

Sources of Han Décor

Foreign Influence on the Han Dynasty Chinese
Iconography of Paradise (206 BC-AD 220)

Sophia-Karin Psarras



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG
www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-325-6
ISBN 978-1-78969-326-3 (e-Pdf)

© S-K Psarras and Archaeopress 2019

Cover image: Yanjiacha (Suide, Shaanxi) stone bas relief. *Zhongguo meishu* 1988: 67, Pl. 79.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed in England by Oxuniprint, Oxford

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

Abbreviations	vii
Chronologies	vii
Early China.....	vii
Egypt.....	viii
Mesopotamia (Key Dates).....	ix
Greece (art historical).....	ix
Chinese Vessel Names	x
Introduction	1
I: Major Iconographies	
Chapter 1 Eastern Zhou Context	11
Chapter 2 The Animal Master	15
Chapter 3 Developments Related to the Animal Master	25
Lesser Deities.....	25
Man-Animal Combat.....	27
Human Activity.....	29
Specific Artistic Conventions.....	30
Kavaem Khvareno.....	30
Flying Gallop.....	31
Parthian Shot.....	32
Three-Quarter View.....	33
Chapter 4 Tree of Life	37
Mountainous Landscapes.....	42
Chapter 5 Animal Predation	45
The Bird Head.....	52
II: Decorative Elements	
Chapter 6 Fantastic Elements	57
Chapter 7 Plant Motifs	61
Conclusion	75
Maps	77
Figures	81
Selected References	121
Index	137

List of Maps and Figures

Map 1: Overview of the Mediterranean through China.....	77
Map 2: Modern Chinese Provinces	78
Map 3: Selected Chinese Cities.....	79
Map 4: Selected Scythian and Sarmatian Sites.....	80
Figure 1. Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan) M1 black lacquered coffin.....	81
Figure 2. Northwestern Iran bronze vase, c. 10th-8th centuries BC	82
Figure 3. Cyprus, hematite cylinder seal, c. 14th century BC	83
Figure 4. Gaozhuang (Huaiyin Municipality, Jiangsu) M1:114-2 incised bronze fragment	83
Figure 5. Jiagezhuang (Tangshan Municipality, Hebei) M5 copper-inlaid bronze <i>hu</i>	84
Figure 6. Mancheng (Hebei) M2:3004 partially-silvered bronze <i>boshanlu</i> incense burner	84
Figure 7. Gaozhuang (Huaiyin Municipality, Jiangsu) M1:0137 incised bronze fragment	85
Figure 8. Nanyang (Henan) stamped brick	85
Figure 9. Nimrud carved stone (gypsum alabaster), Neo-Assyrian, c. 883-859 BC	86
Figure 10. Liulige (Huixian, Henan) <i>hu</i> M59:23 (bronze)	87
Figure 11. Hanjiaqu (Yishui, Shandong) stone bas relief.....	87
Figure 12. Hejiagou (Suide, Shaanxi) stone bas relief.....	88
Figure 13. Yanjiacha (Suide, Shaanxi) stone bas relief.....	89
Figure 14. Xindu (Sichuan) stamped brick.....	90
Figure 15. Songshan (Jiaxiang, Shandong) stone bas relief	90
Figure 16. Yingzhuang (Nanyang Municipality, Henan) stone bas relief.....	91
Figure 17. Daodunzi (Tongxin, Ningxia) M10:33 Xiongnu bronze plaque	91
Figure 18. Suide (Shaanxi) stone bas relief.....	91
Figure 19. Maquan (Xianyang Municipality, Shaanxi) lacquered <i>lian</i> toiletries box.....	92
Figure 20. Greek or Boeotian calyx-krater, red figure terra cotta, c. early 4th century BC	93
Figure 21. Pingshuo (Shanxi) 6M50:8 gilded bronze plaque	93
Figure 22. Yangzishan (Chengdu Municipality, Sichuan) M1 stone bas relief.....	94
Figure 23. Jiunüdu (Suining, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief.....	94
Figure 24. Xichagou (Xifeng, Liaoning) Xiongnu bronze plaque	94
Figure 25. Erlanhuogou 二蘭虎溝 (Qahar [Chaha'er] Right Rear Banner 察哈爾右翼後旗, Inner Mongolia) Xianbei bronze plaque	95
Figure 26. Liulige (Huixian, Henan) M76:85 bronze <i>hu</i>	95
Figure 27. Mancheng (Hebei) M1:2250 gilded bronze harness ornament	95
Figure 28. Yaozhuang (Hanjiang, Yangzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) M101:190 lacquered <i>lian</i> with silver fittings and carnelian inlay.....	96

Figure 29.	Qinglongshan (Peixian, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief.....	97
Figure 30.	Noyon uul (Batsumber, Tuv [Mongolia]) M6:254 silver plaque.....	97
Figure 31.	Western Iran bronze beaker, Iron Age II (c. 10th-9th centuries BC)	98
Figure 32.	Dyrestuj (Burjatija [Russia]) bronze plaque	98
Figure 33.	Unprovenanced (“Ordos”) Xiongnu bronze plaque.....	99
Figure 34.	Shuihudi (Yunmeng, Hubei) M47:93 carved wood comb.....	99
Figure 35.	Jiawang (Tongshan, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief	99
Figure 36.	Aluchaideng (Hanggin Banner, Inner Mongolia) Xiongnu gold plaque	100
Figure 37.	Sanlidun (Lianshui, Jiangsu) gold garment hook	100
Figure 38.	Shaogou (Luoyang Municipality, Henan) M1028A:14 earthenware model well....	101
Figure 39.	Zhangxu (Suining, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief	102
Figure 40.	Luoyang (Henan) hollow brick.....	103
Figure 41.	Aluchaideng (Hanggin Banner, Inner Mongolia) Xiongnu gold plaque, inlaid with turquoise and red stone.....	103
Figure 42.	Thracian silver goblet, c. 4th century BC	104
Figure 43.	Mancheng (Hebei) M2:3032 gilded bronze double cup stand, inlaid with turquoise, jade rings	105
Figure 44.	Shilipu (Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief.....	105
Figure 45.	Tomb of Lord Feng or his consort (Tanghe [Nanyang Municipality, Henan]) stone bas relief.....	105
Figure 46.	Greek situla, South Italian, Apulian, attributed to the Lycurgus Painter; red figure terracotta, c. 360-340 BC.....	106
Figure 47.	Pazyryk kurgan 2 copper plaque	107
Figure 48.	Aluchaideng (Hanggin Banner, Inner Mongolia) Xiongnu gold headdress	107
Figure 49.	Pazyryk kurgan 2 torque, gilded wood and horn on a copper ring (reconstruction).....	108
Figure 50.	Left Wu Family Shrine (Jiaxiang, Shandong), stone 2 (bas relief)	108
Figure 51.	Pazyryk kurgan 1 leather appliquéés on a felt saddle blanket	108
Figure 52.	Shuanggou (Suining, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief	108
Figure 53.	Taishang (Tongshan, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief	109
Figure 54.	Daodunzi (Tongxin, Ningxia) M19:9 gilded bronze plaque.....	109
Figure 55.	Pad’ Sudži (Burjatija) bronze appliqué.....	109
Figure 56.	Archaic Greek or Cretan black-figured terracotta hydria (water jar), attributed to the Eagle Painter, c. 520-510 BC.....	110
Figure 57.	Zhengzhou (Henan) hollow brick	111
Figure 58.	Zengjiabao (Chengdu Municipality, Sichuan) M1 stone bas relief	111
Figure 59.	Zhengzhou (Henan) stamped brick.....	112
Figure 60.	Noyon uul (Batsumber, Tuv [Mongolia]) M25:22 bronze fitting.....	112
Figure 61.	Stag rhyton, gilded silver inlaid with garnet and glass, inscribed in Aramaic (or Persian?); Near Eastern (Parthian), c. 50 BC - AD 50.....	113

Figure 62. Xiaotianxi (Fuling, Sichuan) M3:23 silver-inlaid bronze, c. Middle-Late Warring States	114
Figure 63. Mashan (Jiangling, Jingzhou Municipality, Hubei) M1, N2, embroidered silk.....	115
Figure 64. Mashan (Jiangling, Jingzhou Municipality, Hubei) M1, N7, embroidered silk.....	116
Figure 65. Mashan (Jiangling, Jingzhou Municipality, Hubei) M1, N9, embroidered silk.....	117
Figure 66. Dahuting (Mixian, Henan) M2 painted ceiling	117
Figure 67. Wu family Front shrine (Jiaxiang, Shandong) stone bas relief	118
Figure 68. Jiunüdu (Suining, Xuzhou Municipality, Jiangsu) stone bas relief.....	118
Figure 69. Ionian (East Greek) terracotta oinochoe, c. 625 BC	119

Abbreviations

BMFEA *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*

KG *Kaogu* 考古

KGXB *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報

KGXJK *Kaoguxue jikan* 考古學集刊

KGYWW *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物

M mu 墓 / *mogila* tomb

NMGWWKG *Neimenggu wenwu kaogu* 內蒙古文物考古

SJ *Sima Qian* 司馬遷. *Shiji* 史記. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.

WW *Wenwu* 文物

WWZLCK *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 文物資料叢刊

Chronologies

Early China

Late Shang: c. 14th-mid-eleventh centuries BC

Western Zhou: c. 1050/1040-772 BC

 Early Western Zhou: c. 1050/1040-951 BC

 Middle Western Zhou: c. 950-851 BC

 Late Western Zhou: c. 850-772 BC

Eastern Zhou: c. 771-222 BC

 Springs and Autumns: c. 771-476 BC

 Early Springs and Autumns: c. 771-671 BC

 Middle Springs and Autumns: c. 670-571 BC

 Late Springs and Autumns: c. 570-476 BC

 Warring States: c. 475-222 BC

 Early Warring States: c. 475-391 BC

 Middle Warring States: c. 390-311 BC

 Late Warring States: c. 310-222 BC

Qin: 221-207 BC

Han: 206 BC-AD 220

Western Han: 206 BC-AD 8

Early¹ Western Han: c. 206-134 BC

Middle Western Han: c. 134-62 BC

Late Western Han: c. 62 BC-8 AD

Wang Mang: AD 9-24

Eastern Han: AD 25-220

Early Eastern Han: c. 25-89 AD

Middle Eastern Han: c. 90-154 AD

Late Eastern Han: c. 155-220 AD

*Egypt*²

Predynastic: prior to c. 3100 BC

Early Dynastic (Dynasties 1-2): c. 3100-2686 BC

Old Kingdom (Dynasties 3-6): c. 2649-2150 BC

First Intermediate Period (Dynasties 7-11 [partial]): c. 2150-2030 BC

Middle Kingdom (Dynasties 11 [partial]-13): c. 2030-1640 BC

Second Intermediate Period (Dynasties 14-16): c. 1640-1550 BC

New Kingdom (Dynasties 17-19): c. 1550-1070 BC

Third Intermediate Period (Dynasties 19-24): c. 1070-712 BC

Late Period (Kushite Period, Dynasty 25; Saite Period, Dynasty 26; Persian Period, Dynasty 27; assorted, Dynasties 28-30): c. 712-332 BC

Ptolemaic Period: c. 332-30 BC

Roman Rule: c. 30 BC-395 AD

¹ It is more common to divide according to the reigns of emperors. For the present discussion, however, the identity of the emperor is not relevant; I have therefore divided time into approximately equal periods.

² Early dates are uncertain and differ according to author. Here, based primarily on the timeline from the University College London, *Egyptian Chronology* (dated 2000) <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/chronology/index.html>>; a series of essays, all in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-): C. H. Roehrig, *Egypt in the Old Kingdom* (ca. 2649-2150 B.C.), <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/oking/hd_oking.htm> (dated October 2000); Roehrig, *Egypt in the Middle Kingdom* (2030-1640 B.C.), <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/mking/hd_mking.htm> (dated October 2000); J. Allen and M. Hill, *Egypt in the Late Period* (ca. 712-332 B.C.), <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/lapd/hd_lapd.htm> (dated October 2004); M. Hill, *Egypt in the Ptolemaic Period*, <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ptol/hd_ptol.htm> (dated October 2016). All accessed June 2017.

Mesopotamia (Key Dates)³

Ur Royal Cemetery (Sumer): c. 2600-2100 BC (City-state occupied from c. 5500-400 BC⁴)

Old Assyrian Period: c. 1813-1781 BC

Middle Assyrian Period: c. 1365-1056 BC

Neo-Assyrian Period: c. 883-609 BC

Achaemenid: c. 559/550-330 BC

Greece (art historical)⁵

Geometric Period: c. 900-700 BC

Archaic: c. 700-480 BC

Classical: c. 480-323 BC

Hellenistic: c. 323-31 BC

³ A useful outline is provided by the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, List of Rulers of Mesopotamia, *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/meru/hd_meru.htm> (dated October 2004), accessed June 2017. Again, reign dates are uncertain.

⁴ University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Iraq's Ancient Past: Rediscovering Ur's Royal Cemetery, <https://www.penn.museum/sites/iraq/?page_id=24>, accessed June 2017.

⁵ Ancient Greece, 1000 B.C.-1 A.D., *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-), <<https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/?period=04®ion=eusb>> (dated October 2000), accessed June 2017.

Chinese Vessel Names⁶

Bianhu 扁壺 flat *hu*, similar in form to a circular flask

Ding 鼎 round-bodied tripod

Dui 敦 bowl-shaped vessel for serving grain

Dou 豆 a footed cup-like form with a wide mouth and shallow body, used for serving food

Fanghu 方壺 a *hu* with a body square in cross-section

Fou 缶 a pot to contain alcohol, similar to a *lei*

Guan 罐 (generic) pot (large body, little or no neck)

Gui 簋 pot-shaped vessel for serving grain

He 盒 box

He 盃 a teapot-like vessel for pouring alcohol

Hu 壺 vase-like form (relatively small body and long neck), commonly for storage of liquid

Jia 斝 elongated pouring vessel, usually without a spout (typically, with two knobbed stem-like attachments on the rim)

Lei 罍 typically, a broad-bodied vessel with a relatively narrow mouth, lidded, for the storage of alcohol

Pan 盤 platter/basin

Xuan 鍤 basin

Yan 甗 steamer

You 卣 a lidded container for alcohol

Yu 盂 a basin or broad pot

Zhong 鍾 vase (broader belly than the *hu*)

Zun 尊 of various forms, but often a broad, flaring-mouthed vessel for alcohol; sometimes identified as for heating alcohol

Zun-pan 尊盤 a *zun* set inside a basin

⁶ Various guides are available in other works; see also Jean Lefevre, *Récipients de bronze, d'après les inscriptions sur os et sur bronze*, <chinesereferenceshelf.brillonline.com/grand-ricci/files/recipients-bronze.pdf>, accessed June 2017.

Introduction

The Han 漢 dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) stands at an historical juncture as the first unified dynasty to withstand succession between generations of rulers. Culturally poised between the Bronze Age (broadly, c. 1600-221 BC) and what I have termed the Age of Ceramics, it represents an era of transformation and innovation, building to varying extents on the developments of dynastic Qin 秦 (221-206 BC) and the Warring States (c. 475-221 BC). The relationship between Han social and political organization to Qin practices, retraceable through the comparison of received and excavated texts, has been recognized.¹ Much less has been done to examine Han art in an historical context. This may, in part, be due to the paucity of obvious links with earlier Chinese tradition. The few Eastern Zhou (c. 771-221 BC) motifs that may readily be identified (principally the meander/tendrill or ‘cloud’ pattern), although widely used during the Han (cf., Figures 1, 13, 28), constitute only a relatively minor aspect of Han art as a whole. Dynastic Qin offers evidence important for an understanding of the transition away from Bronze Age norms, a process continued during the Han, but this evidence is highly fragmentary. In this context, Han art gives the impression of emerging largely ex nihilo. This is true in terms of the dominant media (clay and stone, rather than bronze), the dominant type of objects chosen for the most innovative and complex decoration (walls, rather than vessels), and especially the dominant subject matter: human activity and representations of deities, rather than largely abstract design (with some animal motifs).

Han use of bronze for utilitarian vessels² or luxury items,³ rather than the bronze ritual vessels central in pre-imperial Chinese society to political legitimation and social status, is the expected result of social changes largely completed before the Han. Accordingly, the end of the social dominance of the bronze ritual vessel led to other expressions of affluence, as well as freeing décor from the limits of vessel tradition.⁴ The strength of later Bronze Age vessel norms nonetheless persists throughout the Han in terms of the basic categories of vessel forms (*hu* 壺 vases and *ding* 鼎 tripods) and the basic compositional tenets of décor (horizontal banding around the body of the vessel – visible on Figure 10 – or the application of *pushou* 鋪首 animal masks on the side of vessels). At the same time, Han artisans, unlike their predecessors, clearly focused on the development of ceramic vessel production, with innovation in form, thickness

¹ E.g., Loewe 2010.

² Absent an inscription, it is difficult to ascertain the purpose for which the vessels found in Han graves were made. I assume that undecorated pots whose shapes are unrelated to earlier ritual ware are simply utilitarian. In some cases, the bottom of excavated pots (both bronze and earthenware) is marked with soot, indicating that they were used, presumably more than once. This suggests to me that such pieces were intended for practical purposes, rather than for ritual connected with the burial in which they were found. See Psarras 2015: 34, 76-77; see also Lin (ed.) 2012: 316-317, No. 190.

³ As in examples from Mancheng 滿城 (Hebei): Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan 1980, Vol. 1: 40-41, Figs 23-24; Vol. 2: Col. Pl. 5, M1:5014, gold- and silver-inlaid bronze *hu*; Vol. 1: 44, Fig. 26, M1:5015, gold- and silver-inlaid bronze *hu*; Vol. 1: 47, Fig. 29, M1:5018, matching M1:5015.

⁴ For the dominance of ritual bronzes on vessel forms and décors, see Falkenhausen 2006. Little early data in perishable media has survived, but examples of the application of bronze décor to other types of objects in other media include: Houjiazhuang 侯家莊 (Anyang 安陽 Municipality, Henan) HPKM1001 (c. 13th-12th centuries BC) and Lijiazui 李家嘴 (Panlongcheng 盤龍城, [Huangpi 黃陂, Wuhan 武漢 Municipality, Hubei]) M2 (c. 16th-14th centuries BC), both wood coffins (Beijing 1979: Pl. 27, Lijiazui M2 coffin imprint shown, top; comparative bronze décor from M1, bottom); Pl. 28, Houjiazhuang); Shangcunling 上村嶺 (Sanmenxia 三門峽 Municipality, Henan) M2118 and 2119 coffin banners, c. 9th-early 8th centuries BC (Henan 1999b, Vol. 2: Col. Pl. 43, M2118; Col. Pl. 44, M2119); Xiadu 下都 (Yi 易 xian 縣, Hebei: *inter alia*, Hebei 1996, Vol. 2: Pl. 12-14, Laoyemiaotai 老爺廟臺 habitation site V, c. 4th century BC; Pl. 16:4-6, Laoyemiaotai habitation site V, c. 3rd century BC; Pl. 17:3-4, Laoyemiaotai habitation site 25, c. 4th century BC).

of the walls, and surface treatment (such as glazes).⁵ More importantly, vessel décor no longer dominated the décor of objects in other media.

The most obvious Han innovation – often taken as defining Han art – is the development of figural or narrative art, most frequently known to us from tomb murals executed as stone bas reliefs and stamped bricks (paintings are more rare). Attempts to understand the development of this aspect of Han art are complicated not only by the paucity of earlier figural elements, but by the overwhelming association of composition and context: so strong is the association of Han narrative art and the tomb that the subject matter, as well as the use of murals, is often assumed to be ritual in character.⁶ Subject matter and the context in which it is displayed thus become largely inseparable. In this way, despite obvious differences in context and media, a certain equivalence between the Bronze Age ritual vessel and the Han tomb mural tends to emerge. Han figural or narrative art thus tends to be viewed as a sociological concern, emphasizing the meaning of the images (or the reason they were used⁷), rather than their derivation.⁸ This pursuit in turn largely depends on connecting images to passages in transmitted texts, which, in fact, offer remarkably little relevant information. Even the mythological geography of the *Shanhajing* 山海經 is difficult to place in context;⁹ certainly, it does not furnish a description of religious beliefs. This dearth of objective points of reference for Han dynasty interpretations of images applies all the more so to the Eastern Zhou era – and to the cultures beyond China through whom the images were transmitted. Furthermore, although connected at various stages in their history and combined into a harmonious whole by the Han, we have no reason a priori to view the images as a single, set unit throughout their history, in all of the cultures where variants appear. Their likely transmission to China through multiple cultures suggests the reverse. It would therefore be a mistake to interpret their diffusion as paralleling that of Buddhism, whose adoption in China exceeds the scope of the present work. Here, I propose to examine only questions surrounding the emergence of these images in China, a problem that can only be addressed archaeologically, leaving analysis of image meaning to other scholars. Indeed, archaeologically-based conclusions may ultimately modify the way the transmission and further development of image meaning will be seen.

In these terms, the Han tomb mural can be broken down into three components: context (the tomb), form (the mural), and subject matter. Each of these three components has a separate

⁵ In ceramics, this is particularly visible in broad experimentation with surface treatment, as well as with the production of highly-finished variants of standard forms and experimentation with elaborate new structures, such as the multi-*guan* 罐 pot (miniature pots attached to the main vessel). Examples of highly-finished forms, fine clay bodies, or fine glazes include: Zhongguo taoci 2000: Pl. 123, Shaoxing 紹興 (Jiangxi), stoneware/porcelain (*ci* 瓷) *hu* or *zhong* 鍾; Pl. 141, Shanghai Museum; 142, Zaijiadun 宰家墩 (Hanjiang 邗江, Yangzhou 揚州 Municipality, Jiangsu); Pl. 144, Shangyu 上虞 (Zhejiang) Cultural Relics Management Committee, stoneware/porcelain, light-colored glaze. Examples of multi-*guan* pots include Zhongguo taoci 2000: Pl. 133, Shengzhou 嵊州 Municipality (Zhejiang) Cultural Relics Management Station; Pl. 134, Wangjiatang 王家塘 (Changzhou 常州 Municipality, Jiangsu); Pl. 135, Shahe 沙河 (Yin 鄞 xian, Zhejiang); Pl. 136, Fenghuang 鳳凰 (Xiaoshan 蕭山 Municipality, Zhejiang), heavy, deep chocolate glaze; Pl. 137, Ma'anshan 馬鞍山 (Huangyan 黃巖 Municipality, Zhejiang), with double-layered glaze: dripped dark color over a light base; Pl. 138, Shangyu (Zhejiang) Cultural Relics Management Station.

⁶ An assumption visible, for instance, in Wang 2011, 2012. A substantial body of material is readily available on the meaning of Han art, including recent volumes which further provide extensive references (Wu Hung 1989, C. Y. Liu, M. Nylan, A. Barbieri-Low, et al. 2005., C. Y. Liu, M. Loewe, Zheng Yan, L. Thompson, et al. 2008).

⁷ Powers 1991 suggests an association between political views and use of specific images; however, the images he cites may be found elsewhere in China, executed in different styles. For discussion, see Psarras 2015: 34–59.

⁸ Hsing I-tien 2005 is a fine exception; Nickel 2012, 2013, in general terms.

⁹ For annotations and discussion, see Mathieu 1983.

derivation. Although in this research I shall focus on elements of subject matter – specifically, on individual images that recur frequently in different compositions, a brief introduction to the problems of context and form helps to clarify the narrower analysis.

While the use of murals in tombs became popular during the Han, fragmentary evidence from the excavations of Qin palaces at Xianyang 咸陽 (Shaanxi)¹⁰ indicates that murals (paintings and stamped bricks) were used at least during the dynastic Qin in living architecture. Although they provide only limited information about composition, the Qin fragments provide a prototype for the mural as a form, as well as for the use of narrative imagery, to which we will return. We have no evidence as to the possible use of murals in the pre-imperial period; in contrast, narrative scenes applied to other substrates do occasionally occur. Further, although again we lack evidence, the Qin fragments, which include figural décor, suggest that murals were also featured in Han dynasty palaces and (by extension) aristocratic residences. Indeed, some use of ornamented brick or stone in Han living architecture is confirmed by the stamped brick flooring in the Han city at Chongan 崇安 (Fujian),¹¹ with a geometric décor closely related to Bronze Age ornamental patterns.

The earliest Han murals now known are the figural paintings on silk which lined the wood box burial chamber of Mawangdui 馬王堆 (Changsha 長沙, Hunan) M3 (168 BC).¹² Given the fragility of the fabric and the pigments used in painting, such work may not have survived in other tombs. In addition, the high social rank of the deceased in Mawangdui M3, believed to be a son of the Marquis of Dai 軫 (Mawangdui M1), raises the question of how widely such paintings may have been distributed in Han society. The widespread adoption of tomb murals attested later in the archaeological record appears to result from a decision to use more durable materials for such décor. This seems to have resulted in a broader range of quality, with documented examples of stones and bricks with a décor ranging from simply-drawn, single motifs (geometric or figural) to complex scenes sustained over several panels (read as representations of paradise or the residence of the deceased – or the two combined). Such variation suggests the availability of artisans of differing technical abilities, presumably at differing levels of cost. Although it is difficult to assess the social status of most decorated tombs (many, if not most, have been thoroughly robbed), the sheer number of murals known today leads me to conclude that such work must have become accessible to a broader cross-section of society than paintings on silk like those in Mawangdui M3.

The production of stone and brick murals seems to have emerged in connection with the development during the Han of what I have called architectonic tombs in stone and brick, a distinctive form approximating in many respects a miniaturized house. Although so strongly identified with the Han, architectonic tombs coexisted with the flat-topped, compartmented wood box tombs characteristic of Bronze Age aristocratic burials not only in the early Western, but through the early Eastern Han (c. late 3rd century BC-2nd century AD).¹³ They vary in size and in complexity of layout (the number of rooms, the use of connecting hallways), as well as in the treatment of the roof. If the body of these tombs may be related to Han living architecture, this architecture, as we understand it primarily from the models and drawings of buildings

¹⁰ Ma Jianxi 1990; Shaanxi 2004.

¹¹ Fujian 1990: 355, Fig. 13, building 1 (T7[3]:31).

¹² Zhang Zhenglang, Fu Juyou, and Chen Songchang 1992: 26-34.

¹³ For a discussion of Han tomb structures, see Psarras 2015. For steppe influence on the Han aristocratic use of the burial mound, see Rawson 1999.

included in many tombs, offers no parallel for the use of the curved archways, vaulting, and domes characteristic of the architectonic tomb. Even more than Han art, the architectonic tomb seems a new invention, without Chinese precedent. This lack of precedent suggests to me the self-conscious development of new structures; the apparent lack of Chinese prototype for the roofing, in particular, convinces me that these tombs reflect the selective assimilation of foreign influence. The development of Han art may have been less self-conscious, but the role of foreign influence is at least equally significant and more readily traceable.

Eastern Zhou yields scattered examples of narrative or figural décor: hunting and other animal scenes featuring humanoid – rather than human – creatures (as in Figures 4, 5, 7, 10), people engaged in presumably ritual activities against an architectural background, animals interacting with other animals, and, even more rarely, a host of floral motifs (primarily represented on embroidered silks from Mashan 馬山 [Jiangling 江陵, Jingzhou 荊州 Municipality, Hubei]¹⁴; see Figures 63, 64, 65). All of these constitute a sharp, intrusive departure from the norms of Chinese Bronze Age ornamentation. Direct carryover into the Han appears largely limited to more narrative depiction of animals (especially animal predation – as in Figures 6, 32, 38, in which a feline or other animal predator attacks a hooved animal such as a goat or horse) and, rarely, of humanoid figures assumed from their attributes (thunderbolts, for example) to represent deities (cf., Figure 1). The latter appear in an Eastern Zhou style in a mural fragment from the Qin dynasty palace site (Xianyang Municipality, Shaanxi) and again on a silk manuscript Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan) M3.¹⁵

The animal-based images have been widely recognized as steppe-derived;¹⁶ the floral motifs have, as far as I know, not attracted scholarly attention. No convincing origin has been proposed for the other elements. Close examination of Eastern Zhou figural work does, in fact, yield connections with Han narrative art. How this is so becomes evident only when both Eastern Zhou and Han art are broken down into discrete compositional elements that may be seen to have been used repeatedly in different contexts. As in the problem of identifying Eastern Zhou narrative elements in Han art, the question of the origin of these elements may be further obscured by the clearly Chinese context in which they are sometimes placed: in the depictions of people, for instance, the garments worn and the buildings shown are all identifiable as Chinese by comparison to depictions and three-dimensional models found in Eastern Zhou and Han tombs.¹⁷ It is important, however, not to confuse the Chinese context applied to the scenes with the origin of specific components or, indeed, the composition as a whole.

¹⁴ Hubei 1985.

¹⁵ Shaanxi 2004: 220, Fig. 201, Qin palace find; Zhang Zhenglang, Fu Juyou, and Chen Songchang 1992: 35, Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan).

¹⁶ As recognized by Institute of Archaeology of Shanxi Province 1996: 16-17, 83-84, which also acknowledges in passing the possibility of iconographic influence from Egypt, the Near East, and Central Asia. Weber 1968 reviews then-available Eastern Zhou material, minimizing the potential for foreign influence. Bunker 1983-1985 and Jacobson 1988, for example, reprise aspects of the question of sino-steppe exchange. For steppe influence on the Han, including art, see Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 1994, 2008; Rawson 2012.

¹⁷ For three-dimensional models, for the Warring States, see Hebei 1996, Vol. 2: Col. Pl. 51, find from the Xiadu site, state of Yan 燕 (Yixian, Hebei), 64G:043, bronze figure; Col. Pl. 52-53, Xiadu find 67DG:0160, bronze fittings in the form of buildings; for the Han, see Hong Kong 2015: 82, Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan) M1, painted wood figures; 83-85, Yangling 陽陵 site (Xianyang Municipality, Shaanxi), unnumbered tomb, earthenware figures with engobe décor; 102-103, Daiwangxiang 待王鄉 (Jiaozuo 焦作 Municipality, Henan), earthenware architectural model with engobe décor; 104, Hongqiling 紅旗嶺 (Hepu 合浦, Guangxi) M2, earthenware model house; 105, Tielu New Village 鐵路新村 (Guigang 貴港 Municipality, Guangxi) M3, earthenware model residence; 125, Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan) M1, painted wood figures.

The most important of these elements are animal predation, typically a feline attacking a hooved animal (Figure 32); the animal master, a humanoid creature flanked or surrounded by animals (Figure 3); and the tree of life, a tree or tree-like shape, likewise flanked or surrounded by animals (Figure 25). In addition, a substantial number of floral or vegetal motifs also recur. Together, these form the core of one of the most fundamental of Han iconographies: the depiction of paradise. Although Chinese prototypes are lacking, these image components are readily recognizable in the context of the ancient Near East, Egypt, and the Mediterranean, as early as the 3rd millennium BC, followed later by the steppe. In these regions, the animal master, tree of life, and animal predation serve as central iconographies, remaining in use over millennia, recast in different ways, with different meanings attached at various times. In Han hands, these motifs again assume central iconographic importance, with a single image often being adapted in numerous ways: the animal master becomes not only the Queen Mother of the West (*xi wang mu* 西王母), sovereign deity of the western paradise, but simultaneously her consort, the King Father of the East (*dong wang gong* 東王公)¹⁸ (Figure 14), as well as the various genii (to use the Western term) that inhabit the meanders of the Mawangdui (Changsha Municipality, Hunan) M1 black lacquered (outer) coffin¹⁹ (Figure 1) and the Mancheng (Hebei) M1:5182 gilded bronze *boshanlu* 博山爐 mountain-shaped incense burner.²⁰ Thus, even though these creatures are not identical in Chinese terms, all represent adaptations of the image of the animal master. The tree of life, in turn, becomes, in sculptural form, the branching ‘money trees’;²¹ while animal predation (together with related animal images) becomes the subordinate of both the animal master and the tree of life.

To these central elements, Han artisans add a variety of motifs – primarily animal and plant forms – which, outside of China, occupy a more purely ornamental status. Some are as old and as widely-adopted in the ancient world outside of China as the animal master; others emerged in the Hellenistic world (c. 323-31 BC). (Steppe art rarely makes use of floral forms.) Some, again like the animal master, first appear in Chinese work during the Eastern Zhou, but only rarely, becoming widespread during the Han. Indeed, Han development of these décors suggests that foreign motifs first adopted by Eastern Zhou artisans may well have been subsequently reintroduced, perhaps repeatedly. In this context, it is therefore likely that Chinese contact with foreign cultures, over an extended period and extended distances, was the norm, not the exception.

International contact remains little studied in the context of Bronze Age and early imperial China, apart from the advent of Buddhism and obviously-foreign imports, neither of which will be examined here.²² In contrast, international exchange of various kinds has been intensely explored in recent decades for the Near East, Mediterranean, and adjacent territories. In these areas, long-distance trade in raw materials has been well documented, as has cultural

¹⁸ As on the Wu 武 family shrines (Jiaxiang 嘉祥, Shandong): Liu Xingzhen and Yue Fengxia 1991: 16, Queen Mother of the West; 32, King Father of the East, both Wu Liang 武梁 shrine; 67, Queen Mother of the West (? image unclear); 55, King Father, both Front shrine; 92-93, King Father, Left shrine.

¹⁹ Zhang Zhenglang, Fu Juyou, and Chen Songchang 1992: 6-11.

²⁰ Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan 1980, Vol. 1: 64-65, Fig. 44-45. For discussion of the *boshanlu* form, see Rawson 2006, 2012:27-28, as of Achaemenid censer shape.

²¹ For multiple images (and a different approach), see Erickson 1995.

²² Recent studies of note include Zhao Deyun 2016, Hong Quan 2012, Li Ling 2014, Li Jaang 2011, Liu Yang 2013. Such research is more common in the study of early Xinjiang (Li Shuicheng 1999; Wu 2009; Lin Meicun 2015), but of course Xinjiang was not Chinese.

influence transmitted by the flow of objects and artisans. To cite only one example of trade, lapis lazuli, mined in Afghanistan as early as the early 3rd millennium BC, was exported as a raw material to Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq-Syria),²³ as well as to Sistan (eastern Iran), where it was processed and subsequently exported in the form of finished goods.²⁴ The development of the animal master, tree of life, and animal predation, more complex than trade in raw materials or finished goods, covered similar distances. In the more familiar period of the Achaemenid (550-330 BC) and Alexander the Great (reigned 336-323 BC), if not before, Greek and Persian influence permeated northern India and parts of Central Asia, including Bactria (northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan),²⁵ and extended into the Altaian culture of Pazyryk (c. 5th-3rd centuries BC)²⁶ and the Xiongnu 匈奴 culture (c. 4th century BC-3rd century AD) of the Far Eastern steppe (primarily Inner Mongolia, Mongolia, south Siberia).²⁷ I shall not attempt to summarize here the complexities of these exchanges, but refer interested readers to readily-available scholarship.

The extent of these interregional exchanges, both geographically and chronologically, should raise parallel questions for China, all the more so given that territories contiguous to China (as in those of the Xiongnu and, indeed, Xinjiang) were part of the western equation. How can we assume that China did not have significant contact with, for instance, Central Asia long before Zhang Qian's 張騫 assignment (c. 138 BC) to the Western Regions (*xiyu* 西域, essentially modern Xinjiang)²⁸ or with India long before the introduction of Buddhism into China (traditionally, c. 1st century AD)? Certainly, Zhang's reports changed Han diplomacy, bringing a more detailed awareness of foreign cultures to the attention of the court (and, thus, the historian), but this change may well have affected primarily the central government and its immediate circles, not what might be termed private experience and private enterprise. Unfortunately, the current archaeological record in²⁹ and immediately around China rarely allows narrow identification of the paths of intercultural contact. As more field work and more analysis are completed, we may hope that greater precision becomes possible. Nonetheless, the effects of such contact are already clearly visible and awaiting examination.

²³ Moorey 1999: 86; see also Francfort 1993.

²⁴ E.g., at Shahr-i-Sokhta: Weiss (ed.) 1985: 153-154, No. 54 (entry by K. Kohlmeyer). Kohlmeyer also notes Afghanistan as a source of the carnelian exported as a raw material to Mesopotamia, where it was subsequently worked; and on p. 165, No. 71 and 166, No. 72, trade in steatite vessels from southern Iran, where evidence has been found of mines and workshops, with the vessels subsequently traded throughout Iran, Mesopotamia, and the Persian Gulf. All of these examples date to c. 2900-2500 BC. Other sources on the subject include (*inter alia*) Aruz, Benzel, and Evans (eds) 2008, Aruz, Graff, and Rakic (eds) 2013, Aruz, Graff, and Tadic (eds) 2014, Collon 1987, 1995, Moorey 1999, Muscarella 1988.

²⁵ Substantial literature is readily available on these questions, including Sideris 2008; Bernard 1987.

²⁶ Rudenko 1970 emphasizes Achaemenid cultural influence on Pazyryk, primarily as a means of dating the site; cf., Curtis and Tallis 2005: 47-48; Boardman 2000: 200-202. It must be noted that the dating of Pazyryk remains highly controversial, with multiple new runs of radiocarbon analyses: consensus now seems to be c. 300-250 BC for the Pazyryk kurgans, with related Altaian sites presumably earlier (Parzinger *et al.* 2008: 15).

²⁷ For the Xiongnu, see Psarras forthcoming.

²⁸ Cf., Nickel 2013, especially 28.

²⁹ Since most extant figural data from the Eastern Zhou often occurs as vessel décor on pieces found in excavated tombs, dating is often possible by inscriptions on the vessel (subject to problems of interpretation) or, more frequently, through cross-dating established by other objects in the same tomb. In contrast, most Han murals occur in tombs which cannot be dated unless the structure has been inscribed with the date of the death or burial of the occupant, or the date of construction of the tomb. Most figured tombs are not date-inscribed and, thoroughly robbed over time, no longer yield objects which may provide a date. Thus, questions such as whether certain regions of China were more open to certain influences cannot now be answered.

The terminology I have adopted is commonly used in Western languages, particularly with reference to early versions of these images, before they became recognizably associated with specific gods, kings, heroes, or landscapes.³⁰ Such terminology thus allows for identification of the images with minimal cultural association. My use of the term “paradise” is similarly neutral, without reference to any school of thought, simply indicating the place where supernatural or fantastic beings and creatures may be found, whatever their relationship to the human world.

In this work, I offer analysis of the development of key images in Han figural art. Most of these reflect foreign influence, whether received in China during the Eastern Zhou, the Qin, or during the Han. Ideally, this discussion would be fully illustrated to allow easy comparison of relevant objects. Alas, this is impossible, not only because of the volume of illustrations required, but because of the high cost of reproducing images from some museums (the British Museum, for instance, considers scholarly publications to be commercial and therefore not exempt from fees³¹) and publishers (particularly Wenwu). I am grateful to the J. Paul Getty Museum (Malibu, CA) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), whose open access programs allow reproduction of photographs published online of specified objects in their collections. Research for this article was begun with a Summer Stipend grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities under grant no. FT-40420 (1994), gratefully acknowledged, and continued with the incalculable, unwavering support of my mother, the late Mrs. Mary E. Psarras. My thanks are also due to the editors and reviewers whose generous comments were most helpful as I prepared this manuscript for publication. As always, any errors are naturally my own.

³⁰ For questions of the meaning of these iconographies in the Near East, cf., Collon 1987; and, in the steppe, cf., Dumézil 1978.

³¹ British Museum, terms of use of site images <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_this_site/terms_of_use/copyright_and_permissions.aspx>, viewed June 2016; no waiver is allowed (personal communication, 14 June 2016).