NOTES ON SOME BOOKS PUBLISHED IN EXILE

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The Museum's Library has been enriched by a small but notable group of Chinese books which have unique interest, apart from their contents, in that they were all issued in out-of-the-way places and under extreme difficulties during the years when so many of China's institutions of research were driven into exile by the invading Japanese.

In the course of an extensive trip sponsored by the Cultural Relations Division of the State Department, I visited many of these temporary "colonies of the learned," and it was my privilege to receive these books as gifts to the Museum. In almost every instance the volumes were presented by the authors themselves, and in many a case the author was the printer, the collator, and the binder as well. While these books represent perhaps only a tithe of the works issued on the primitive presses of the hinterland, nevertheless they stand as proof of the courageous manner in which China's scholars in art and archaeology were determined to carry on their researches even though transplanted to distant outposts.

The captious critic may say that the scholar in his aridity to commit his ideas to print is simply trying to stake out his small claim to fame and posterity, but in receiving this little group of crude, homely publications I came to think otherwise—that it is rather the scholar's inextinguishable impulse to share his ideas with his colleagues which is the driving force and that unless this is done he regards his efforts as sterile.

The collection altogether numbers some sixty pen, or individual paper volumes, making up perhaps a score of works. This is not the place for a librarian's listing, but the few that I have selected to illustrate through reproductions of typical pages will indicate the kind of subject under investigation and will show, too, how these amateur printers produced workmanlike books under conditions that would have staggered any contemporary New York shop.

On pages 28 and 29 are shown two samples from A Dictionary of Mo-so Hieroglyphics (Memoirs of the National Central Museum, series B, no. 2), which was printed in 1944 at Li Chuang, Szechuan Province, a small and inaccessible town about two hundred miles up the Yangtze from Chungking. This locale was selected by the refugee National Central Museum as its wartime headquarters, as well as by the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture and by certain sections of the Academia Sinica. The first page of the dictionary (see ill. p. 28) explains how the study of the Mo-so hieroglyphics came to be made but does not explain how it was recorded.

Mr. Li Lin-ts' an, the compiler, and Miss Tsêng Chao-yüeh, author of the English preface, wrote each of the two hundred pages of text on oiled paper, transferring them while still wet to the one lithographic stone available in Li Chuang. From this stone each leaf of the five hundred copies was separately printed on a crude hand press. The entire staff of the museum then helped in collating the leaves and sewing them together by hand.

Yet I do not wish to place the chief accent on the unusual manufacturing problems that were painstakingly overcome in the publication of this study; I would rather stress the fact that this particular work is but one proof among many of the extraordinary eagerness and inquisitiveness displayed by a large number of scholars, who might simply have vegetated in exile or at most repolished ideas on old, familiar subjects, but who sought out new problems instead. Their characteristic attitude was indicated by Dr. Li Chi, Director of the National Central Museum, who said in substance when commenting on this Mo-so dictionary, "Well, we happened to be in a region neighboring on
The compiler of this dictionary, Mr. Li Lin-tsans, is a trained young artist, he acquired a keen interest in ethnology in his travel from Kun-ming to northwestern Yunnan where he served as a landscape painter after his graduation from the Art School in the spring of 1939. During two months' stay in Lichiang he became much attracted to the pictorial script used by the Mo-so people of that region. In November of the same year he went there again. With financial aids first from personal friends and then from the Ministry of Education, he was able to stay in Lichiang for two years, learn the language, and do a lot of translating work. He was appointed a member of the National Central Museum in July 1941. Under the auspices of the Museum, he traveled to many other places where the Mo-so people inhabited and made a careful study of their language and their migrating route. He came back to the Museum at Nan-chi, Szechuan in November 1943, and compiled this work with the help of Mr. Chang K'un, research assistant of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, and Mr Ho Ts'ai, a native of the Mo-so tribe from Lichiang.

The Mo-so people, who call themselves the Na-hei, possess two types of written language, one pictographic and the other syllabic. Thousands of books, all in manuscript form, have been written in the country of the Mo-so tribes, and so it seemed like a good chance to study them. Therefore, while Messrs Li Lin-ts'an, Chang K'un, and Ho Ts'ai and Miss Tsêng worked on the language, the ethnologists of the Academia Sinica assembled collections of the material culture of these tribes and other "wild" peoples of the southwest, and the anthropologists gathered cranial indices of living tribesmen and of the skulls that were brought to light in the construction of airfields near by.

Similarly, the archaeologists turned their at-
tention to local sites and conducted several fruitful excavations in this hitherto almost untouched region. The illustrations on page 31 are taken from a paper by Wang Shih-hsiang, published in volume 7, no. 1, of the Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, wherein is meticulously described the clearing of an interesting Sung dynasty twin-tomb, encountered by chance in the hills south of Li Chuang (at T'ang Chia Wan). Though the illustrations are crude—for this publication came from the same lithographic stone as the Mo-so dictionary—nevertheless they are painstakingly accurate and, with the attendant detailed text, constitute as complete a scientific record as could be desired.
contains rare examples of T'ang sculpture.


"The White Pagoda and the Sung Tomb at Chiu Chou Pa, I Pin (District), Szechuan," by Mo Tsung-chiang. The pagoda and tomb are located about a mile from the town of Chiu Chou Pa on the northern bank of the Min River. The style of the tomb is Sung, and there are Sung wall paintings and inscriptions in the pagoda.

"The Hall of Eight Corners," by Lu Shêng. This hall is located in the southwestern part of Nan Ch'i District, Szechuan. It was built about A.D. 1596.

Though perhaps a larger number and a greater variety of scholars were located in Li Chuang than elsewhere, it was not the only center of scientific and artistic activity to issue important

Woodcut from Drawings of the Wall Paintings at Tun Huang. Printed in Chengtu in 1944. Leaf size: 6⅞ by 10½ inches

To list the contents of this particular issue of the Bulletin (one of two fat numbers edited, prepared, and printed under the inspiration of Dr. Liang Ssū-ch'êng, the indefatigable Director of the Society) is perhaps the most succinct way of indicating the vitality and wide intellectual range of the scholars and students working in the Society’s particular field of interest. Thus, in addition to the paper on the Sung tomb at Li Chuang, we find:

"A Note on the Architecture of the Fo Kuang Temple on Mount Wu T'ai," by Liang Ssū-ch'êng. This temple is a small one, but it is a rare example of T'ang architecture. It also

Page from a list of cave temples and other monuments issued by the Chinese Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Objects in War Areas. Printed in Chung-king in 1945. Leaf size: 5⅛ by 7¾ inches
Illustrations from an article by Wang Shih-hsiang in the Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, volume 7, no. 1. Printed at Li Chuang in October, 1944. Leaf size: 73/4 x 11 inches
A Chinese Scholar, sketch painted by Chang Ta-chien in 1945. Gift of the artist. Height 32 1/6 inches
and useful publications. Probably an equal number of valuable studies were published in Cheng-tu during the war years, but in this old provincial capital there were regular printing shops, equipped with fonts of movable Chinese and European types, so that there were fewer difficulties to be overcome and hence the books produced there are less appealing than those produced at Li Chuang. The present collection also includes several works printed in Chung-king, notably the invaluable little bilingual pamphlets (see p. 30) issued by the Chinese Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Objects in War Areas (the counterpart of our Roberts Commission), which not only constitute a complete gazetteer of the historic buildings, cave temples, and tomb sites in the “occupied” areas but also contain three excellent tabulations of the General Principles for Identifying and Dating Wooden Structures, Brick or Stone Pagodas, and Brick or Stone Masonry Structures (other than pagodas), prepared by Dr. Liang Ssü-ch’eng. The total number of monuments listed, province by province, runs to well over four hundred. Here certainly is an indication of the great strides made during the war years by Chinese archaeologists and architectural historians in building up records of their artistic heritage.

Last, I would draw attention to a pair of slim, copiously illustrated volumes printed in Cheng-tu in 1944, all from woodblocks made there under the artist Chang Ta-chien. It is entitled Drawings of the Wall Paintings at Tun Huang, and except for a brief prefatory note by one of Mr. Chang’s colleagues it consists entirely of full-page brush drawings (see p. 30) of details from paintings in the Cave Temples of the Thousand Buddhas at the well-known site on the Kansu-Turkestan border. Mr. Chang spent three years at the site with a number of his students and apprentices, “having come to appreciate,” as the preface relates, “that here was the most complete historical record of Chinese painting still extant and that only by studying the Tun Huang wall paintings could the development of Chinese pictorial art be adequately understood.” (The shades of Paul Pelliot and Sir Aurel Stein would indeed be pleased with this tribute by a prominent Chinese artist and connoisseur to the importance of Tun Huang.)

The details are haphazardly chosen, though each is marked with the number of the cave from which it is taken (Pelliot’s numbers, by the way) and executed with great charm and fidelity. The woodcuts are all reduced, so the preface says, from Mr. Chang’s original drawings and are wonderfully well executed, considering the time and place of their production.

I met Mr. Chang, and when I told him that I, too, had been to Tun Huang he signed and inscribed the two volumes that were his gifts to the Museum. With evident pride he thumbed through the pages and catechized me as to the datings of the originals, perhaps doubting whether I had really seen them. But in spite of the twenty years since I had visited the Thousand Buddhas, I was able to answer his questions, for his subjects were nearly all chosen from the earliest and finest of the caves, chiefly those of the Wei and T’ang dynasties.

His confidence seemingly established, he then brought out several large scrolls of his own work, including several which he said had been inspired by the Tun Huang style. These were difficult to praise, for though Mr. Chang’s colors were faithful to the hues predominant in the Tun Huang caves, they had a cold, archaeological quality that struck me as rather repellent. But that he had not, in his archaeological enthusiasm, lost his skill in handling a brush in the traditional manner was soon evidenced by the sketch which he then and there painted for me as a gift to the Museum. It had an originality and innate charm wholly lacking in the other scrolls that he had displayed.

It was not until I had returned to my inn and had reflected at greater length on my afternoon with Mr. Chang that I realized that what had seemed to me to be a weakness was in fact the point of his paintings in the Tun Huang style; they, too, are proofs of the inquiring mind—the vitality of China’s living artists, who, like their scientific colleagues, finding themselves transplanted, eagerly turned to a re-examination of the greatness of China’s past. Time may well reveal that the eight long years of war in China brought forth unexpected cultural fruit.