu xing* and Yin Yang modes of thought may well be dated to the *Zhanguo* period, some centuries elapsed before Yin Yang appears for certain in

iconography. While the banner of Mawangdui is dated at before 168 B.C., the earliest known example of *wu xing* iconography is perhaps to be found in the pediment of the tomb now in Luoyang central park, of ?*c.* 50 B.C.

(g) pp. 123, 130; references to the *Yi lin* 易林 require at least a note regarding the doubts that have been cast on the date of the composition of the received text.

(h) p. 125; the reference to Kunlun is to be found in the *Han shu* and not the *Hou Han shu*.

(i) pp. 156f.; it is perhaps relevant to note that a much earlier example of the portrayal of sovereigns was evidently found at Mawangdui; this has been described as *Jiu zhu tu* 九主圖.