CHINA'S ANCIENT CAVE TEMPLES
SUI DYNASTY CLIFF AND CAVE SCULPTURES IN SHANTUNG

BY
MARY AUGUSTA MILLIKIN

Tsi-nan Fu and its neighbourhood offer a rare opportunity to contrast the sculptured art of the wholly Chinese Han Dynasty with the Buddhist-inspired sculptures of the Wei and Sui Dynasties. In the Provincial Library at Tsi-nan Fu are to be seen the Han Dynasty tomb reliefs wisely assembled there from their original sites in outlying inaccessible and not easily protected districts. Only by studying this unique collection, compact with unrivalled riches, may one fully grasp the extent and meaning of Han art, which is based on ancestral worship, yet gives a lively presentation of Chinese life in those times. It is essentially an animate and mundane art, in spite of the flights of angels and dragons in its stony skies. Yet one has only to wander forth to the surrounding hills of Tsi-nan to see a very different art, carved in cliff and cave, under the inspiration of Buddhism, in the Sui Dynasty (A.D. 590-618). At Ch'ien Fu Shan and K'ai Yüin Ssu the remains are mediocre, weathered and repainted. In the caves at Lung Tung grandiose and shadowy figures tower impressively, the strata of the rock dividing them into strangely modern cubist sections. In these motionless figures we read the contemplative ideal of Buddhism and its divorce from worldly and material subjects, such as the Han palace and battle scenes. Nor is it surprising that Buddhist sculptures are to be found in remote but beautiful places, sanctified, doubtless, in the past by the living presence of some recluse noted in his own time for his holy meditations.

Near Tsing-chou Fu, on the Kiao-chou Railway, are to be found the sculptures which Oswald Siren unhesitatingly proclaims as standing "on the very highest level that was reached by Chinese sculpture in the Sui Period." Here two sacred mountains lie ever in view of the people of this very ancient city, which was once the capital of a minor principality. Pilgrims, in long past centuries, must have worn the paths which ascend T'o Shan and Yün Mén Shan. T'o Shan, or "Camel Mountain," suggests in its form a hunched and sleeping camel. One ascends by an irregular foot-path over a natural stairway of huge angular rocks, split off and tumbled from the summit in past ages and leaving a crown of straight-sided cliffs. Above these is a shabby and evidently not popular Taoist temple. Several shallow caves have been hollowed in these cliffs on the side facing toward the sister mountain, Yün Mén. Within these caves are sculptures of varying workmanship, which are like a distant echo of the great art of Yün K'ang and Lung Mén. Smaller, cruder, more provincial, they seem to be the last ebb of the great tide of religious enthusiasm which pulsaties in the older shrines. In the

Above is a lovely Bodhisattva of the T'ang Period carved out of the living Rock in a Cave on T'o Shan, Shantung.

The delightful Figure on the Right is a Bodhisattva in a Niche in the Rock Surface on Yuen Men Shan, Shantung, carved in the Sui Period.

From Drawings by Mary Augusta Millikin.
JE TEMPLES

PICTURES IN SHANTUNG

LIKIN

a rare opportunity to con-

The delightful Figure

A lovely Boddsattva of the T'ang

Below is a lovely Bod-

The delightful Figure

From Drawings by Mary

above, are to be found the

workmanship, which are

next in view of the

capital of a minor

must have worn the

T'o Shan, or "Camel

and sleeping camel. One

d stairway of huge angular

past ages and leaving

is a shabby and evidently

caves have been hollowed

ster mountain, Yin Men.

and Lung Men. Smaller,

e older shrines. In the

the Han Dynasty tomb

tiginal sites in outlying in-

t sites. Only by studying this

based on ancestral worship,

life in those times. It is

spite of the flights of angels

as only to wander forth to

ny different art, carved in

Buddhism, in the Sui Dynasty

Kai Yin Seu the remains

e caves at Lung Tung

assively, the strata of the

cubist sections. In these

ideal of Buddhism and its

, such as the Han palace

Buddhist sculptures are to

unified, doubtless, in the

ited in his own time for his

allway, are to be found the

proclams as standing

d by Chinese sculpture in

is he ever in view of the

nce the capital of a minor

es, must have worn the

an. T'o Shan, or "Camel

and sleeping camel. One

d stairway of huge angular

past ages and leaving

is a shabby and evidently

caves have been hollowed

ster mountain, Yin Men.

workmanship, which are

and Lung Men. Smaller,

e older shrines. In the

Above is a lovely Bod-

Boddhisattva of the T'ang

Period carved out of

the living Rock in a Cave

on T'o Shan, Shantung.

The delightful Figure

on the Right is a Bod-

Boddhisattva in a Niche in

the Rock Surface on

Yuen Men Shan, Shan-

tung, carved in the Sui

Period.

From Drawings by Mary

Augusta Mullikin.
A Han Dynasty Relief in the Museum in Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung. Such Relics are of the greatest Value as they throw Light upon the Life of those distant Times.

An Inscription of the Han Period, on a Stone Stele in the Museum at Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung.
A Seated Buddha and Lohans of the Sui Period in the Lung Tung, near Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung.

A Colossal Buddha of the Sui Dynasty in the Lung Tung, near Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung.

A Colossal Buddhist Trinity of the Sui Dynasty carved out of the Rock in the Lung Tung, near Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung.

A Buddhist Trinity, Sui Dynasty Carving, at Lung Tung, Shantung.

A Rubbing of a Wei Dynasty Stele in the Museum at Tsing-chou Fu, Shantung.

Yuen Men Shan as seen from T'o Shan in Shantung.

Photograph by Mr. Folkard.
T'o Shan, Shantung.

From; l

Dr; lrring by Mary Augusta

Cloud Gate which pierces

Crest of Yuen Men Shan, Shantung.

Looking down on the Half-way Temple from the Crest of Yuen Men Shan, Shantung.

Photographs by Mr. Folkard
third cave is the largest Sakya-muni, whose height, seated, is some ten feet. Its crude simplicity has a static power, but no living quality. One hand rests, palm upward, on its knee, while the other is raised, palm outward. On the base of its throne and on the walls of the cave are rows of conventionalized seated Buddhas. One cave in this series has works as late as the T'ang era, among which are a few Bodhisattvas of mature grace and lightness.

Yün Mén Shan, the "Cloud Gate Mountain," receives its name from the circumstance that its crown of cliffs was perforated by the labours of a pious devotee who tunnelled a passage sheer through the cliff. The opening appears from below as an eye of light in the mountain mass. Through it one reaches the carved cliffs and the stairway to the temples on the crest above. There must be days when, with a bit of a mist and a waft of breeze, clouds really pass through this gateway, fulfilling the dream of its maker. As in many another case, this mountain, at first sacred to Buddhism, has reverted to the native cult of Taoism, whose long-haired priests preside over a most popular women's pilgrimage. At the half-way stage and on the crest are Taoist temples with ochrewashed imitations of imperial roofs, with shabby gods, dirty courts and importunate priests. Fortunately for the student of sculpture, priests and pilgrims alike are uninterested in the cliffs of Buddhist carvings. In shallow niches, a little above eye-level, one sees these sculptured reliefs. The foremost niche lacks its central figure, which may have been carved in the round and since removed. In its place, against the rock wall, is sculptured an inscribed panel, now illegible, while on either side of this stands a delightful Bodhisattva, a little larger than life. Although the heads are injured, one may yet see delicate and expressive modelling. The ornate headdresses, the jewelled chains, embroidered panels and graceful scarves which enrich their costumes, show the luxurious development of art, doubtless also of life, since the era when the austere forms of Yün Kang were sculptured. The second niche has, at its outward buttresses, badly injured guardian warriors. Here the central Buddha is in place, attended by Bodhisattvas similar to the ones in the first niche, and, like them, standing on lotus pedestals. Both niches have their backgrounds enriched by series of tiny conventional seated Buddhas of clean-cut detail. It is the Yün Mén sculptures which called forth Siren's words of high praise.

It is not known to what extent this rare art was the work of local sculptors or of artists who had come down the river from Lung Mén, in Honan, finding employment here in a neighbourhood long known as a seat of culture. Such migrant sculptors might have brought with them the accepted patterns for Buddhist art. On the other hand, we may believe that the Han Dynasty's demands had trained so large a body of skilled sculptors that their traditions and skill would have lingered on, even through the long troubled years which succeeded. The little museum at Tsing-chou Fu, housed in the Confucian Temple, contains a brilliant specimen of work done in this neighbourhood in the Wei Dynasty. It is an enormous stele, dedicated, as its inscription reads, in A.D. 528, by the wife of Chia Chi Yuan. It has attracted a
THE CHINA JOURNAL

good deal of attention because of the strong local resistance to its purchase by Japanese, resulting in a court decision in favour of its remaining in China. Of bold and deep relief, it is marked by extremely individual characteristics and facial types. In spite of its Buddhist subject, it is strongly native, racey of the soil. It represents an intermediate period between the earlier Han and the later Sui art. For the Han motifs of real and active life, flatly cut and boldly etched, are worlds apart from the dreamy, ornate Sui saints, whose only action is a graceful turn of the wrist, a drooping of the eyes, a dewy curve of the delicate lips. Whoever the sculptors may have been, the thing to be expressed has entirely changed under the impact of the foreign religion, Buddhism. Something of great spiritual import has followed down the course of the Yellow River, to speak its last word in far Shantung.

TO MY COUSIN
BY
TOU SHU-HSIANG*

The Yeh-hö flowers abloom are fair;
Their perfume fills the yard.
All night the gentle whispering rain
Disturb the drunken bard.
A crony’s precious message came
From regions far away;
But when I wished an answer made,
I knew not what to say.
When I recall those good old days,
Then sorrow true I ken;
For half my friends have gone their ways,
And children now are men!
Alas! we part to-morrow morn,
My lonely barge to bear me.

Translated by Law Chin Tang.

* Of the T’ang Dynasty.
† Magnolia pumila, according to Giles.
cal resistance to its purchase in favour of its remaining red by extremely individual its Buddhist subject, it is its an intermediate period. For the Han motifs of bed, are worlds apart from action is a graceful turn of of the delicate lips. Who be expressed has entirely on, Buddhism. Something the course of the Yellow z.

N

air;
in
le,

r ways,

/ LAW CHIN TANG.

Rubbings from Han Dynasty Reliefs in the Library at Tsi-nan Fu, Shantung, showing a Hunting Scene (above) and a Host receiving Guests (below).
Rubbings from Han Dynasty Reliefs in the Library at Ts'ai-nan Fu, Shantung, depicting an Official (above) driving in his light Carriage drawn by high-stepping Horses, and a Kitchen Scene (below).