



Glimpses of a Remote Epoch

HAN TOMB ART OF WEST CHINA.

By Richard C. Rudolph and Wen Yu. Berkeley: University of California Press. 100 pp. \$8.50.

By HORACE H. F. PAYNE

WAR, with its quick creation of rubble piles and scattered potsherds is more often the ally of future generations of archeologists than of those of the present. Yet it must be recognized that on occasion the frontiers of archeology have been notably advanced as a by-product of man's conflicts. Egyptology is, of course, the classic example, for had it not been for Napoleon's campaigns in the valley of the Nile, this branch of the dusty science might well still be in its infancy.

The present volume on Han Tomb Art of West China provides another example, of less magnitude perhaps, but nonetheless possessing creditable brilliance. Had not the Sino-Japanese war forced many fine scholars to take refuge in the westerly province of Szechuan, our knowledge of the antiquities of the ancient kingdom of Shu would have remained confined to a few passing references in travelers' books and general archeological surveys. But it turned out that many a competent student of antiquity found a haven in the pleasant but rather inaccessible provincial capital of Chengtu—the Peking of West China—or in its neighborhood, and some of these with alert minds and energetic natures banded together to undertake a surprising number of fruitful studies in this archeologically rich area. Tombs were excavated ranging in date from Han through the Tang and Sung dynasties.

The Han Dynasty tomb carvings of about 200 A.D. particularly received

early attention, partly because there were so many of them and partly because their existence had already been reported due to the marked resemblances they bore to the better known and more fully studied Wu Family tombs of this same epoch in Shantung province, a thousand miles to the northeast. Although, as Dr. Rudolph says, and this reviewer can attest, similar reliefs are found in hundreds—if not thousands—of artificial caves carved by men in the red sandstone cliffs of this region, the authors have confined their studies in the present work chiefly to two groups of caves along the Min river, with the addition of a few other examples from neighboring sites.

This would seem to indicate plenty of more work for future archeological recorders. Nevertheless, the seventy-five reliefs so thoroughly studied and documented here probably give us a reasonably complete idea of the general artistic style of Han tomb decoration in this region—a style much simpler and freer than that of the Shantung reliefs—as well as a general pattern for the architectural features employed by the tomb designers of the ancient kingdom of Shu.

The last quarter of this well organized and designed volume is devoted to a study of the closely related decorated clay tomb tiles that come from this same region. No tile work of this or any other period in Chinese art has ever equalled the uncommonly vivacious quality depicted on the larger examples illustrated. The animated scenes thereon of hunting and fishing and husbandry, of feasting and juggling and dancing seem like peeks through a tiny crack in Time's door which give bright glimpses of how the Chinese gentry of that remote epoch lived and dressed and pleased themselves. To encounter this section at the end of this eminently scholarly work is like being served a piquant relish at the end of an admirable dinner.

Horace H. F. Payne, who has been a member of several archeological expeditions to China, is chief of the Chinese Unit of the Voice of America.

A Neglected Field

THE ART OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN. Edited by Sir Leigh Ashton. New York: Coward-McCann. 270 pp. \$15.

By DOROTHY NORMAN

IN EARLIER ages, those who invaded India both enriched her arts and were enriched by them. Whereas, under British rule, it so happened that Indians became not only increasingly apologetic about their own cultural heritage; they even began to turn their backs upon it. And the British artists who came to India—mainly to paint—were themselves almost totally uninfluenced by the Indian art they found.

It was not, in fact, until Tagore and Gandhi exhorted their countrymen to cast aside self-contempt and fear—and to believe in themselves—that India's interest in her own rich tradition began to revive. Which makes it rather doubly ironic that it should have been precisely the British who, in 1947-48—just as India had gained her freedom—assembled at the Royal Academy in London the most comprehensive exhibition of Indian art ever to be held; and that so large a number of the pieces exhibited should have been "loaned" by the British King, Queen Mary, "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom," and the Victoria and Albert Museum of London.

The handsome commemorative volume for the recent British exhibit has been prepared with the utmost care by such distinguished British authorities as Sir Leigh Ashton, F.S.A.; Professor K. de B. Codrington of London University; John Irwin, Assistant Keeper of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum; and Basil Gray, Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum.

The scope of the catalogue is necessarily vast, covering as it does Indian sculpture from the third millennium B.C. to the nineteenth century A.D., and paintings from the medieval period (beginning in the eleventh century) to the seventeenth century A.D. Moreover, since preoccupation with the arts has played so vital a role in the everyday life of India as a whole, it is particularly satisfying that a major section of the London exhibi-

Dorothy Norman, editor of a number of volumes on the fine arts including "Art and Action" and "The Selected Writings of John Marin," recently made an extensive trip to India.

tion, as well as the catalogue, should have been devoted to Indian textiles, jewelry, jade, crystal and glass, furniture, peasant embroideries, carpets and hangings, saris, court dress, and arms and armor. It is notable also that since the exhibition provided so rich an opportunity to view what was shown with fresh perspective, those associated with it should so brilliantly have utilized the opportunity offered them. Indeed, one can be only grateful that there now exists this new and orderly presentation of such widely varied and relatively little publicized material.

One cannot help but regret, however, that, despite Codrington's excellent introduction concerning Indian sculpture, a greater effort was not made to relate the meaning of the major works of Hindu—including Buddhist—art to that of the temples from which they have been taken. For, in order properly to be seen or understood, these works must be viewed in relationship to the meaning of the structures they originally adorned, and of which they were an integral part—not only architecturally but conceptually as well. Surely to continue to consider them as isolated entities is to continue to consider them falsely.

Perhaps the most notable contribution to the catalogue has been provided by Basil Gray, whose introduction concerning Indian painting is exceptionally perceptive, the reproductions of Orissan, Rajasthani, Pahari, Mughal, Deccani, and other miscellaneous paintings being both well organized and representative.

A helpful list of books, as well as a careful bibliography, concordance, glossary, and index are included. The black and white photographs are well reproduced; unhappily the color plates of paintings leave much to be desired. But the fact that the two Governments of Britain and India—in the face of overwhelming difficulties—should have made the Royal Academy exhibition possible to begin with, deserves only the greatest praise, as does the permanent record that has now been made of what was shown.

It can only be hoped that, as a result of the publication of such a volume, as Professor Codrington suggests, a fresh "historical basis for the appreciation of art will be felt to be desirable," and that the West will finally cease to behave as though its "cultural inheritance" descends only from a "happy conjunction of Greek thought and Christianity." It would be equally beneficial for the world at large if only, now that India is free, her arts—in addition to her folk arts that have never entirely disappeared—could flourish once more.

For Decor & Warmth

THE MODE IN FURS: The History of Furred Costume of the World from the Earliest Times to the Present. By R. Turner Wilcox. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 257 pp. \$5.

By MILLIA DAVENPORT

THIS is the fourth in a series of books on costume, hats and head-dresses, and shoes, for which Mrs. Wilcox has made 3,780 line drawings. As it happens, Mrs. Wilcox's books, though by no means the worst of their kind, represent the kind of costume book I despise.

If I may paraphrase my own beliefs and prejudices from a book introduction written long ago:

(1) Costume books illustrated by the author are usually to be deplored, and most of them are terrible.

(2) To my mind, the best book is the one with the most pictures, all of them contemporary documents, with

(3) the physical location or source of every picture, manuscript number, date, name of artist and subject, wherever possible, to aid search for similar material or colored reproductions. A text based on contemporary writers, with chapter and verse given, is also preferable.

It is almost impossible to redraw (even with the most laudable intentions of clarification) without falsifying another age in terms of one's own. Redrawn illustrations seem to me inexcusable in the age of photo-engraving. The amount of collateral information you absorb, as you get facts from documentary illustrations, more than repays the extra effort which may be required. This was dramatized for me, long ago, by a Japanese artist, a disciplined and exquisite draughtsman, who committed suicide in despair over his inability to eliminate from his work in New York all trace of his Oriental origin.

Mine is frankly the gospel according to SS. Leloir, Von Boehn, D'Allemagne, and Kelly and Schwabe, with such minor saints as H. K. Morse and Piton. Almost the only redrawings to which it is hard to take exception are the line drawings of details by Randolph Schwabe, Slade Professor of Art at London University, which supplement documentary plates in his and F. W. Kelly's admirable works on costume and armor.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Wilcox is no Professor Schwabe. Her drawing is

Millia Davenport is the author of "The Book of Costume."

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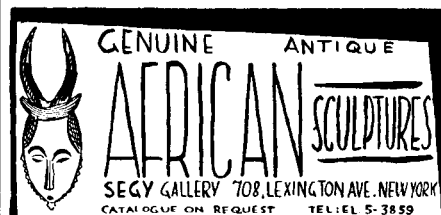
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