

THE OLDEST PORTRAIT OF A JAPANESE (*).

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I

In March, 1972, an old tomb was excavated in the Asukamura Village, Nara Prefecture, and, for the first time, painted portraits of sixteen Japanese, eight males and eight females, were found on mortared walls. The male figures were of about 35 *cm* in height and those of females about 38 *cm*. It is yet to be identified whose tomb it is and to what date it belongs. From the point of view of the costume and other belongings, the portraits are considered to be of the seventh or eighth century. The people painted there may be servants or officials or members of family of the buried. The Japanese were so enthusiastic for the finding that so many things were said about the tomb and so many books and photographic reproductions of the portraits were published. The tomb is called Takamatsu-zuka and now registered as a national treasure (1).

However, no one has mentioned in connection with these portraits to another painted portrait of a Japanese who is described as the ambassador sent by the government of Japan to the court of the Chinese Emperor Wu of Liang (502-549). This picture makes a part of a scroll painting formerly attributed mistakenly to the famous T'ang painter Yen Li-tê († 656), of which the original was actually one of the works of Hsiao I (508-555) who was the seventh son of the Emperor Wu and reigned from 552 to 555 as the fourth emperor of the Liang Dynasty. The original picture has long been lost and what is available now is a copy made in 1077 probably not

(*) . — Trabalho apresentado para o número Jubilar da Revista (nº 100), infelizmente entregue quando o mesmo já se encontrava no prelo (*Nota da Redação*).

(1) . — So many things have been said. Even detective novel writers participated in the controversy about the date of the tomb and the identification of the buried. However, full bibliography of these publications is yet available.

from the original but from an earlier copy. It had been in the Imperial Collection of Ch'ing from the first half of the eighteenth century up to some time when it was taken out of the Imperial Palace. After World War II, the Nanking Museum got it and it is now displayed in the Peking Museum of History as a good example to show that so many foreign countries sent embassies to the court of China to pay tribute.

It is Mr. Chin Wei-no who published a facsimile of the scroll in the journal *Wên-wu*, 1960, pp. 14-17, and proved in an undeniable way that it is a 11th century copy of the original scroll painting named (*Liang*) *chih-kung-t'u*, which has nothing to do with the T'ang painter. According to my investigation, the original *Liang chih-kung-t'u* contained the pictures of envoys of thirty-five countries, who came to the court of Liang to pay tribute in the reign of the Emperor Wu, as well as descriptions of these countries. Hsiao I made the scroll painting during the period between 526 and 539 when he stationed as governor at Ching-chou or what is now Chiang-ling, Hu-pei Province. It is not known how long the original survived, but several copies were made and circulated from the period of Sui (581-618) to that of Ming (1368-1644), when all copies were believed to have been lost until the publication of the facsimile in 1960.

When the copy was in the Imperial Collection of Ch'ing, it contained the pictures of envoys, as well as the descriptions, of twenty-five countries, the beginning part, which contained ten pictures of envoys and descriptions of ten countries, having already been lost. To make the matter worse, the scroll was still more damaged by the time it came into possession of the Nanking Museum, when it contained pictures of only twelve envoys and the descriptions of only thirteen countries and of these two were incomplete (2).

The reproduction of the scroll published by Mr. Chin is not particularly good and leaves many points unclear, both in the pictures and the written sections. In 1963 another reproduction was published in *Chûgoku Bijutsu (Chinese Art)*, Vol. 1 (pp. 124-126), a volume of the series *Sekai Bijutsu Taikei (Outline of the Art of the World)*, edited and published by Kôdansha, Tokyo. This is much clearer than

(2). — As to the compilation of the original *Liang-chih-kung-t'u* and circulation of its copies with special reference to the copy of 1077, see K. Enoki, *The Liang-chih-kung-t'u on the Origin and Migration of the Hua or Ephthalites*, *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, Vol. 7, Nos 1 & 2, December, 1970, pp. 37-38, and six other articles by the same author mentioned in notes 1 and 5. In the extant *Liang-chih-kung-t'u* the latest date given for the coming of an embassy is 528; see under Po-ssu (Persia). Thus the original scroll was made in 528 or later.

that published by Mr. Chin, but still leaves some uncertainties. It has, however, given one full page to the reproduction of the picture of the envoy of Japan in its original colour, which allows one to realize the quality of the original. I am reproducing here a photographic copy of it not in colour, but in black and white. The description of the country of Japan in five lines reproduced here is the invaluable remnant, the rest having been lost after the scroll was removed from the Imperial Palace. Though the copy was made in 1077, there is nothing to disprove that it represents faithfully Hsiao I's original of the first half of the sixth century. For this reason, I would like to take it as the oldest portrait of Japanese now extant, or, more strictly, a copy of the oldest.

Hsiao I was not the first who made this kind of *chih-kung-t'u* or a picture scroll of foreign envoys who came to China to pay tribute. A few years earlier, P'ei Tzu-yeh (471-532) compiled a book entitled *Fang-kuo-shih-t'u* or *Pictures of envoys from countries of four quarters*, which contained pictures of the envoys and the descriptions of twenty countries. Hsiao I was an intimate friend of P'ei Tzu-yeh and so it will be quite natural to think that Hsiao I's *Chih-kung-t'u* which contained thirty-five countries was what we may call an enlarged edition of P'ei's work. However, it is not certain whether P'ei's work contained the picture of the envoy and the description of Japan or not.

II

The Japanese were known to the Chinese in the latter half of the second century B. C., when the Chinese conquered the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. The center of the Chinese administration was placed at the district of Lo-lang or what is now Pyongyang, to which the Japanese sent envoys from time to time. From about A. D. 204, when the Chinese established another center of administration at the district of Tai-fang which was situated in the neighbourhood of what is now Seoul, the Japanese had a closer relationship with the Chinese both in the Korean Peninsula, and in the mainland, and one can find a detailed description of Japan and the Japanese in the *Standard History of the Wei (220-265) (Wei-chih)*, Bk. 30. The Wei ruled the northern half of the Mainland China, as well as the northern half of the Korean Peninsula, from 220 to 265. At that time, China was divided into three kingdoms, the Wei, the Wu and the Han, which united into one by the Chin in 280. The northern half of Korea was also put under the control of the same dynasty. But, in 313, a strong tribe named Kao-chü-li, which originated in the mountainous region between Manchuria and Korea deprived the Chin of the northern half

of the Korean Peninsula, conquering the district of Lo-lang. This created a new epoch in the history of the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The predominance of the Kao-chü-li stimulated the unification of Korean tribes in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula which had been divided into so many countries. The islands of Japan had also been divided into so many independent countries, which were now unified into one by the ancestors of the present dynasty. By the middle of the fourth century, there turned up two united kingdoms of Pakche and Silla in South Korea, while the Korean tribes on the waters of the river Naktong struggled for the unification. The Japanese took advantage of this disunification of the southeasternmost part of the Korean Peninsula which they invaded in 391. Pakche and Silla were put under the control of Japanese military forces and a new war started between Japan and the Kao-chü-li who did their best to let the Japanese army evacuate from the Korean Peninsula. Both Japan and the Kao-chü-li could not win against each other and Japan sent several embassies to the court of Sung (420-479) at what is now Nanking in order to have Japan's domination of south Korea authorized by the Sung which was considered to be the legitimate government of China. From 420 to 589, China was divided into two, south and north, and the governments in the south were looked upon as legitimate. The Japan's struggle against the Kao-chü-li and Silla, the ally of the former, lasted up to 562 when the government of Japan in Mimana or what is now Kinhai to the west of Pusan was destroyed by the army of Silla. Mimana had long been the basis of Japan's administration and military operations in south Korea.

The Sung was replaced by the Ch'i (479-502) which was succeeded by the Liang (502-557). All of these governments were considered to be legitimate, but Japan which had been so enthusiastic in sending embassies to the Sung seems to have stopped to do so to the Ch'i and the Liang. During these two dynasties, nothing is recorded about the coming of embassies from Japan except that a new title was given to Wu, emperor of Japan, in the first year of Chien-yüan (479) of Ch'i and in the first year of T'ien-chien (502) of Liang respectively. One may suspect that the granting of a title to the ruler of a foreign country means the coming of embassies to receive the title from that country. But, in these two cases, it is quite unlikely that any embassy came from Japan (3). Wu sent an embassy to the court of Sung in 478, one year before the Sung was destroyed by the Ch'i. The embassy was received in audience on June 28 of the same year and a

(3). — This is the view generally accepted by specialists. See, for instance, Masatomo Kan, *Kanseki Wajin kô* (*A Study of the Japanese as described in Chinese Records*), Kan Masatomo Zenshû, Tokyo, 1911, pp. 353-354.

通 何月入傳呼顯自強大歷魏晉至梁為柔麻名馬昔百通二
 平遣使康石憶丘波州奉表入朝



倭國使
 倭國在東 於東南大海中依山島居自帶海濱水不南一交對
 其北岸虛三十餘國百方餘里倭王所居天在會稽東氣暖地温
 出真珠青玉馬牛馬虎豹羊鷄
 面文身以木綿帖有六

An-tung Ta-chiang-chün

安東大將軍

Asukamura

明日香村

Chang Ch'u-chin

張楚金

Chê-chiang

浙江

Chê-kiang

浙江

Chên-tung Ta-chiang-chün

鎮東大將軍

Chêng-tung Ta-chiang-chün

征東大將軍

Ch'i

齊

Chiang-ling

江陵

Chien-yüan

建元

chih-kung-t'u

職貢圖

Chin

晉

Chin Wei-no

金維諾

Ching-chou

荆州

Ching-ch'u

荆

Ching-ch'u sui-shih-chi

荆楚歲時記

Ch'ing

清

ch'ing-mien wên-shên

清黥文身

ch'ing-yü

清玉

ch'uan

穿國美術

Chûgoku Bijutsu

中國使圖

Fang-kuo-shih-t'u

方國

Han

漢

Han-yüan

漢範

Hsiao I

蕭繹

hu-kung-t'ou

胡公顯

Hu-nan

湖南

Hu-pei

湖北

Hui-chi

會稽

Wei-chi

Wei-liao

Wên-wu

Wu (emperor of Japan)

Wu (emperor of Liang)

Wu (one of the Three Kingdoms)

Yen Li-tê

Yüan (=Hsiao I's appellation as the emperor) 元

Yûryaku

魏 志
魏 略
文 物
武 武
吳 閣
立 德
雄 略

long title was given to Wu, which authorized him to act as the ruler of Japan, Mimana and Silla. In addition, he was entitled *An-tung Ta-chiang-chün* or *Grand General to Pacify the East*. The title given to the same Wu in 479 by the first emperor of Ch'i was just the same with a slight change to the additional title *An-tung Ta-chiang-chün* which was altered into *Chên-tung Ta-chiang-chün* or *Grand General to Stabilize the East* and which was commented as promotion (4).

When the Liang succeeded to the Ch'i, the conferment of the new title to the Japanese emperor Wu was made on the fifth of May, 502, just two days after the enthronement of the first emperor who was the father of Hsiao I. This time the same title as before was bestowed again. Only the *Chên-tung Ta-chiang-chün* was altered to *Chên-tung Ta-chiang-chün* or *Grand General to Conquer the East*, which was also commented as promotion. These are nothing but a renewal of title, which can be done without the receiving of embassies. The Ch'i conferred a new title on Wu because Wu had already been given a title by the Sung, predecessor of the Ch'i. The same thing was done by the Liang. A slight modification was made for the reason that both the Ch'i and the Liang would not like to copy blindly the title given by their predecessors and it was commented as promotion. The emperor Wu is identified with the emperor Yûrvaku who reigned from 457 to 479 when he died. This means that the Liang bestowed on him a new title twenty-three years after his death. Thus, it is quite clear that no embassies were sent to the court of Liang in 502. Then, whose portrait it is that Hsiao I painted on the scroll as that of the ambassador of Japan?

III

Hsiao I describes the costume of each ambassador, of whom he painted the portrait. But, in case of the Japanese ambassador, only a small portion of the beginning part of his description has survived, the rest having been lost after the scroll was removed from the Imperial Palace of Ch'ing. Here is a translation of passages extant:

"The Ambassador of the country of Wei (i. e. Japan). The country of Wei is situated in a great sea to the south-east of (the district of) Tai-fang. It consists of (a group of) mountainous islands. Starting from Tai-fang, one may go by sea to the south

(4). — As the first emperor of Ch'i acceded to the throne on the 30th of May, 479, the entitling must have taken place some time after this date and it may not be quite unlikely that the same embassy of 478 was still in China and received in audience by the first emperor of Ch'i just after his enthronement.

first and then to the east and arrives at the seashore which makes the northern boundary (of the country of Wei). On the way, one may pass more than thirty countries. (The distance from Tai-fang to the capital of the country of Wei) is about ten thousand *li* and odd. The place where the king of Wei lives is located approximately to the east of the district of Hui-chi (or what is now the province of Chê-chiang or Chê-kiang). It is mild. The land is warm. It produces pearls and blue jade (ch'ing-yü). There are no cattle, no horses, no tigers and no leopards. And no sheep and no magpies. . . . (The people tatoo their) faces and decorate their bodies (with colours). They wear a piece of cotton cloth around their neck. Their clothes are of wide cloth not sewn together but tied with each other. . . .”

However, if one compares this statement with the portrait of the ambassador, one may notice that it does not describe very faithfully the costume of the so-called ambassador. For instance, he does not tatoo his face; nothing is mentioned about his head dress which is a piece of white cloth; and, though he wears a wide cloth tied together to cover the lower part of his body, he wears a jacket which does not look to consist of pieces of cloth. Actually, the itinerary, the location of the capital of the country of Wei and the description of costume here given are an abridgement of the statement of the *Wei-chih* or the *Standard History of the Wei* (220-265), Bk. 30. Unfortunately, because of the damage given to the picture scroll, the passages now extant are too fragmentary to be fully compared with the corresponding passages of the *Standard History of the Wei*, of which only the portion concerning the costume is translated here:

“All males, no matter whether they belong to the upper class or to the lower one, tatoo their faces and decorate their bodies (with colours) All males dress the hair, but wear neither hat nor cap. They put a piece of cotton cloth around their head. Their clothes consist of pieces of cloth, which are just tied together and not sewn. Females let down the hair which is tied at the end. Their clothing is like an unlined coverlet and is worn by slipping the head through an opening in the center. Thus, it may be looked upon as a kind of head-slipping-clothes” (5).

(5). — Another translation by Ryûsaku Tsunoda is given here for the reference of readers: “The men wear a band of cloth around their head, exposing the top. Their clothing is fastened around the body with little sewing. The women wear their hair in loops. Their clothing is like an unlined coverlet and is worn by slipping the head through an opening in the center”. (*Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, South Pasadena: P. D. and Ione Perkins, 1951, p. 10).

At the end of the leftiest line of the passages on Wei of the *Liang-kchih-kung-t'u*, one comes across remains of right-hand radicals of three characters which are (1) *tan* "unlined", (2) *i* "clothes", and *ch'uan* "slip, penetrate". These are pieces of evidence to show that the *Liang-chihung-t'u* copied the corresponding part of the *Standard History of the Wei*. However, the *Liang-chih-kung-t'u* writes as "(*t'ien*-) *mien wên-shên*" or "(*tatoo*) *the face and decorate the body*", which the *Standard History of the Wei* writes as "*ch'ing-mien wên-shên*" for the same meaning. Actually, the "*t'ien-mien wên-shên*" is the expression used in another history of the Wei, which is known under the title of *Wei-liao* and of which only some extracts are available at present (6). From this point of view, it is more probable that the *Liang-chih-kung-t'u* copied the *Wei-liao* so long as its description of Japan is concerned.

Taking into account the fact that no embassies were sent from Japan to the court of Liang, one may suspect that Hsiao I painted the portrait of the ambassador of Japan just on the basis of the statement of either the *Standard History of the Wei* or *Wei-liao*. If so, the picture is not a sketch from nature but the creation of Hsiao I himself. However, one can easily say that such a suspicion is groundless from so many details which are in the picture but not in the statement of the *Standard History of the Wei*, as well as from the facial expression and the predominant atmosphere of the picture which are unmistakably Japanese. The figure painted there is exactly that of a Japanese.

If it is a picture of a Japanese of the sixth century, one may wonder whether the person represented there can be taken as an ambassador or not. At a glance, one can not help thinking that he is too shabby to be an ambassador. In all probability, he is a commoner who may be a fisherman or something like that. The *Standard History of the Liang*, Bk. 54, is a chapter specified for Japan and the Japanese, in which it is described as follows:

"The common people, both male and female, have no head dress, but have their hair just tied; (on the other hand), the people who are rich or of higher class wear a hat or a cap made of brocade or of silk of various colours, which is like *hu-kung-t'ou* of the Middle Kingdom" (7).

(6). — This part of *Wei-liao* is extracted in a book named *Han-yüan* compiled in 660 by Chang Ch'u-chin. Of this book, only a manuscript copy is available in Japan, which was reproduced by the Faculty of Letters, Imperial University of Kyoto, in 1922. However, in this manuscript, the last character *shên* is omitted. The omission is supplied by the statement of *Ts'ê-fu yüan-kuei*, Bk. 959, which seems to have based on *Wei-liao*.

(7). — The section of Japan of the *Standard History of the Liang* is not translated by R. Tsunoda in his book quoted in Note (5).

The source of information, on which this statement is based, is not yet identified. But, it is established that the statement is of the period of Liang because the *hu-kung-t'ou* mentioned there was a hat or a cap worn specially on the eighth day of the twelfth month in the region of Ching-ch'ü or what are now provinces of Hu-pei and Hu-nan during the Liang (8). This record makes it clear that there were two classes of people, common and rich or of higher rank, in Japan at the time of Liang and that the rich people were dressed in a way more luxurious than the common people. The statement of Japan and the Japanese of the *Standard History of the Liang* may have been based on what they heard from some Japanese who happened to come to the Liang for trade or by the shipwreck.

The four facts that (1) no official embassies from Japan are not recorded in contemporary writings; that (2) the statement of Japan and the Japanese of the *Liang-ch'ich-kung-t'u* is made on the basis of either the *Standard History of the Wei* or *Wei-liao*; that (3) the picture itself is only considered to be a sketch from nature; and that (4) some Japanese possibly visited the Liang will lead one to the conclusion that Hsiao I painted a Japanese whom he happened to see at the place he stationed or some other place, while he made the description of Japan and the Japanese on the basis of some former record.

Then, why Hsiao I painted the man as the Japanese ambassador? The reason is quite simple. He wanted to show that Japan sent an embassy to the court of Liang to pay tribute. He made the picture scroll with the intention to show ostentiously high virtues and profound benevolence of his father Emperor who charmed and attracted the people of so many foreign countries. Though Japan never sent embassies to the court of Liang, his father promoted the title of the king of Japan. So, it was natural for Hsiao I to include the portrait of the Japanese ambassador, as well as the description of Japan in his picture scroll.

In any way, it is interesting that a portrait of a Japanese of the sixth century has survived up to this date through an eleventh century copy.

(8). — See *Ching-ch'ü sui-shih-chi* (ed. *Pao-yen-t'ang pi-chi*) by Tsung Lin who took service to the emperor Yüan (552-555), that is to say, Hsiao I.