

Whose body? : with apologies to Dorothy L. Sayers

Autor(en): **Soper, Alexander C.**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen
Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société
Suisse-Asie**

Band (Jahr): **44 (1990)**

Heft 2

PDF erstellt am: **04.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146883>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

WHOSE BODY?
(with apologies to Dorothy L. Sayers)

Alexander C. Soper

In 1973 railroad workers accidentally uncovered an old brick tomb in the western outskirts of Guyuan in Ningxia province, a town located 225 km east of Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu, and 300 km northwest of Xi'an. Proper excavation took place in 1981.¹ The tomb, entered by a ramp running from west to east, turned out to be a double burial, of husband and wife. It had never been robbed, but had suffered much damage from water. The chamber was a square in plan, 3.8 m on a side and 3.9 m high at the center of the (collapsed) vault.

There were two disintegrating wooden coffins with rotting skeletons, whose sexes could be distinguished, lying on their backs. The husband's coffin was well enough preserved to show that it had been originally covered with narrative and decorative paintings, remarkable for their variety, for the painstaking rendering of the ornamental motifs, and for the almost childlike naivete of the figures represented. The single remarkable small find was a Sassanian silver coin, apparently of Peroz (r. 459-84). There was a long, narrow iron sword; also a pair of iron stirrups and several plainish but well executed bronze vessels, two with zoomorphic details. Precious Chinese metalwork was represented by one silver cup with "ear" handles, 10 cm long, and two gold cups.

Two surprising and not entirely understandable objects were open-work bronze plaques, looking something like the ornamentalized knocker-handles cast, painted, or engraved on formal containers from late Chou on. Both types held at top center a diminutive, standing figure of a half-naked male, with widespread legs and arms akimbo, his head topped by a protruberance that suggested an *ushnisha* and so prompted identification as an unorthodox Buddha.

The man's coffin is covered by a curving, gable-shaped lid. Along the longitudinal center line runs a narrow serpentine ribbon shape made up of small spirals, on which are superimposed turtle and fish shapes. At the

1 Report in *Wenwu* 1984,6: 46-56 with precise drawings to supplement the photographs, by the Guyuan Cultural Relics Office. Additional details and speculation by Han Kongle and Liu Feng in *Meishu Yanjiu* 1984,2: 1-17, with barely passable color plates.

wider, head end of the coffin lid are two Chinese-style *tempietti*, each with a hipped roof and a row of simple bracketing, plus tied-back curtains. In one sits a well-preserved Hsi Wang Mu in Chinese dress, in the other a more damaged, robed Tung Wang Kung. The background of the lid is densely filled with a floral pattern.

On the fragmented front end of the coffin is a somewhat different type of *tempietto*, within which an oversized male – presumably the tomb-master – sits on a cusped dais, holding a cup and a fly-whisk, and wearing a robe with narrow sleeves and ballooning trousers in nomad style. Below on either side of a lost false door(?) are shown what remains of two guardian figures, with fierce, mustachioed faces, bare torsoes, and billowing scarves.

The long sides of the coffin originally held three strongly differentiated rows of paintings. Along the top were spaced small fields containing narrative figures, separated by decorative triangles. Each field held from one to three persons in nomad dress, engaged in some sort of simple action and identified by a cartouche with vertical writing. Where necessary the field might include a simple building, like a primitive stage prop.

The middle tier of paintings was subdivided, in its original state, by a pattern of circles and diamonds, containing paired, conventional figures like Asiatized *putti*, or human-headed birds, or fantastic quadrupeds. At the middle of each side of the coffin was a wide panel containing two bust-length figures in nomad dress, called servants in the report.

The narrow, bottom tier contained a Han-style hunt at the flying gallop over mushroom-like mountains.

In its original state the coffin must have displayed a fairly large number of scenes across its two long sides. Perhaps the greatest number were devoted to the pre-royal phase of the mythical Emperor Shun's life; his struggles to survive in a family dominated by a jealous step-mother; and the charity he displayed when roles were reversed and he was able to save his parents from starvation.²

Other filial sons present at least in recognizable fragments today, or identified by writing, include: Tsai Shun, who tried to save his mother's coffin from a fire;³ Kuo Chü and the pot of gold;⁴ Ting Lan and his

2 Stories about Shun are summarized in H.A. Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*. Taipei 1962 reprint II, no. 1741. More details are given in W.F. Meyers, *The Chinese Reader's Manual*. Shanghai reprint 1924, no. 617.

3 For stories about Tsai Shun and the fire, see Giles no. 1981, or Meyers no. 752; biography in *Hou Han Shu* lxix.

4 For Kuo Chü and his find of buried gold, see Giles no. 1059, Meyers no. 303.

wooden image of his mother;⁵ another step-mother melodrama, in which Yin Chi-fu learned the truth from a sorrowful small bird;⁶ and the tale of derring-do called “two peaches slaying three braves.”⁷

No epitaph or other written clue was found in the Ningxia tomb to make possible an identification of the buried couple and their dates. The report makes one statement of fact, however, that provides what I believe gives a head-start in the right direction. The present name of the town where the find was made, Guyuan, was in the Northern Wei period called Kao-p'ing, “Lofty Peace.” The Wei dynastic history contains a long, detailed, very informative biography of an educated and highly resourceful North Chinese who served the Wei all his life, a certain Li Shun. He was born in the northeast but spent his last years, 432-42, in the northwest, and at that time bore the rank Kao-p'ing Kung, Duke of Kao-p'ing. His career came to an end with terrible abruptness when the previously trusting Wei emperor had him summarily executed. Two reigns later his sons – who had escaped the father's fate – recovered sufficient favor to secure his rehabilitation, with a posthumous promotion to Wang, Prince of Kao-p'ing. He must have been properly re-buried at that time, along with his wife, at the military station which had been his final home; buried with respect but no ostentation, a long way from the luxuries and perils of the Wei capital, Tai. If the last was a motive it was singularly prudent. In 470 the brothers gravely offended *their* emperor, the idealistic Hsien Wen Ti, who was to abdicate and become a Buddhist monk two years later, and were executed. The father was stripped of his new honors and reduced to a commoner. His tomb seems to have been undisturbed.

Li Shun grew up in the deeply disordered northeast of the late fourth century, in a town called P'ing-chi in the district of Chao, which had once

5 For Ting Lan and the statue, see Giles no. 1937, Mayers no. 303. Since his cult was reflected in art in Han times he appears in Edouard Chavannes, *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale*. Paris 1909-1915: 143, 192(?), 205, 279; and in Japanese with brief English abstract, by Toshio Nagahiro, *Kandai Gazō no Kenkyū*. Tōkyō 1965: 77.

6 Yin Chi-fu, a historic figure of Western Chou, is identified in Giles no. 2485 without mention of the bird.

7 For the peaches story a Han tomb painting found at Luoyang is described and illustrated by J. Chaves, “A Han painted tomb at Loyang,” *Artibus Asiae* XXXI, 1, 1968: 8-11, figs. 3,4. This is not a filial piety tale, but emphasizes instead the ferocious courage of professional assassins: a category of ethical behavior generously represented in the Wu family shrine stones.

formed part of the late Chou feudal state so called.⁸ His father Hsi served one of the better-known chieftains of the semi-barbaric Mu-jung clan, Ch'ui, as a useful town prefect. The Li family survived the brief, bloody duel of wits in 395-96 in which Ch'ui was worsted by his more imaginative neighbor, the first Northern Wei emperor. Li Hsi seems to have transferred his services to this new ruler. At his death the latter granted him posthumous honors as a general — an all-purpose title in a warlike, unsophisticated society — and as Grand Warden of Chao Commandery, with the rank of Baron, Nan, of P'ing-chi.

Shun had been well educated in the Classics and Histories, and in his turn entered Wei service in the Central Secretariat.⁹ More surprisingly he soon won a reputation as a talented war planner. In 424 in the massive punitive campaign in which the second emperor drove off the perennial Juan-juan raiders, Shun's planning was given a sizable part of the credit, and he was rewarded with a generalship and a rank one step higher than his father's, Viscount of P'ing-chi. In due course the third emperor, T'ai Wu Ti (r. 424-52), who was designing an all-out assault on the barbarian neighbor to his west, the Hunnish Ho-lien chieftainate that called itself Hsia, came to consult his best-known Chinese advisor, Ts'ui Hao, on the desirability of entrusting that campaign's strategy to Li Shun.

For that time the result was predictable. Ts'ui Hao came from a town, Ch'ing-ho (in modern middle southerly Hebei) fairly close to the Li home and much better known.¹⁰ Both his father and grandfather had been useful advisors to major pre-Wei regimes, and had been generously rewarded by titles. Hao himself was the most distinguished North Chinese who served the Northern Wei in its period of empire-building. Beyond such standard requisites as a Confucian-style education and bureaucratic apti-

8 Li Shun's biography is in *Wei Shu* xxxvi and (somewhat shorter) in *Pei Shih* xxxiii. I have used a Taipei reprint of the Wu-ying-tien edition printed for Ch'ien-lung, in which the biography appears in separate volumes on 414-16 and 535-36 respectively. Chao Commandery appears on a simplified map in Gerhard Schreiber, "The history of the Former Yen dynasty," *Monumenta Serica* XV,1,1956: following p. 128, in which Mu-jung Ch'ui appears as a youth; after a hiatus he ruled Later Yen 384-395. Chao-chün lay in west central Hebei.

9 I use in this paper the renderings of Chinese titles published in the English translation by Yi-t'ung Wang of the sixth century *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Lo-yang*, Princeton 1984: 250-56.

10 Ts'ui Hao's biography is in *Wei Shu* xxxv (reprint pp. 401-12) and *Pei Shih* xxi (reprint pp. 341-42). His family home, Ch'ing-ho, appears slightly to the southeast of Chao-chün on the map cited in fn. 1 above.

tude, he was very widely talented in calligraphy, astrology, the designing of state ceremonies, history-writing in the Chinese tradition, and law-making, and was admirably zealous in filial piety. The third emperor treated him as an intimate, visiting his house on the spur of the moment and receiving him with the same informality. Hao often enjoyed special delicacies from the imperial kitchen. He was a still more successful strategist than Li Shun, the newcomer. As the emperor liked to remind his ex-barbarian generals at victory banquets, this frail creature, white-skinned and as delicately formed as a young girl, carried more in his breast than any of them. In the Taipei reprint of the *Wei Shu* I am using, his biography runs to 380 lines, a whole chapter, as compared to 76 for Shun.

The two Chinese families were doubly drawn together by marriage. Ts'ao's younger brother was married to Shun's younger sister, and his nephew was the husband of Shun's daughter. The two principals were irreparably divided by envy and suspicion. Hao is quoted as saying to the emperor: "Shun has enough wisdom in his head to carry out routine duties, as Your Majesty has said. But we are drawn close by marriage bonds, he and I, and I know very well how he operates. It is his nature to be quite satisfied with just making a start on a problem. He should not be put in charge of anything special." The emperor listened, and gave up the idea.

All the same Li Shun eventually had enough responsibility for the successes scored against the Ho-lien regime in 432 so that he received promotion to higher titles as a general. When the emperor was distributing costly booty among his generals, Shun asked only for several dozen books, winning his ruler's admiration (as he may well have intended). For services as a quartermaster-general he also received 15 female slaves and 1000 bolts of silk. At the final victory his rank was raised a degree further, to Marquis, *hou*.

The emperor went on to decide that he must next bring his one surviving semi-civilized rival to the west, Chü-ch'ü Meng-sun, to surrender the Northern Liang state, primarily Gansu.¹¹ Again he consulted Ts'ui Hao on the choice of some distinguished emissary to carry out a diplomatic preamble. This time Ts'ui Hao craftily (?) suggested Li Shun; and when the emperor objected that Shun was too highly placed a minister to be assigned to what was after all a messenger's role, Hao countered by citing an

11 Data on the regime of the semi-barbarian King Meng-sun of Northern Liang in Gansu are included in Soper, "Northern Liang and Northern Wei in Kansu," *Artibus Asiae* XXI,2,1958: 131-64, especially 133-43.

incident in recent Chinese history. In the third century A.D. when a Grand Ceremonialist of the Wei kingdom was sent on a mission to the rival Wu court, he had been able to negotiate a formal visit of submission by the Wu king. So Shun was also appointed Grand Ceremonialist, T'ai-ch'ang, to address Meng-sun (who was to be promised promotion to Grand Tutor to the Crown Prince, and Prince of Liang). On his return Li Shun himself was to receive a string of new titles, including Grand Marshal of the West and Duke of Kao-p'ing; this in 432.¹²

On his arrival, Meng-sun deputized a Captain Yang (another Chinese?) to receive him. The latter explained that his ruler, now in his declining years, suffered from boils and old scars that prevented normal bodily motion, i.e. the act of prostration; it would be best to postpone the interview for a few days, hoping for some temporary improvement. Shun retorted, "My court is well aware of the king's age. I bear a special imperial order that he perform the courtesy owed by a subject. How can he place his bodily comfort before seeing the emissary of the All-highest?"

On the morrow Meng-sun invited Shun into his courtyard, but received him with his legs thrust out fan-wise and using a hidden arm-rest. He showed no signs of moving. In a towering rage Shun called him a rude old man, who was insulting Heaven and Earth and the upper and lower spirits, so that it was useless to see him. He left the scene, clutching his tablet of office, only to continue the argument with Captain Yang. The latter tried to minimize the clash by speaking of special decrees that had been granted in the past against the prostration requirement. Shun countered by citing the correct example recorded for the famous Duke Huan of Ch'i and the then Chou king; and reminded Meng-sun of the recent spectacular Northern Wei victories, harking back even to a legendary failed rebellion against the Emperor Shun. In the end the old man performed the act, delivering a warning of his own; and Shun went back to report.

At the Wei palace the emperor asked him about the old chief's behavior, and how successful his regime was. Shun said:

For 30 years Meng-sun has lorded it over the West, weathering crises by rude trickery. In out-of-the-way and far-off places he's kept them quiet by fear. He hasn't built any dynasty, but things will last out his life-time if he's allowed to go on as he has in the past. What your subject has seen of his sons shows that they have no talents or greatness. It's said that the Grand Warden of Tun-huang, Mu-chien, has some rough ability, and will probably be the successor; but he's no match for his father.

12 Presumably Kao-p'ing was his new administrative seat, close to the Northern Liang border; corresponding to modern Guyuan in Ningxia.

The emperor was satisfied with this, since he had now cast his voracious eyes on the surviving half-civilized regime in the Northeast, the Northern Yen. That fell in 437; and since Meng-sun had died in 433, succeeded by his unsophisticated son Mu-chien, T'ai Wu Ti turned again to Li Shun with a new urgency, giving him another 1000 bolts of silk and a pair of carriage-horses, and stepping up his generalships. Shun's advice was asked in all matters, great and small alike, and in the end he was sent on 12 missions to Liang-chou. Ts'ui Hao, nursing his hatred, learned that Shun was frequently feasted by the Meng-sun heirs, to the accompaniment of highly improper language; and was sufficiently bribed so that he kept his knowledge to himself. All this Hao passed on, but the emperor was still incredulous.

When he returned from his last mission, in 437, T'ai Wu Ti asked him if the time was not now ripe "to sweep clean all the lands west-of-the-Yellow-River." Shun replied that the Wei people were exhausted by their just completed efforts against the Yen kingdom, and asked that they be given a further year to catch their breath. The emperor again agreed. When the time had passed, the question was put to a Council of State, in 439. Shun now declared that Liang-chou lacked water and pasturage, and so was unsuitable for a long-range campaign. On this issue an open debate ensued between him and Ts'ui Hao, and this time the emperor favored the latter. When the Wei army reached the Liang capital, its surroundings were found to be well watered and fertile; the emperor was won over at last.¹³

One further grievance against Shun was learned at the conquest: the fact that when the emperor had ordered him to bring back Meng-sun's notorious wizard-monk Dharmakṣema, Shun had taken a bribe to allow the man to be murdered en route by his guard (to prevent his becoming a Wei asset).¹⁴

The final crisis developed when Shun was ordered to list the surrendered leaders who were to be given Wei titles. Then too he was bribed, or so

13 Details of the very brief invasion of Northern Liang and the quick surrender of its cities (with the exception of Dunhuang) are given in *Wei Shu* annals, ixa,b, and in xcix, section dealing with the Chü-ch'ü regime.

14 The Buddhist monk called T'an-mo-ch'en or Dharmakṣema(?) is the subject of a paragraph in Soper, "Northern Liang" p. 141 and fn. 11. By a bizarre turn of events he was remembered both as a sorcerer and as a very productive translator of Buddhist scriptures.

his nemesis claimed, to give preferential treatment.¹⁵ This time the emperor was infuriated, and ordered Shun's execution, this being in 442.

Under circumstances so melodramatic that they seemed a judgment from Heaven, Ts'ui Hao himself fell precipitously from favor in 450, and was executed along with his co-workers in office, his entire family, and even relatives by marriage.¹⁶ On the contrary, in Li's case he alone had been punished, for his sons survived, and began promising careers under a later emperor in 468. His biography includes the record of a remarkable interview between T'ai Wu Ti and a cousin of Shun's from the same small town, Li Hsiao-po, who had scored a conspicuous service when the Wei armies were finally set in motion against the southern empire, Sung, in 450. The emperor admitted that although Shun had clearly worked against his country's interest, he — T'ai Wu Ti — had intended no such fatal action as took place; the fault was entirely Hao's.¹⁷

At the outset of the reign of the young Hsien Wen Ti in 467, Li Shun's sons were held in such favor that they were able to win his restoration. He was now granted the military rank of West-guarding Grand Marshal in Attendance, along with a promotion in the nobility to Prince of Kao'ing; his wife was granted the posthumous epithet "the Filial Consort."

Unfortunately this return to honors was brief. The oldest son, Li Fu, was one of a company of high officials who were sent out to regulate taxes in the provinces, and in time was impeached by a new inquisitor for accepting bribes. A younger brother, Li I, was so personable a courtier that he won the special favor of the youngish and very lively Empress Dowager, Lady Feng.¹⁸ All this so enraged the emperor, the lady's step-

15 The Li Shun biographies do not identify the subjects *ch'en*, who were to receive these titles. However, high-sounding titles and ranks were offered to the members of the Chü-ch'ü family to induce them to surrender more speedily. Those who accepted and allowed themselves to be included in the polyglot Northern Wei court society were in at least several cases soon accused of plotting, and were executed. In connection with the case of their fellow victim Li Shun and his putative tomb it is interesting to note that the young king Mu-chien, who as part of the softening-up process had been awarded a T'o-pa princess as wife, was ordered to commit suicide by Ts'ui Hao. She followed him in death; the two were buried together with royal pomp. He was given the posthumous epithet Ai Wang, the Pitiabie Prince; their one child, a daughter, was allowed to inherit the mother's rank, "Princess of Wu-wei."

16 *Wei Shu* xxxv, reprint 411, and iva (annals for 450) 70.

17 *Ibid.* xxxvi, 416.

18 For an account of the Empress Dowager, the north Chinese Lady Feng, step-mother and enemy of the Emperor Wen Ch'eng Ti, see Soper, "Imperial cave-

son, that he had the brothers executed, and reduced the longpast Shun to a commoner.¹⁹ The next year, impelled by a still greater revulsion, he abdicated and took orders as a Buddhist monk, dying in 476; it was said of poison as an act of revenge contrived by Lady Feng. His fit of anger against the Li brothers had been as small-scale as his predecessor's against Shun. The biographical chapter, xxxvi, in the *Wei Shu* that begins with the career of Li Shun²⁰ runs on for another 222 lines, recording more briefly the careers of Li family survivors, many of whom made names for themselves in later generations at the court level, in notably civilized fields (with one impeached and executed for bribery and impurity).

The compiler of the Wei history, Wei Shou (506-572) seems to have been unable to conceal completely a rueful admiration for Li Shun and something like exasperation for Ts'ui Hao. He tells of the latter that when his vendetta against Shun was approaching its final success, he suffered a terrible nightmare in which he found himself setting fire to his enemy's bed-chamber and watching his death. At the dream's climax he was called a bandit by Shun's brother, beaten, and thrown into a river. Being told of this by Hao, a shocked court visitor commented, "This is bad indeed. Fire is a sign of extreme cruelty." Hao is said to have replied, "I too think so, but I couldn't stop."

On the other hand in recording the disaster that overtook Shun's four sons so soon after their father's rehabilitation, the Li chapter²¹ records that they:

Were great upholders of filial piety and loyalty to the state. Their courtesies within the family, their observance of the rules for mourning, and the records of their behavior through good and ill fortune, were much admired in the North, so that men lamented their fall.

chapels of the Northern Dynasties," *Artibus Asiae* XXVIII,4,1966: 244-45. Further details are given in Soper, "South Chinese influence on the Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties period, *Stockholm Museum Bulletin* 1960,XXXII: 67-69. Lady Feng's father, who had once been a potential heir to the leadership of the Northern Yen state in the northeast, which the Wei swallowed up in 435, had at first been generously treated by his captors. As governor of two important Wei provinces (including Ch'ang-an) with the rank of duke, however, he was involved in some unrecorded, fictitious(?) plot and at once executed. When the daughter became regent in 472 at 30 she took several steps to restore his reputation, awarding him the posthumous rank of Prince of Yen, his home-land, and establishing a mortuary shrine for him at Ch'ang-an. I have argued also that she had a very large Yün-kang cave-shrine, no. 5, dedicated to him next to her own no. 6, since he was a prince of royal blood who might have been a king.

19 *Wei Shu* xxxvi: 416-17.

20 *Ibid.* xxxvi: 411-12.

21 *Ibid.* xxxvi,416. It seems possible that these signs of civilization in the Chinese

It is no surprise that the biography should name the honorific title posthumously awarded their mother, Hsiao-fei, the Filial Consort.

This emphasis on *hsiao* in the observed behavior of the Li family may be one reason for the prominence of the stories of filial paragons set along the top of the Ningxia tomb's male coffin. The fact that so much has been lost makes it impossible to say anything definite about the number of paragons shown and their relative importance. One can at least comment that the remaining panels testify to some degree of emphasis on the feats performed as a youth by the person who in later life became the Golden Age Emperor Shun. This cycle was apparently lacking in Han art.²² It is of course given major importance on one of the long sides of the Northern Wei stone sarcophagus in the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, with one scene dramatising the young man's escape from the well and the other showing his idyllic reward, marriage to the two daughters of his predecessor, Emperor Yao.²³ The Nelson slabs are rare survivors of the luxuriant, fully sinicised Northern Wei pictorial style of the 520's. The much simpler but already sophisticated painted screen found at Datong in the tomb of the Wei court grandee Ssu-ma Chin-lung, who died in 484, uses the same episodes from the Shun cycle in its topmost tier.²⁴ Among the screen's fragments the most accomplished level of execution may be a result of the arrival at the Wei capital in the early 470's of great numbers of enforced South Chinese immigrants from Shandong, many of whom

sense found an unusual response from the new boy-emperor who began to rule in 466 in his 11th year. The Wei annals for the opening of his reign recall that he understood things quickly and powerfully; even as a boy he held to the twin ideals of concern for his people's welfare and divine inspiration as a warrior; his performance of *jen* and *hsiao*, compassion and filial piety, was unmixed; he was perfect in *li* and reverence toward his tutors and friends. His mother, a Lady Li, was a south Chinese beauty whom the T'o-pa Crown Prince discovered and carried home in 450, during the great Northern Wei raid on the Sung: see *Wei Shu* xiii: 174-75. (When she bore the future emperor she was gently executed, by the workings of the Confucian dynastic policy followed in the North.)

- 22 The Emperor Shun is one of the personages studied by Yoshiko Doi (with a dense array of quotations from early literature) in *Bijutsu Shi* XXII,2,1986: 31-47, "On motifs of several reliefs in Han dynasty," (in Japanese). The Han material, however, shows Shun as a master plowman, not as a filial son.
- 23 Described in Soper, "Life-motion and the sense of space in early Chinese representational art," *Art Bulletin* XXX,1948: 180-86.
- 24 Reported in *Wenwu* 1972,1. This find and its implications are the subject of the Ph.D. dissertation of Lucy Lim. New York University 1989: *The Northern Wei Tomb of Ssu-ma Chin-lung and Early Chinese Figure Painting*.

must have been skilled craftsmen. In contrast, one of the screen fragments from the bottom tier, showing the familiar scene of the Han emperor in his garden-viewing litter and the high-principled lady of his harem standing outside, is rendered almost as childish as the panels of the Ningxia coffin; the work perhaps of a partially trained apprentice, filling in because of some emergency. The Ningxia paintings suggest the work of a remote provincial workshop, prior to the rebirth of craftsmanship brought about in the last quarter of the century by influences from the South.

This paper is obviously not the place in which to attempt to explain the emergence of the youthful future Emperor Shun among the filial sons honored under the Northern Wei. An odd detail has turned up, however, in the review of the various portions of the *Wei Shu* and *Pei Shih*²⁵ required for this comment on the Ningxia coffin. Both of these texts begin with a summary of what was believed, or claimed, at the mid sixth century about the prehistoric origin of the Hsien-pei people and the T'o-pa clan: a fantastic melange of tribal memories and pedantic Chinese speculation, which may be summarized as follows:

The Yellow Emperor, Huang Ti, had 25 sons, some of whom made up the Flowery Realm while others settled in the wilds outside. The youngest son, Ch'ang-i, received lands in the north where there was a great mountain called Ta Hsien-pei, and that became the name of his people. They extended their lands, as herders and hunters with simple ways and no knowledge of reading and writing. Huang Ti, as Ruler by the Virtue of Earth, gave their leader the northern name T'o-pa as the native equivalent of the Chinese title Earth Ruler.

His descendant Shih-chün entered the service of Emperor Yao and drove off the Drought Demoneess by the Weak Water in the West. The northerners gave him their trust; Emperor Shun delighted in him, and decreed that he become the Ancestor of Field Agriculture, T'ien Tsu.

Thus the Emperor Shun and the mysterious Shih-chün are given credit for the transformation of the northerners into a farming people, following the Chinese model.

25 *Wei Shu* i: reprint 23; and *Pei Shih* i: reprint 21.

Glossary

Chao-chün	趙郡
Chü-ch'ü Meng-sun	沮渠蒙遜
Chü-ch'ü Mu-chien	沮渠牧犍
Ch'ang-i	昌意
Ch'ing-ho	清河
Feng (Lady)	馮
Guyuan	固原
Ho-lien	赫連
hou	侯
Hsiao-fei	孝妃
Hsien-pei	鮮卑
Hsien Wen Ti	獻文帝
Juan-juan	蠕蠕
Kao-p'ing Kung	高平公
Kao-p'ing Wang	高平王
Kuo Chü	郭巨
Li Fu	李敷
Li Hsi	李系
Li Hsiao-po	李孝伯
Li I	李奕
Li Shun	李順
Liang-chou	淳州
Mu-jung Ch'ui	慕容垂
Pei Liang	北涼
Pei Yen	北燕
P'ing-chi	平棘
P'ing-chi Nan	平棘男
Shih-chün	始均
Ssu-ma Chin-lung	司馬金龍
Tai	代
Ti Shun	帝舜
Ting Lan	丁蘭
T'ai Wu Ti	太武帝
T'an-mo-ch'en	曇無讖
T'ien Tsu	田祖
Ts'ai Shun	蔡順
Ts'ui Hao	崔浩
Wei Shou	魏收
Wen Ch'eng Ti	文成帝
Wu-ying Tien	武英殿
Yin Chi-fu	尹吉甫