

Buddhas' have preserved for us. But neither this task nor a systematic review of the stylistic motifs in our figured silks from Lou-lan can be attempted here.

Types and
groups of
designs in
silk tissues.

The aim of the following notes will be merely to distinguish the main types and groups into which the designs of these tissues may be divided, and to indicate briefly the chief features which are characteristic of each, giving references to individual specimens. My remarks must necessarily be based on the detailed descriptions which Mr. Andrews' competent hand has supplied in the List below, and on the very instructive synopsis of the prevailing schemes and motifs with which he concludes the paper I have repeatedly quoted.² When dealing with these oldest extant remains of Chinese textile art, discovered, as it were in transit, by the side of the very route which for centuries had served China's earliest silk trade with Central Asia and the distant West, the question necessarily suggests itself as to the influence its designs may have exerted in those 'Western regions'. This question, in the present state of our knowledge, may not be capable of a definite answer. But in view of its archaeological interest we shall be justified in considering it after we have also examined the designs, of a strikingly different type, which the woollen tapestry pieces from L.C. present.

Types of
decorative
designs.

The decorative designs shown by our L.C. silk fabrics may be classed under three main types. The first and most frequent is characterized by the predominance of animal figures, surrounded and set off by a wealth of fine scrolls which in most of the fragments are derived from cloud forms and in others suggest a floral origin. In the second type the essential element of the decoration is formed by scrolls and floral motifs, either naturalistic or stylized. The third type is represented by a variety of geometric designs, among which diapers based on the lozenge motif prevail. The designs of all three types are of an 'all-over' character. The total absence of 'spot' patterns has been duly emphasized by Mr. Andrews.³ It is all the more noteworthy in view of the frequency of such patterns, not only in the earliest Western silks, but also among the Chinese fabrics of T'ang times recovered from the Ch'ien-fo-tung hoard.

Designs
with animal
figures.

The designs of the first type must claim our special attention not merely because they are the most numerous but still more on account of their great artistic interest. The art value attaching to them is seen to full advantage in the animal figures that form their most striking feature. In these figures we see expressed with remarkable skill that faculty for correctly observing and graphically rendering movement in nature which ever since Han times may be claimed for Chinese art as one of its greatest merits. Among the animals represented in our silks the diversity is great. But whether they are lions, tigers, rams and other beasts taken from nature, or dragons, griffins and other strange monsters created by fancy, their forms and actions are always shown instinct with a wonderful sense of life. The feline form in movement, stealthily prowling, gathering for the jump, leaping, appears to have particularly stirred the artist's eye and hand, as shown by some of the finest designs of this type. There is a very happy harmony between these vividly rendered movements and the lithe freedom of the cloud scrolls which in many of the designs entwine the animal forms. Their various types, as distinguished in Mr. Andrews' paper,⁴ have, like so much else in these figured textiles, a close and unmistakable affinity to decorative motifs in the sculptural work of Han tombs. On the other hand, they often strangely recall Rococo forms. This resemblance is scarcely accidental, if some indebtedness of the Rococo to the influence of contemporary Chinese art must be admitted in general.⁵

The qualities here indicated in all briefness are, perhaps, best illustrated by the fine polychrome

² See Andrews, *Chin. Figured Silks*, pp. 18 sq.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 4 sq., 18 sq.

⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 19; regarding Chinese motifs in French figured silks of the Rococo style, cf. Migeon, *Les arts du tissu*, p. 81; von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*², p. 47.