

Western
motifs in
tapestry
L.C. v. 02. a.

But of far greater interest than the last few specimens is the design of a carefully worked tapestry, L.C. v. 02. a (Pl. XXXI, XXXII), which in spite of its ragged condition has well preserved its fine colours. Its design has been drawn and fully discussed already by Mr. Andrews in his paper.²¹ The general scheme of the design and most of the decorative motifs betoken Western inspiration and models. We have evidence of this, in the first place, in the rigid division of the whole into a broad centre band with three narrower longitudinal bands or 'guards' repeating on either side. Two of these show treatment in rainbow shading. The band between these two is ornamented with a pattern in which a heart-shaped flower or closed palmette alternates with a pair of shear-shaped leaves resting their base on volutes. Heart-shapes repeating in the same direction are a motif quite common in late Greek and 'Coptic' work in Egypt, as illustrated by numerous textiles from Antinoë and elsewhere,²² as well as in Byzantine and 'Sasanian' fabrics from the sixth century onwards.

Chinese
motif of
horse-
legged bird.

Hellenistic influence is recognizable also in details of the broad centre band. Its subject 'is a bird rising from a nest between a pair of confronting horse-legged birds. This is repeated, but with an interval in which is a symmetrical scroll pattern'. Such details are the acanthus-shaped 'nest' from which the breast and head of a bird emerge, and the symmetrical scroll ornament, dividing the repeats, which resembles two anthemions reversed. Very different in origin, however, is the form of the two horse-legged birds which confront each other on either side of the nest. Type and pose, as well as the cloud scroll below, indicate the closest connexion with the horse-legged bird seen galloping over a cloud in the relief sculpture of a Han tomb.²³ As this particular form of a composite monster is not traceable in any Western design so far known, we may safely attribute its appearance as a motif in our tapestry pattern to a Chinese origin. On the other hand, the identity of the technique with that of 'Coptic' tapestries and the close affinity of the rest of the decorative details to those found in 'Coptic' and in late Greek textiles make it appear highly probable that this piece, like the other tapestry remains from L.C. and two more from other Lou-lan sites to be mentioned farther on,²⁴ was a product of local craftsmanship, whether in the Lop region or elsewhere in the Tārīm basin.

Chinese art
influence in
Tārīm basin.

We are thus justified in recognizing here a definite indication that Chinese art had already exerted its influence in the Tārīm basin during Han times, even though Graeco-Buddhist tradition was then and remained for centuries the predominant element in the decorative style, as in most of the civilization and art, of those 'Western regions'. We have ample evidence to show how powerful that influence of Chinese art had become in T'ang times, and know that it had asserted itself already long before.²⁵ It is *a priori* likely that it made itself from the first particularly felt along the great trade route leading from China into Central Asia, and we can scarcely feel surprise at coming across the earliest approximately datable evidence of it just by the side of that route and in the form of a textile product. For decorated textiles have at all periods served as the most portable means for the transmission of artistic motifs and treatment, and no more convenient tool

²¹ See Andrews, *Chin. Fig. Silks*, pp. 16 sq., Fig. 15. By an oversight the material of the tapestry has there been erroneously indicated as silk instead of wool.

²² See e. g., Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst*, p. 153, No. 7211; von Falke, *Seidenweberei*, Figs. 9, 10, 18, 19, 21, 33, 34, 39, 52, 54, 55.

Cf. also Strzygowski, in *Jahrbuch der k. preuss. Kunstsammlungen*, 1903, p. 152. The pair of shear-shaped leaves rising from a voluted base appears in a modified form on a Coptic tissue of the British Museum; cf. Migeon, *Les arts*

du tissu, p. 37.

²³ See Chavannes, *Mission archéol.*, I. Pl. LXX, No. 134. This connexion, like those which are traceable between the motifs of L.C. figured silks and of Han tomb sculptures, was first pointed out by Andrews, *Chin. Fig. Silks*, p. 18.

²⁴ See below, p. 277.

²⁵ Cf. *Serindia*, I. p. 298, regarding the images in Chinese style which Sung Yün saw in A. D. 519 at Tso-mo or Charchan, and which were described to him as dating from Li Kuang's expedition, A. D. 384.