CHARLES D. WEBER

CHINESE PICTORIAL BRONZE VESSELS OF THE LATE CHOU PERIOD

PART IV[1]

GROUP VIII:
VESSELS DECORATED WITH A MELEE OF ANIMAL AND HUMAN FIGURES, REAL AND FANTASTIC

The vessels of this group are associated by the content of their pictorial decorations—a world of fantasy. They are decorated with a jumbled array of animal and bird figures, which often are given odd and unreal appendages, human figures, bird-men, and combined animal-human figures. Frequently the forms oppose one another in combat. On some vessels the figures are formed by inlay of copper; on others, the figures are created by flat, recessed areas, as though to receive inlay although no inlaid material is present. There are several kinds of vessels in the group: three types of *hu*, a *tou*, and a small bowl.

One of the vessels of the group, a *hu*, was excavated in 1951 at the burial site, Chia-ko-chuang, near T'ang-shan in eastern Hopei province. The T'ang-shan site has been mentioned earlier in this study as the source of several vessels decorated with animal and bird figures in recessed line, the type I have designated as Group II in the series of pictorial vessels (Part I, pp. 115–122 and fig. 12).

An Chih-min, in his report on the T'ang-shan site[2], published clear drawings of the decor of the *hu*, which I have reproduced in fig. 62a–f. There is an imitation rope sling in rounded relief around the vessel, which undoubtedly is a copy of a kind of rope sling used to carry vessels of this type, perhaps pottery *hu* in daily use. No attempt has been made, however, to make an accurate copy of a real rope sling. For example, the twist changes direction occasionally without reason, and the knotting technique, for the most part, does not seem to follow any feasible system.

The pictorial images, cut out of sheet copper, are inlaid within the panels created by the rope sling on the vessel body and in a circle on the lid. There are copper-inlaid, curvilinear, inverted heart shapes around the neck. The ring handles on the neck are decorated with hatched bands and the ring on the lid with a guilloche pattern, both created by recessed lines.

[1] Part I of this series of articles appeared in *Artibus Asiae*, XXVIII, 2/3, pp. 107–154; Part II in XXVIII, 4, pp. 271–311; and Part III in XXIX, 2/3, pp. 115–192. The illustrations are numbered consecutively from the beginning in order to avoid confusion when references are made to illustrations in the earlier parts.

[2] An Chih-min, *Kao-ku hsüeh-pao*, 6, 1/2 (December, 1953), pp. 57–116, with text figures and 24 plates. William Watson published a photograph of the vessel, the same as that published by An Chih-min, pl. 10, but larger in scale, in *Archaeology in China*, London, 1960, pl. 86. More recently a clear, colored photograph of the other side of the vessel was published in *Chūgoku bijutsu*, 3 vols., Tokyo, 1963, vol. I, p. 40, fig. 22 (English edition, *Arts of China, Neolithic Cultures to the T'ang Dynasty, Recent Discoveries*, Tokyo and Palo Alto, 1968, p. 28, fig. 22).

There are twelve pictorial panels on the vessel in two horizontal rows of six each. Breaks in the horizontal cords near the left-hand sides of the six vertical pairs of panels represent joints in the mold. The vessel thus must have been cast in a mold of six vertical sections.

Four of the six vertical pairs of pictorial panels are reproduced in fig. 62a–d. The vertical pairs were designed as units, and there are just two types of designs, the one of fig. 62a and d, and the other, fig. 62b and c. The two vertical pairs which are not shown in fig. 62 are repetitions of those of a and d. Thus, for no apparent reason, there are four vertical pairs of the one design and only two of the other.

The panels are filled, rather indiscriminately it seems, with a variety of animal, bird, and human forms. Most of the animals are decorated on shoulders and haunches with spiral or "pointed-C" patterns. The shoulder patterns resemble the wings of the bird figures, and presumably represent wings upon the animals too.

The strangest creature is the beast which appears in the upper panels of fig. 62b and c, and again in the lower panels of a and d. It has wings, a beard, multiple tails and other appendages on the rear, and an object upon its head which looks like another animal head. All four of its legs are shown, an unusual feature in the pictorial art of the bronze vessels.

Facing this beast in a somewhat lower position in the lower panels of fig. 62a and d there is a standing, animal-headed, human-bodied creature. Below the beast with multiple appendages in all four panels where it appears, an unidentifiable ungulate animal is being attacked by a human figure brandishing a spear.

This human figure is nude and is provided with a topknot (shown clearly in fig. 62a), a type of headdress known to have been worn by some of the barbarian tribes to the south of China. A similar barbarian figure was noted upon the engraved basin excavated at Chao-ku, near Hui-hsien in northern Honan, which I have placed in Group IV of the pictorial-vessel series (Part II, p. 276 and fig. 22). The manner in which this figure on the T'ang-shan *hu* is drawn—bent-knee posture and torso flattened on the pictorial surface, a feature made obvious by the depiction of nipples—reminds one of the human figures in combat with beasts upon the pictorial vessels of Group VII, the so-called "hunting *hu*" (Part III, figs. 42–44). The T'ang-shan figure is drawn with a greater sense of activity—he seems to be running toward the animal.

At the top of the upper panels of fig. 62a and d and of the lower panels of b and c, two similar human figures attack a heavyset animal, which is somewhat bovine in appearance. In all four of the depictions one of the human figures seems to have leaped upon the back of the beast in his eagerness to attack. It is simply a running figure placed above the animal. In the two lower panels of b and c the second figure approaches the beast with his spear aloft, and he is drawn in the same manner as the figure with a topknot noted above. The second figure in the upper panels of a and d is drawn in a more natural posture, with both arms extended in front, as he drives his spear into the animal's mouth.

Two other man-animal combats are shown: in the lower left corner of the lower panels of b and c, a man drives what seems to be a sword into the mouth of an animal which represents, perhaps, a feline; and in the lower part of the upper panels of a and d, a man armed with a double-pointed spear attacks an animal which undoubtedly represents an elephant.

The elephant appears again in the right, center of the lower panels of b and c. Although this beast can be identified as an elephant by its trunk and its thickset body and legs, there are some

glaring departures from the true appearance of an elephant. The ear is too small and is improperly placed, the neck is more pronounced than it is in the living animal, and the tail is not that of an elephant. The elephant lived in northern Honan during the Shang period, as indicated by the discovery of skeletons at An-yang, but it is doubtful that it was still present in the area in Late Chou times. Elephants lingered considerably longer in south China, where the Late Chou Chinese may have had contact with them[3]. The elephant on the T'ang-shan *hu* looks as though it were drawn from hearsay by an artist who never had seen the real animal.

The remaining spaces in the panels are filled with various bird figures and running and crouching animals, some resembling dogs. A deer with its head thrown back appears in the lower right corner of the lower panels of b and c.

A group of similar animals decorate the lid of the T'ang-shan *hu*, repeated twice to form a circle (fig. 62e). At the top, beginning at the ring handle, one can see an elephant, then an animal with multiple horns and strangely bent hind legs biting the rump of a running, goatlike animal, and also several other animal types. The group of animals is not repeated exactly in the same manner the second time, which indicates that the design was created by an additive accumulation of the forms, one by one, with only a general compositional plan to guide the artisan who made the vessel. After the two groups of animals had been placed around the lid, a small area remained to be filled, so the designer simply added another elephant figure.

There is a vessel of the type called *tou* in the Shanghai Museum, which is decorated with a variety of inlaid figures very much like those on the T'ang-shan *hu* (fig. 63a)[4]. The strange creature with multiple appendages on its rump, a beard, and a strange device on top of its head, is present, near the center of the bowl. Below it a man with a spear attacks another beast, resembling those which occupy a similar position below the fantastic beast with multiple appendages on the T'ang-shan *hu*. The parallel is carried further by the presence again of a standing, humanlike figure with an animal's head, in front of the fantastic beast as is the case in the lower panels of fig. 62a and d. (The details of this figure are not clear on the only photographs of the Shanghai *tou* which are available to me, but it seems to be the same kind of figure as that on the T'ang-shan *hu*.)

The elephant, too, is present, under the bulge on the left in fig. 63a. There are other animal and bird figures which have counterparts on the T'ang-shan *hu*, and there are additional figures as well. A strange creature with multiple projections on its head, neck, and rear, with its head reverted, appears on the *tou*, on the lid near the center. In front of this creature a human figure attacks what seems to be a pig.

There can be little doubt that the T'ang-shan *hu* and the Shanghai Museum *tou* are products of the same workshop. The artisans of the workshop must have manufactured a great many vessels using these same figures, and they must have had a large repertory to draw from, the decor of the *hu* representing a narrower selection than that of the *tou*.

[3] Arthur de Carle Sowerby, *Nature in Chinese Art*, New York, 1940, p. 55.

[4] *Shang-hai po-wu-kuan ts'ang ch'ing-t'ung ch'i* (Catalogue of bronzes in the Shanghai Museum), 2 vols., Shanghai, 1964, vol. I, pl. 71. A color photograph has been reproduced in *Ancient Relics of China* by Werner and Bedrich Forman (photographers) and Chan Hui-chüan (ed.), Peking, 1962, pl. 85. There is a drawing of a similar vessel—perhaps the same vessel—in the catalogue of the Manchu imperial collection in Peking, compiled by an Imperial Commission in 1749–1751 (later copies published in 1888, 1908, and 1925), Liang Shih-cheng *et al.*, *Hsi-Ch'ing ku-chien*, XXIX, 26. The figures on the vessel resemble those on the Shanghai Museum *tou* in many of their details and in the broad compositional arrangement; however the figures are drawn in the free and rather inaccurate manner which one finds in the old bronze catalogues.

that this scene represents an animal sacrifice in connection with the mulberry-tree ceremony shown next to it on the vessels. In spite of the differences in the scenes on the Walters, Curtis, and Jannings vessels, I think that a specific ancient ritual connected with the mulberry tree is shown, a ritual that involved the gathering of mulberry leaves, the dance, and the sacrifice of either human or animal victims. I am at a loss to explain the presence of the winged animal on the foot of the Walters *tou*.

The queue worn by some of the women in the mulberry-tree ceremonies on the Walters, Curtis, and Jannings vessels is an interesting feature. In the ancient texts the Chinese, as far into the past as we have descriptions of them, were people of *chieh-fa*, knotted hair. Hair worn in a braid or the queue, *pien-fa*, was a feature of some of the barbarian tribes in the north. The two hair styles are distinct, and certain ancient references indicate that the Chinese were proud of their *chieh-fa* as a distinguishing feature[47]. Why then should the queue appear on figures in the scenes on these vessels? In the whole body of pictorial representations upon the bronze vessels of Late Chou the queue appears only on certain figures participating in the ceremonies connected with the mulberry tree on the group of vessels presently being considered. The persons wearing the queue are never armed, and often they are smaller than other figures in the scene (fig. 66h). We may assume that they are women, who have a definite part to play in the ceremony. In most cases they are the leaf pickers. One may wonder if, in these scenes, the women with the queue are barbarian concubines from the north.

On a fragment of a mold found at the site of a bronze foundry at Hou-ma in southwestern Shansi one can see part of a mulberry-tree ceremony, which resembles somewhat the scene on the foot of the Walters *tou* (fig. 66i)[48]. A woman with a queue sits in a tree picking leaves; below, there is a dancer in peaked cap, an armed figure in peaked cap, and another woman with a queue. Apparently the mold, the source of this fragment, was used to create a pictorial vessel (or vessels) with figures in raised relief in the manner of Group VII, discussed in an earlier article (Part III). However, no scene of this type appears on any of the known vessels decorated with figures in relief. On the other hand, the vessels of Group IX, in whose decor one does find scenes resembling that on the Hou-ma fragment, are decorated by means of metal inlay or by recessed figures which probably once were inlaid with metal. I do not think that the discovery of this particular fragment at Hou-ma, part of a mold which was used to produce a scene resembling scenes on inlaid vessels of Group IX in the relief technique of Group VII, necessarily indicates that all vessels with scenes of that type or that all vessels in the relief technique were produced at Hou-ma. It does seem to indicate that the pictorial vessels we have today are but a small fraction of the pictorial vessels which were manufactured in Late Chou times. Probably the foundry at Hou-ma was one of several within the areas of southern Shansi and northern Honan which were controlled by the Chin and Wei states during the period of our concern. It has been noted earlier that these two states were closely related in the later sixth and the early fifth centuries B.C. (Part II, p. 301). In the discussion above of the inscription on the Berlin *hu* mention was made of the cooperation of Chin and Wei in their attacks upon Hsien-yü. It is difficult to find a basis for separating the bronze-vessel art of Chin from that of Wei during this

[47] Shiratori Kurakichi, "The Queue among the Peoples of North Asia", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, no. 4 (1929), 1–69.

[48] There is a photograph—not a very clear one—of the fragment in *K'ao-ku*, 1962, 2, pl. 2–10.

period, in examples available from excavations in the areas controlled by the two states (Shan-hsien, Hou-ma, and Ch'ang-chih in Chin; Hui-hsien and Chi-hsien in Wei).

The bowls of the vessels in the Walters Gallery are given over to a scene of animal and human figures, some real and some fantastic, which reminds one of the scenes upon the vessels of Group VIII reviewed above (fig. 66f). The same scene appears on the Curtis *hu* where it occupies the lower two zones. Half of the figures on the Walters *tou* (those on the right-hand side in fig. 66f) are repeated around the bulge of the Curtis *hu* (fig. 67h), and the other half is repeated in the lowest zone on the *hu* (fig. 67g). Some of the animals, drawn in a fluid, curvilinear style, resemble the animals in the scenes on the Berlin *hu* (fig. 65b–d). None of the animals have wings, but unreal appendages on many of them attest to the fact that this is not the everyday world of reality.

At the far left (as the figures are presented in fig. 66f) there is an animal-headed human figure approaching or threatening a strange creature which has little animal heads on tentacles growing from its head. Behind this creature there are two bird-men with bows, one of them following a combined animal-human figure which seems to be held on a leash. These bird-men have flaring tails like those on the bird-men of the relief vessels of Group VII (Part III, figs. 42, 43, and 45, and fig. 74i–k), a feature which serves to identify them, even though they have no wings. The other human figures in the scene are normally constructed. They attack various kinds of animals using a variety of weapons.

Among the recognizable animals there are deer, pigs, hares, a charging bull (on the right being attacked by a man with a spear), and a rhinoceros (far right, at the top in fig. 66f). Professor Vandier-Nicolas in describing this figure of a rhinoceros on the Curtis *hu* calls attention to the animal's feet, which consist of little circles of the type found upon animals in the art of the Asian steppes[49]. Originally this was a device which held precious or semiprecious stones; eventually the round sockets came to be used alone as decoration. In this form the motif may have passed from the art of the steppes into China. (It may be recalled that round sockets holding pieces of turquoise can be found on the figures of birds decorating a *hu* in the Freer Gallery shown in Part I, figs. 4 and 10b.)

The human figures are shown in a variety of active postures: running (top, left in fig. 66f) dragging a pig, or kneeling on the back of a pig to stab it (center), fighting one another for a trussed hare (right of center), reaching out to grasp the hind leg of a struggling deer (at the bottom, right of center), even dying in the struggle (bottom, toward the right).

The animals, too, are drawn in a variety of poses. Some, like the rhinoceros, are merely static silhouettes, but others are shown reacting to their human pursuers. The bull (on the right-hand side) lowers its head to present its horns to the man with the spear, the deer struggles realistically to free itself from the man who grasps its hind leg (bottom, center), and two animals, asslike in appearance, crouch in front of their attackers (top, far left, and also right of center). Many of the animals, mostly deer and hares, are shown in the flying gallop.

Although the scenes on the Curtis *hu* are essentially the same as the scene on the Walters vessels, there are a few differences: the large, piglike animal with its back arched standing over the corpse, and the kneeling man attacking it from the rear on the Curtis *hu* (fig. 67h, bottom, center), both are replaced by a single feline animal on the Walters vessels (fig. 66f, bottom,

[49] *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

right); there is an additional figure, a running doe, above the large piglike animal on the Curtis *hu;* and also on the Curtis *hu* there is a fishlike creature behind the men fighting over a trussed hare (fig. 67h, far left), which is absent on the Walters vessels. Probably these differences represent accommodations to the different shapes of the *hu* and the *tou.*

Some of the figures on the Curtis and Walters vessels appear almost in the same fashion in the large chariot-hunt scene on the Freer basin: the man kneeling on the back of the pig while he stabs it (fig. 69f, top left); the large, piglike animal with arched back (top, left, behind the chariot); the man attacking a feline animal with an unidentifiable right-angled weapon (in back of the lower chariot); the two men fighting over trussed hares (top, right of center), although the postures here are somewhat different; and below the two men fighting, the man attacking an asslike animal while he holds in front of himself some kind of container. The running hares placed here and there on the Freer vessel remind one also of the hares on the Curtis and Walters vessels.

Some of these resemblances between figures on the Freer basin and figures on the Walters and Curtis vessels are too close to be explained as coincidence. There must have been a single source, a stock of motifs which the artisans drew from in forming the various little cut-out sheet-metal figures. It is very likely that the Freer, Walters, and Curtis vessels were made in the same workshop.

The scene on the Freer basin is primarily a chariot hunt. Except for a few animals on the right-hand side, which are winged, all of the figures, animal and human are of the real world. On the other hand, the scene on the Curtis and Walters vessels represents primarily a world of fantasy—a mass struggle which involves not only real animals and real humans but also animals with unreal appendages, bird-men, and combined animal-human figures. However, since both subjects require the presence of animal figures and human figures struggling with animals, it was possible for some of the motifs to serve this dual purpose.

(There is no inlaid metal present on the Freer basin, and the recessed figures now are filled with a corrosion product of lead. As noted in the discussion of the vessel above, it has been suggested that originally the pictorial figures were formed by inlay of silver and this was removed at some later time. The similarities among some of the figures on the Freer, Curtis, and Walters vessels tend to support this theory. Perhaps these figures were cut out in sheet silver for the Freer basin and—from the same models—in sheet copper for the Curtis and Walters vessels.)

Both the Freer chariot-hunt scene and the Curtis and Walters fantastic-hunt scene seem to have been built up as an additive accumulation of figures, rather than to have been designed originally as coherent, unified compositions, which were transferred into the medium of the pictorial vessels. From this standpoint these scenes are in contrast to the ritual ceremonies, the ceremonies connected with the mulberry tree, the archery contests, and the battle scenes on the Curtis and Walters vessels, the Jannings *hu*, and the Shan-piao-chen basins. These latter scenes were designed as unified, integrated compositions, and probably, as been suggested, they were derived from paintings.

The top surfaces of the rings on the lids of the Walters vessels, areas which have no counterpart on the Curtis *hu*, are decorated with a group of figures which seem to be an extension of the fantastic-hunt scene on the bowl of the vessel (fig. 66a). There is a file of asslike animals, most

All of these representations of ceremonies have been discussed in detail in the survey of the vessel groups (those of Group IX above, and those of Group IV in Part II), and only a few remarks will be made here to point out certain elements of continuity from Group IV to Group IX.

All of the more complete representations (a, c, d, g, h) in general show the same ritual activities. In all cases a ritual beverage (presumably a kind of beer, Part II, note 18) is ladled from vessels and passed around. It is passed in beakers, which probably are made of rhinoceros horn (Part II, note 23). Long-handled ladles are used (shown clearly in f). It is interesting that in the scenes of Group IV of the later sixth century, the ritual vessels are bulbous in silhouette and resemble the type called *lei* (shown clearly in b), while in the Group IX representations of about half a century later (g, h), the ritual vessels are the *hu* type. It is known from excavated material that the *hu* vessel, though in existence earlier, became extremely popular in the fifth century. Along with the beverage, in some cases, food is prepared in large *ting* (d, in the building, at the right; g, at the right; see also k, at the right). The *tou*, a food container is very much in evidence (a, left and right; c, left and right; g and h, on the floor, left of the altar).

There is a musical accompaniment to the ceremony: bells and stone chimes (a, left and right; d, right, where bells are shown; g and h, lower sections); the *sheng*, a horizontal pipe with reeds mounted vertically (a, extreme right; h, third figure from the left in the orchestra; also k, far left); drums (d, mounted on a sculptured bird support; g and h, at the right); and in one case a stringed musical instrument of the type well-known today in the Japanese koto (d, far right). Sometimes there are dancers (d, at the right; h, at the right, a weapon dance).

Illustrations of archery contests are shown in fig. 77. As in the case of the ritual ceremonies, these also are from Groups IV and IX (a–f, Group IV; g–i, Group IX). In one example (a) the archers stand upon small platforms and shoot at the target from both sides. In another (b) the layout is similar, but both the archers and the target are on a single, long platform. In two cases the archers shoot from the porch or the loggia of a building (e, where only the lower part of one archer's figure remains, and f). In the examples of Group IX the archers shoot from a small pavilion (g, h). The targets, in all cases except one, are rectangles (presumably of hide) stretched between posts (a–e, g, h). There is one example in which a round target is shown (f).

Sometimes the archery contest is very much abbreviated. In two examples, only the target is shown (c, d); in one, only the archers are represented (i). The two representations with only the targets shown (c, d) are found on *yi* vessels where the ritual ceremony also is presented in reduced versions (fig. 76 e, f), accommodations, no doubt, to the small size of the vessels. In the earlier discussion of these two vessels it was pointed out that these reduced versions of ceremonial and archery scenes are rather inadequate as pictorial art to be enjoyed as such (Part II, p. 291). Possibly these vessels were used in ritual ablutions in connection with ceremonies of the type shown on the vessels themselves. In that case, the reduced scenes could serve adequately as symbolic representations of the ceremonies. In the case of the vessels of Group IX, the representations of ceremonies and archery contests are only a part of a profuse and varied pictorial decoration which covers almost the entire surfaces of the vessels. There, one receives the impression that the pictorial decoration was created solely as a source of aesthetic pleasure. We cannot be certain of this, of course; yet there is no reason to believe that these late, profusely decorated pictorial vessels were used as ritual vessels in the traditional manner.

Professor Ludwig Bachhofer expressed a similar view in discussing the Freer basin and the Curtis *hu:* "Such hunting scenes were inspired by similar representations in Caucasian, Hallstadt and Ordos art. The connecting link was what is rather vaguely called Scythian art[64]." Professor Nicole Vandier-Nicolas, in her article on the Curtis *hu*, suggested that there were relations between China and the Asian steppes, citing a resemblance between the bird-men on the Curtis *hu* and the Tungus shaman, who sometimes wears a bird costume. She called attention also to the rings on the feet of a rhinoceros figure on the vessel (fig. 79l), which resemble the raised rings which decorate many animals in the art of the steppes[65]. Miss Florance Waterbury, too, in her discussion of the bird-men on the vessels, suggested a relationship with the Tungus shaman[66]. (I have considered this idea in Part III, p. 164, and have reproduced a picture of a Siberian shaman in bird costume, fig. 432).

Later, after the excavation of the pictorial *hu* at T'ang-shan in the north (fig. 62), several scholars suggested that the origin of the pictorial-vessel art lay within the realm of the ancient Yen state, the northernmost state of Late Chou, which controlled the region around T'ang-shan. The inscription on the Berlin *hu* (discussed above), which contains a reference to the small state, Hsien-yü, sometimes is interpreted to be connected in some way with Yen. If the pictorial vessels were inspired by influences from the Asian steppes, most likely such influences would have entered China from the north, and therefore the Yen state would be an obvious locale for such developments.

Along these lines, Professor William Watson said, "The style of the hunting scenes is so much at variance with the normal canons of the feudal art that one may suspect an exotic influence. The figurative art of the Yen state may owe something to the art of barbarian hunters inhabiting the forested region lying to the north-east, a pendant to the nomad's art which formed in the north-west[67]."

In the same vein, Mr. William Willetts, speaking of the hunting theme, states, "We shall probably conclude that it originally came from over the northern border of Yen state, and was a concept of the tribal peoples who hunted the forests of South Manchuria[68]." In his catalogue of the Brundage collection, Mr. Ivon d'Argencé suggested that the pictorial bronzes emerged at the transition from the Ch'un Ch'iu period to the Warring States period in "some northern workshops, which were probably exposed to foreign influences[69]." The authors of the new catalogue of the Freer bronzes followed Watson in connecting the hunting vessels with the Yen state, which was in contact with nomadic tribes in the north, concluding that "the hunting scenes... are probably influenced by or partly derived from the art of those northern nomads[70]." Similarly Dr. Jan Fontein has stated that the hunting vessels are "obviously inspired by the steppes art[71]."

Taking a completely different view, Professor Michael Sullivan suggested a southern origin,

[64] *A Short History of Chinese Art*, New York, 1946, p. 87.
[65] *Op. cit.* (note 39), pp. 140–141.
[66] *Bird-Deities in China (Artibus Asiae Supplementum X)*, Ascona, 1952, pp. 93–97.
[67] *Ancient Chinese Bronzes*, Rutland, Vermont, 1962, p. 60.
[68] *Foundations of Chinese Art*, New York, 1965, p. 103.
[69] *Op. cit.* (note 13), p. 94.
[70] *Op. cit.* (note 24), p. 305.
[71] *Encyclopedia of World Art*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1960, III, p. 485.

within the realm of the ancient Ch'u state, for the Jannings and Curtis *hu* and for several of the engraved vessels of Group IV, although he followed Karlgren in finding influences from the northern nomad art in the Pillsbury *hu*, and suggested "a possible origin for this vessel in the Honan-Shensi region." Sullivan related the naval battle on the Jannings *hu* to Dong-s'on boat scenes[72]. In earlier works, Karlgren had found parallels between the bird-men on some of the pictorial vessels and representations of men with birdlike headdress on bronze drums of Dong-s'on[73], and the late Professor Alfred Salmony had found southern elements in the scenes on the Seattle *yi* of Group IV[74].

In summary, one may note that generally scholars who have been concerned with the pictorial bronze vessels, recognizing the novelty of this kind of decoration in the bronze art of China, have concluded that foreign inspiration was largely responsibly for its creation. The steppe regions of Asia are favored as a source, the influences having entered China from the north into the northern Yen state. A minority opinion favors the south of China as the source of a number of the vessels, and finds parallels in the southern Dong-s'on culture.

I agree with those scholars who find evidence of Western influences in the pictorial-vessel art, but I cannot agree with the more extreme assertions that this art form came into being as a result of Western inspiration. In reviewing the whole body of pictorial vessels I have endeavored to show that, although this is indeed a new art in China, it does not appear suddenly as a full-blown art—like Athena springing from the head of Zeus—as might be the case if it were an imported idea. Rather, one can trace a gradual evolution, beginning with individual figures placed in areas of lesser importance on vessels which carry more traditional designs, and developing in the course of about a century and a quarter, into the rich, animated scenes which cover the entire surface of some of the latest vessels. The earliest figures in some cases have been developed from images already in existence as a minor element in Chinese art (feline figure, for example), and in other cases they have all of the features of a naive and spontaneously created image (human figure on the Ōta *hu*, for example). Through the period of pictorial-vessel production one can trace developments in style which seem normal and reasonable in the light of modern concepts of art history. Furthermore, the evidence indicates that the pictorial vessels, for the most part, were the product, not of either the northern Yen state or the southern Ch'u state, but of the heartland of China, of the southern Shansi-northern Honan region, which had been the center of the Chinese culture from Shang times on.

I have suggested that the pictorial vessels represent not primarily an innovation which developed within the bronze-vessel art of China—the innovation lies rather in the birth of pictorial art itself, as a new expression in China. Interest in this new art form led the designers of bronze vessels to incorporate elements from it into the decor of their vessels. Because of their durability, the bronze vessels have preserved for us a remarkably complete record of the historical developments in the early stages of Chinese pictorial art. One may suspect that the more fragile medium of painting, being less involved with traditions, was in the lead.

This pictorial art of Late Chou did not come into being because Chinese artists during that period happened to come into possession of imported objects with figurative decorations on

[72] *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962, pp. 21–24 and 187 (note 53), and 188 (note 59).
[73] *BMFEA*, XIV, pp. 15–19.
[74] *Antler and Tongue (Artibus Asiae Supplementum XIII)*, Ascona, 1954, pp. 14–15.

them and decided to copy them. It must have had a more profound basis. It must have been the dynamic situation which existed in China in the early centuries of Late Chou, as the older feudal system gradually disintegrated, which called forth this new, pictorial art. One would expect the practitioners of a new, developing art to be receptive to fresh ideas. There is some evidence that motifs were borrowed from the art of the West and of the Asian steppes, which I explore below. However, such borrowings, I suggest, were the *result* of a new, dynamic situation in Chinese art, rather than being a causative factor.

Of the many scholars who have discussed the possibility that the art of the Asian steppes may have exerted an influence on the art of Late Chou China, Karlgren has been the most specific. In his study cited above, devoted to a comparison of Ordos art and that of Late Chou, he reviewed the occurrence of twelve different motifs in the art of the two regions[75]. I shall review Karlgren's motifs individually from the standpoint of their pertinence to the pictorial bronze vessels, and then consider seven additional motifs which represent parallels between the art of the steppes and that of the pictorial vessels. For the convenience of the reader, I illustrate these motifs in figs. 78 and 79, examples from steppe art in the former, and parallels in Chinese art in the latter.

China, of course, in the Late Chou period had no direct contacts with western Asia. However, the peoples of the steppes, ranging from Hungary to the Ordos, produced a great many small, portable bronze objects, of the type which easily may have circulated through Asia and into China. China's immediate contact with the steppe peoples was at its northern boundaries, the Ordos and possibly the areas north of the territory of the Yen state. The steppe peoples were nomads, and we may assume that, if a particular motif was of common occurrence in the hardware of the steppe peoples during the time of the production of the pictorial vessels, possibly it may have found its way into China.

Unfortunately (for scholars) the steppe peoples were not literate, and they have not left a body of inscribed bronze objects as the Chinese have. Dates in steppe art generally are secure only in the West, particularly in the Black Sea region, by the presence in tombs of the steppe peoples of Greek or Greek-related objects which can be dated, and occasionally in areas farther east, by the presence of Persian or Chinese objects or motifs (Pazyryk, for example). Carbon 14 determinations have been few. In fig. 78 I have selected objects which generally are considered by specialists in this field to be of the same time as the pictorial vessels or somewhat earlier (except for b and w, which are considerably earlier). The motifs shown in fig. 78 are of fairly common occurrence in steppe art, and thus there is reason to assume that they represent types which may have found their way into the hands of Chinese artists of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

The motifs reviewed by Karlgren are as follows:

1. Plait pattern, the loose-twist variety of the guilloche. This pattern is found in the decor of vessels of Group II (Part I, fig. 12a), Group IV (Part II, figs. 22, 25 and 27), and Group VIII

[75] *BMFEA*, IX, 97–112. Karlgren's work was based on an earlier comparison of Chinese and Ordos art by Victor Griessmaier, *Sammlung Baron Eduard von der Heydt, Wien*, Vienna, 1936, pp. 8–9. Recently William Samolin published a study of steppe art as a link between China and the West, "Cultural Diffusion from An-yang to the Danube", in *East-West in Art*, Theodore Bowie, ed., Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, and London, 1966, pp. 50–69.

(figs. 62e and 65a). It is rather common on Late Chou bronzes of the sixth and fifth centuries, and it is found occasionally as late as the Han period (Part II, note 69). The motif arose in the ancient Near East and had a long history there. It is not common in steppe art, but because of its long history in the West, its widespread diffusion, and its rather sudden appearance in China in the sixth century B.C., I think there is little doubt that in China it represents a borrowing from the West.

2. Rope pattern. There is one case among the pictorial vessels, a double rope pattern on a pair of vessels of Group V (Part III, fig. 35d). I cannot see much significance in this one example. (I would not consider the rope pattern on the T'ang-shan *hu* and the *hu* of Group IX, figs. 62 and 69a, examples of the rope pattern as a motif, but rather as copies of a rope sling of a type actually in use.)

3. Dot rows or dot filling. Granulated areas, which Karlgren includes in the term "dot filling", are new in China in Late Chou and are common in Group I (fig. 79a–c, and j). There is one occurrence in Group II (s). Perhaps a dotted field pattern of the type found in Group III, Li-yü (z, cc), also should be included. These patterns may have been invented independently by the Chinese artist as a means of creating a textural interest. However, the use of a row of dots or granules is an artificial, decorative concoction which more readily can be considered a borrowing. It appears in China in Group II (fig. 79d and y). Two steppe examples are shown (fig. 78g, h). The dot row appears suddenly in the Chinese figures as an arbitrary, decorative element and may well represent a borrowing.

4. Concentric circles as eyes, found occasionally in pictorial figures (fig. 79b) and also in animal faces supporting handles of *hu* vessels (n). The use of a circle for an eye could easily lead to the use of multiple circles. At any rate, the motif already was present in China in Middle Chou (m).

5. Hind parts adorned with big spirals, found in steppe art (fig. 78a, g) and China (fig. 79d–f, o, r, y, cc). As early as the Shang period the Chinese artist had placed spirals at the juncture of an animal's legs with its body (fig. 79g), and this feature in Late Chou can be explained easily as the Chinese artist's continuing proclivity for the use of decorative spirals in figurative design (see also Middle Chou example, fig. 79x).

6. Spiral band (the "Running-S" band). Not applicable to the pictorial-vessel art.

7. Animal with head turned—an animal with its head turned at an angle of 90° with the line of its body, described by Gregory Borovka as a typical and principal motif of the animal style of the steppes[76]. This motif is not found in the pictorial representations in the bronze-vessel art of China (except perhaps for the monster in fig. 66f), but it is common on vessels associated with pictorial vessels, in the form of sculptured animals on the lids of *ting* of the first half of the fifth century B.C. (discussed in Part III, pp. 119–120).

8. Streaked or dotted animal (short strokes, usually incised, which suggest the fur of an animal). Found in steppe art (fig. 78f and n) and in China (fig. 79 o, p, nn, tt). This motif, I believe, easily could have been invented by artists independently of one another as a simple and obvious way to indicate fur. It is found, for example, in paleolithic bone carvings. It is interesting

[76] Borovka, *Scythian Art*, transl. by V. G. Childe, London, 1928, reprinted by Paragon Book Gallery, New York, 1960, p. 46.

that the Chinese artist, in the figures on the Li-yü vessels, used this technique as a decorative, field pattern on animals without fur, such as frogs and fish (fig. 79q).

9. Animal *enroulé*, an animal curled or rolled in circular form, common and distinctive in steppe art (fig. 78q–s), There is one example among the pictorial vessels of China, on a fragmentary *p'an* of the Li-yü find (fig. 79w). The motif has been discussed frequently (see, for example, references to articles by Frisch and Loehr, Part I, note 68). Animals with their bodies rolled into spiral form are common in China as far back as the Shang and Early Chou periods (Part I, fig. 15a and b), and the motif is continued in Middle Chou (fig. 79v). These older examples in China are unreal and decorative in style. The Li-yü animal resembles the steppe examples in the shocking disparity between the artificial quality of the posture and the naturalism in the drawing of the animal. One can imagine very easily that the artist who designed the Li-yü animal had at hand an example from the steppes which he copied.

Related to the rolled animal are the examples of paired animals which together form a circle, found often in steppe art (fig. 78t) and in one example in the pictorial-vessel art (fig. 79y). This motif is found also in Middle Chou (fig. 79x). Here one may see easily how the Chinese artist may have arranged the animals in this fashion in order to fit them on the surface of a round object. Thus, in the Late Chou example (fig. 79y), one need not assume that the Chinese artist was influenced by an example from the steppes. Here, too, there is harmony in the lack of realism in the drawing of the figures and the lack of realism in the postures which is more typically Chinese in spirit than is the design of the single, rolled animal of Li-yü.

10. Pear-shaped cells or figures, an artificial pattern not found upon living animals, which undoubtedly is a creation of the steppes (fig. 78c, e). Karlgren argues very convincingly that its occurrence in Late Chou China represents an influence from steppe art (fig. 79s, t, on the bulls, and jj).

11. Comma-shaped figure, a special kind of spiral on the haunch of an animal which, unlike the spirals of item 5 above, is an isolated, arbitrary shape applied to the haunch. The motif is frequent on the animals on the Berlin *hu* (fig. 79u). Often, in Group I, the comma shape is hatched, a feature which Karlgren feels is particularly characteristic of the steppes (fig. 79b, c). All of the examples cited by Karlgren are from the Ordos—except one which is not a clear-cut case of the motif (Karlgren's pl. LXI–6). Furthermore, some of Karlgren's examples appear to be more or less Chinese in spirit. Thus one cannot be certain that the motif did not originate in China. It is perhaps significant in this respect that a comma shape very much like that on the haunch of the animals on the Berlin *hu* is used frequently as an independent, presumably symbolic motif on the vessels of Group VI and VII (Part III, figs. 36b, behind the deer at the bulge; 36c, behind the felines near the ring handles; 42a, above the deer, 42a and b, behind the birds on the necks).

12. Circles on the bodies of animals. When circles are used on the bodies of animals as a field pattern, especially when the animals are felines and may be leopards, one cannot attach much significance to parallels in the art of the steppes (fig. 78n, the leopard) and China (fig. 79t, the felines). Similar patterns applied to deer and bulls, as in the case of some figures in Group II (Part III, fig. 42c), does not necessarily imply an influence from outside of China. I offer an interesting parallel: the feline on a silver vessel from Maikop, in the Kuban valley north of the

Black Sea (fig. 78b), and the feline on a vessel fragment of Group VII (fig. 79t, second figure), both decorated with dotted circles on the body, and with single dots on the neck and legs. There could hardly be a closer parallel, yet the vessel from Maikop can be dated no later than the end of the third millennium B.C.[77], and one would be hard put to trace connections through the intervening years and across Asia to the Late Chou example.

Karlgren also includes within this category isolated raised circles or rings, which are found both in the steppes (fig. 78d, e, q) and in Late Chou China (fig. 79i–l). These raised rings, often applied to joints of animals or to the feet, are meaningless in terms of the living animal. The motif may have been used first in the steppes as a means of applying jewels to small metal objects, and then eventually it came to be used without inlaid jewels as a decorative motif in itself. In China the raised rings sometimes are inlaid with turquoise (fig. 79i) and sometimes are plain (j). Raised rings without inlay occur in China as early as Middle Chou (fig. 79h), and thus the motif need not indicate an influence of steppe art upon Late Chou China. Jewel mountings in the form of raised rings are simple functional devices which easily could have been invented more than once; however, the use of functionless, empty rings, placed particularly at animals' joints and on the feet, more strongly implies a diffusion of the idea. As Professor Vandier-Nicolas pointed out, the rhinoceros figure on the Curtis and Walters vessels with circles on its feet (fig. 79l) reminds one very much of examples in steppe art (fig. 78e). The rhinoceros figure as an image, of course, is a Chinese concept.

In addition to these parallels cited by Karlgren, there is a series of motifs in the pictorial representations on the Late Chou vessels, which are pictorial in nature and which call to mind similar motifs in Western and steppe art.

13. Predator attacking a herbivore. There are three examples in the pictorial-vessel art: an eagle carrying off a hare, from Li-yü (fig. 79z), a bird attacking a hare in Group VI (aa), and a canine grasping the throat of a deer in Group VIII (bb). These three representations stand apart from all of the others on the vessels and must be recognized as an unusual feature for this period in China. Very frequently a bird may attack a serpent or serpentine creature and occasionally a feline may do so, but the predator and herbivore are new and rare. I know of no other examples. On the other hand the theme is extremely common in the art of the steppes[78], a fact which suggests very strongly that these three examples on the vessels were inspired by examples from the steppes which had fallen into the hands of the Chinese.

14. Animal or bird with reverted head. Unlike Karlgren's item 7 above, here the head is turned 180° to face directly to the rear. The posture is very common in the pictorial-vessel art, being found in Groups II (fig. 79d, e), III (cc), IV (dd), V (ee), VI (ff), VII (gg), and VIII (hh, ii). It is found also among the animal figures painted on a musical instrument from Hsin-yang (jj). This motif had a long history in the ancient Near East, being found from the Early Dynastic period on[79]. Sometimes, there, the animal looks backward at a pursuer (fig. 73b, from Luristan), but often the posture is a stylization which seems not to be called for by the subject. At any rate, it is a position which is physically impossible for most animals to assume, and it must be

[77] For a discussion of the Maikop find see Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, Baltimore, 1954, pp. 115–116.

[78] For example, Borovka, *op. cit.*, pls. 22A, 23B, and 46–52.

[79] Frankfort, *op. cit.*, pls. 39, 40, 76D, 112, 113, 119A, 146D, 165C, 179B, 190B.

Chinese Pictorial Bronze Vessels of the Late Chou Period. Part IV

Charles D. Weber

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