

TAPESTRY  
IN THE COLLECTION OF  
THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM

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## PREFACE

In ancient times, *Shang Shu* records the art of embroidery, and in the Chou dynasty embroidery was already taken up as an industry. Chao Kuei did a scene of mountains and rivers for Emperor Wu Tau-ti, which was superb needlework, and Lu Mei-niang embroidered the Lotus Sutra on silk and the characters were small as the heads of flies and the lines were fine as hair. From Han to T'ang, pictorial embroidery developed into an art carried on by skilled women weavers, quite aside from the making of ornamentation on clothing, and by the Sung dynasty, it grew even more popular and the skills were even finer. Commenting on the embroidery of Sung, Tung Hua-t'ing writes in *Yun Ching Hsien Pi Lu*, "In many aspects such as the distinction between the nearness and farness of the landscape, the depth and spaciousness of the pavilions, the liveliness of the figures and the quaintness of the birds and flowers, some of the best works are superior to painting." From Sung on, the palace has collected the most valuable tableaux of each dynasty, and the splendid tradition is evidenced in these works.

Silk tapestry appeared much later and is not written of in any of the books prior to Northern Sung. After the upheaval of Ching-k'ang, Hung Hao was sent in 1129 as emissary to the Chins, and there he first saw robes made by tapestry-weaving worn by the Uighurs. In his *Sung Mo Chi Wen*, he writes, "The Uighurs were on the decline toward the end of the T'ang dynasty. During the present dynasty, they came to live in Chin-ch'uan. Then the Jurchens invaded Shensi and moved to Yen-shan near Kan, Liang, Kua and Sha, and set up their tents there. Later they even went to Hsi-hsia and lived on the outskirts of the towns." Chuang Ch'o also writes in *Chi-le-pien* concerning tapestry-making in Tingchou. This Tingchou was the former capital located northwest of Wuwei, not the Tingchou of Hopei. The accounts of Hung Hao and Chuang Ch'o were written about the same time and by then the art of tapestry-weaving had been introduced into Hopei from Shensi and Kansu; indeed Hung Hao should not have been surprised to see it among the Uighurs. Chuang Ch'o had written in some detail concerning the technique of tapestry-weaving. Previous to that this art had been kept quite secret. From him we learn that tapestry-weaving had come from the Uighurs that had moved to the central lands.

In the time of Shao-hsing, the calligraphy and painting in the imperial palace were mounted in tapestry. During this period there was also a famous weaver, Chu K'o-jou, whose works were collected in the palace. At the beginning of Emperor Kao-tsung's reign, tapestry was greatly treasured and later in the Chiangnan region imitators engaged in copying old tapestries gained in number.

In the Ch'ing imperial collection of tapestry, there were two panels that bore dates. One was the Diamond Sutra woven by Liang of the Five Dynasties, dated 915, and the other was "Peacock" woven in the Sung dynasty, dated 969. The Diamond Sutra panel was described in written records and is now lost, and the inscription on "Peacock" was embroidered on later, not as part of the original tapestry and we cannot estimate it to have been made earlier than Southern Sung based on this inscription. As for the tapestry discovered in the stone caves of Tun-huang, they could have been made as early as the late T'ang period, but Tun-huang is situated near Chin-ch'uan where the Uighurs settled and we cannot claim true Chinese origin for these works.

Gakken Co., Ltd. in Japan does fine printing and in publishing this volume containing the entire collection of embroidery and tapestry in the National Palace Museum, it renders a great service. These exquisite works of Chinese embroidery and tapestry art preserved through the centuries may now be shown to peoples of the world.

July 1970

Wang Yun-wu  
Taipei, Taiwan

## FOREWORD

Embroidery began early in China as one of the arts practiced by women. Later tapestry was introduced into China by the northern regional tribes. The making of tapestry is different from embroidery though both rely on the needle. Tapestry, 繡絲 *k'o-ssu*, is also referred to in Chinese as 刻絲 *k'o-ssu*; both names are interchangeable and denote the same type of pictorial silk-weaving. The collection of embroidery and tapestry in the National Palace Museum originates from the Sung dynasty, and contains the best samples from each successive dynasty. The fineness of the skills, the beauty of the colors are beyond imagination. When these were preserved in the palaces, the public did not have any occasion to see them. Now we have edited these works in one volume and added brief descriptions and this volume is to be published by Gakken Co., Ltd. in Japan. Thus these fine works may be made known to all.

Arts and crafts should develop and progress with time, but as with many inventions of China this has not been the case. Instead of improvement, we have tended toward conservatism, instead of promulgation, we have tended to keep the skills secret and often through disuse, certain arts have perished; these staid habits are all impediment to progress. Today the handicrafts flourish, but they largely imitate the styles of foreign lands; they have not sought to persevere in the fine tradition of old. It is even so with embroidery and tapestry, which is a pity. We hope this volume will both stimulate the efforts of our countrymen and tell the story of the glory of this traditional art abroad.

July 1970

Chiang Fu-tsung  
National Palace Museum

## CHINESE CHRONOLOGY

商(殷)	Shang (Yin)	.....	B. C. 1766—1122
周	Chou	{ 西周	Western Chou B. C. 1122— 722
		{ 春秋	Spring and Autumn Period B. C. 722— 481
		{ 戰國	Warring States B. C. 481— 221
秦	Ch'in	.....	B. C. 221— 207
漢	Han	{ 前(西)漢	Former (Western) Han B. C. 206— 8 A. D.
		{ 新(王莽)	Hsin (Wang Mang) 9— 24 A. D.
		{ 後(東)漢	Later (Eastern) Han 25— 220 A. D.
三國	The Three Kingdoms	{ 蜀(漢)	Shu (Han) ..... 221— 263 A. D.
		{ 魏	Wei 220— 265 A. D.
		{ 吳	Wu 222— 280 A. D.
南朝	The Southern Dynasties	{ 晉	Tsin ..... 265— 316 A. D.
		{ 東晉	Eastern Tsin 317— 420 A. D.
		{ 宋(劉裕)	Sung (Liu Yü) 420— 479 A. D.
		{ 南齊	Southern Ch'i 479— 502 A. D.
		{ 梁	Liang 502— 557 A. D.
		{ 陳	Ch'en 557— 589 A. D.
北朝	The Northern Dynasties	{ 北魏(鮮卑)	Northern Wei (Hsien-pi) ..... 386— 534 A. D.
		{ 東魏(鮮卑)	Eastern Wei (Hsien-pi) 534— 550 A. D.
		{ 西魏(鮮卑)	Western Wei (Hsien-pi) 535— 557 A. D.
		{ 北齊	Northern Ch'i 550— 577 A. D.
隋	Sui	{ 北周(鮮卑)	Northern Chou (Hsien-pi) 557— 581 A. D.
			581— 618 A. D.
唐	T'ang	.....	618— 907 A. D.
五代	The Five Dynasties	{ 後梁	Later Liang ..... 907— 923 A. D.
		{ 後唐	Later T'ang (Turks) 923— 936 A. D.
		{ 後晉	Later Tsin (Turks) 936— 946 A. D.
		{ 後漢	Later Han (Turks) 947— 950 A. D.
		{ 後周	Later Chou 951— 960 A. D.
宋	Sung	{ 遼(契丹)	Liao (Khitans) ..... 916—1125 A. D.
		{ 北宋	Northern Sung 960—1126 A. D.
		{ 南宋	Southern Sung 1127—1279 A. D.
元	Yüan	.....	1277—1368 A. D.
明	Ming	.....	1368—1644 A. D.
清	Ch'ing	.....	1644—1912 A. D.
中華民國	Republic of China	.....	1912 A. D.—

## REIGN PERIODS OF MING AND CH'ING

明 Ming	.....	1368—1644	泰昌 T'ai-ch'ang	1620
洪武 Hung-wu	1368—1398		天啓 T'ien-ch'i	1621—1627
建文 Chien-wen	1399—1402		崇禎 Chung-chen	1628—1644
永樂 Yung-lo	1403—1424		清 Ch'ing	..... 1644—1912
洪熙 Hung-hsi	1425		順治 Shun-chih	1644—1661
宣德 Hsüan-te	1426—1435		康熙 K'ang-hsi	1662—1722
正統 Cheng-t'ung	1436—1449		雍正 Yung-cheng	1723—1735
景泰 Ching-t'ai	1450—1457		乾隆 Ch'ien-lung	1736—1795
天順 T'ien-shun	1457—1464		嘉慶 Chia-ch'ing	1796—1821
成化 Ch'eng-hua	1465—1487		道光 Tao-kuang	1821—1850
弘治 Hung-chih	1488—1505		咸豐 Hsien-feng	1851—1861
正德 Cheng-te	1506—1521		同治 T'ung-chih	1862—1873
嘉靖 Chia-ching	1522—1566		光緒 Kuang-hsi	1874—1908
隆慶 Lung-ch'ing	1567—1572		宣統 Hsüan-t'ung	1909—1912
萬曆 Wan-li	1573—1620			

## SILK TAPESTRY (K'O-SSU)

### What Is K'o-ssu?

*K'o-ssu* is one type of textile weaving of earlier times. In casual appearance it is similar to other woven fabrics, but actually the process of making *k'o-ssu* is unique. There are many notations in ancient books concerning this type of weaving. For instance:

Chuang Ch'o of the Sung dynasty writes in *Chi-le-p'ien*: "The silk tapestry woven in Ting-chou does not use a large loom. The warp of dyed silk is hung on a wooden frame. Any shapes of flowers, birds and animals that are wanted can be first left in the warp and weft by using a small shuttle. Then the design is completed by using vari-colored threads and filling in the opening left in the warp and weft. Since these are not connected, it is possible to see a narrow opening between the ground and the design. The opening gives a carved effect, and as a result, tapestry is called 'cut silk.' It takes a year to make a set of woman's clothes. It is possible to make any kind of ornament, none of which is the same, because the shuttle carrying the weft threads does not go all the way across the web."

Chang Yin-wen of the Ming dynasty writes on the imperial collection of Sung silk tapestries: "Whether rendering landscape, human figures or birds and flowers, there is no limitation and great freedom is allowed. It is not hampered by the restriction of a set pattern of the loom."

Ts'ao Chao of the Ming dynasty states in *K'e-ku yao lun*: "Of silk tapestry made in the Sung dynasty, on white or blue ground, poems, landscape, stories, figures, flowers, birds and animals are woven. The matching of colors can be as varied as there are colors, therefore it has also been called 'woven color.' Silk tapestry is greatly valued."

The meaning of *k'o* 緯 is interpreted by Ku Yeh-wang of Liang in *Chuan-yu-p'ien* as "weft-weaving"; that is, after the design has been prepared, it is filled in by the weaving of weft threads. *Ming Yi K'ao* states: "The word *k'o* 刻, often used to describe silk tapestry, is not clear. *Kuang-yün* employs the character *k'o* 緯, meaning weft-weaving, and the use of the character 刻 is a mistake for the proper character 緯." *Ssu-hsiu pi-chi* mentions "In the time of Sung, 緯 was commonly used; nowadays people use 刻; 刻 means 'carving' in *Shuo-wen* and refers to wood-carving in *Erh-ya*. We can infer the meaning, but the correct expression as it applies to silk should be 緯 and to metals and wood 刻." The above sources all favor the character 緯. However, *Ts'uan-tsu ying-hua* differs in opinion and emphasizing the descriptive passage in *Chi-le-p'ien*, "the opening gives a carved effect and as a result, tapestry is called cut silk," states that to employ the character 刻 is quite appropriate. Other words, 克絲, 剋絲, have also been used referring to silk tapestry.

Tapestry is woven flat, with even thickness throughout and both sides are identical. For that reason it has been called *t'ou-k'o* 透刻 (through weaving) and it is very suitable for flags. No diag-

onal or cross threads are permitted and only the weft thread are shown, the warp threads being hidden from view, therefore among woven textiles it is rated the most highly in artistic worth.

## The Weaving Method

As for the looms employed, *Ts'uan-tsu ying-hua* relates that there are two kinds, the fixed loom and the hand loom. Most tapestries were woven on hand looms. This book quotes the Japanese scholar Jimbei Kawashima on his description of weaving as follows:

"The weaving of *chiieh-chin* (tapestry is referred to as *chiieh-chin* in Japanese) relies entirely upon the dexterity of the fingers. The drawing is placed beneath the warp threads and a small shuttle threaded with colored silk is used to cross the warp threads in the designated area, and then the thread is tightened into place by the fingernails. Inch by inch, the pattern is composed. Although this method had been practiced in olden times, it was restricted to coarser patterns and small designs, and only recently has it advanced to this fine and close weaving. No matter how large the panel, the original cartoon is finely worked in this manner. As for the improvement and invention of new looms, this does not concern this technique."

*Ts'uan-tsu ying-hua* further adds, "Whether the stationary loom or a hand loom is used, whether the frame is placed flat or upright, the cartoon is placed beneath the warp threads. The weaver uses her fingernails trimmed to resemble the teeth of a comb to push the weft threads flush, or sometimes a wooden comb is used instead."

From these descriptions, we note that the warp threads are fixed on the frame which may be placed either horizontally like an embroidery frame, or upright. The cartoon is laid beneath the warp threads. Following the design of the cartoon, color thread carried in a shuttle is used to work in the weft threads on that portion of the design specified by the cartoon. The weft threads do not travel all the way across the web and stop at the outline of the design; for that reason saw-tooth shaped slits are often left along the edges of adjoining areas.

## The Materials Used

In the National Palace Museum collection, there are 175 pieces of tapestry, most of which are woven with silk. There are some exceptions:

1. In *CRAPE-MYRTLE AND FUNGUS* and *MAGPIES AND FLOWERS* (both of the Sung dynasty), the darker portions have been woven of linen fibres, thus emphasizing the feeling of weightiness in those portions of the design. This has been very successfully done.

2. On the brown backgrounds in *ABODE OF IMMORTALS* and *KINGFISHER ON AN AUTUMNAL LOTUS* and the backs of the pied wagtail and the shrimp in *PIED WAGTAIL BY THE*



SHORE, the weft threads appear different from the rest; they are possibly made of raw silk or hemp.

In most works, the warp threads are of silk. Infrequently, silk may be replaced by hemp. *Ssu-hsiu pi-chi* writes, "*Chu-ssu* 紵絲 has been substituted in new weavings. It is akin to silk but lacks its lustre, and in elasticity, it cannot measure up to silk." *Chu-ssu* is a kind of hemp.

In terms of thicknesses of threads, there are two types, the loose thread and the "joined" thread. In most tapestries, loose thread is used. "Joined" thread is also called double twirled thread because two strands of silk have been twisted together. The weft threads in ESCAPING SUMMER HEAT IN A STREAMSIDE PAVILION, BAMBOOS AND PLUM BLOSSOMS by CHAO CH'ANG, EMBLEMS OF LONGEVITY WITH INSCRIPTION by LI TZU, and FLOWERS by TS'UI PO are composed of double twirled threads.

### The Origins of Tapestry

The earliest documented accounts of tapestry are in the notebooks of Sung scholars. Chuang Ch'o's *Chi-le-pien* mentions that tapestry came from Ting-chou. A contemporary Sung writer, Hung Hao, in *Sung-mo chi-wen* has the following statement concerning the origins of tapestry: "The Uighurs were on the decline toward the end of the T'ang dynasty. In the present dynasty, some came to live in Chin-chou. The Jurchens came to invade Shensi and pitched their tents near Yen-shan, Kan-liang, and Kua-sha and later went so far as Hsi-hsia and lived on the outskirts of the cities and considered themselves an independent country with their own ruling chieftain . . . They are adept at weaving brocades and silks and use five-color threads to tapestry-weave robes, called *k'o-ssu*, which are very beautiful."

Hung Hao was a *chin-shih*; in 1129 he was sent as an emissary to the Chins and was kept there for fifteen years before he returned. It was there he first saw tapestry-woven robes made by the Uighurs. This coincides with the time when Chuang Ch'o wrote about the tapestry-weaving in Ting-chou. So the technique of tapestry weaving was introduced into China by the Uighurs in the beginning of Southern Sung.

The Ting-chou mentioned by Chuan Ch'o appears to have been the seat of the capital located northwest of present-day Wu-wei, not the Ting-chou in Hupei. Since the accounts of Hung Hao and Chuang Ch'o were written about the same time, we can deduce by them the technique of tapestry weaving had already spread from Shensi and Kansu to Hupei. Hung Hao should not have been surprised to notice it among the Uighurs.

In 1906-1908, Sir Aurel Stein found in Lou-lan, Sinkiang, fragments of wool tapestry from the Han dynasty, material which combined Chinese and Hellenistic influence in style, and at Noin-Ula in Outer Mongolia; fragments of woven material with rock and tree motifs of the Han dynasty were discovered in 1912. These were all single-threaded flat weaving with through warp and sectionalized weft construction and the material was wool. The



origins of this type of weaving must have been early. In Egypt and other places in the West this form of weaving was prevalent. Hemp was found used for the warp and wool for the weft and it was only after the introduction of the technique into central China that silk threads were employed and we have silk tapestry. Li Hsing-nan writes in *Hsiao-p'in chih-ching t'u-chi*, "Silk tapestry is evolved and developed from the weaving arts of Western Han," so some have attributed the source of silk tapestry manufacture to those early times.

### Evolution and Special Characteristics

As we have stated before, the technique of silk tapestry was brought into China by the Uighurs after Northern Sung, so if we speak of the evolution of silk tapestry, this begins only with Southern Sung.

The tapestries in the National Palace Museum collection all bear dates. There are 70 pieces from Sung, 3 pieces from Yüan, 32 pieces from Ming and 70 pieces from Ch'ing or unspecified periods.

The earliest piece in the Museum collection is THE WEALTH OF SPRING (color pls. 30, 31), the cartoon of which dates back to the Five Dynasties. The choice of colors suggests an unadorned simplicity and the weaving primarily sought to express the spirit and the form of the cartoon. It has also been found often one cartoon was used for several panels; for instance, the elements in ABODE OF IMMORTALS (color pls. 1, 2) and ACCUMULATING COUNTERS IN AN IMMORTAL ABODE (color pls. 3, 4) and leaf No. 5 of *Lou-hui chi-chin* (black-and-white pl. 6) are identical and these three panels were all for presentation on a birthday. The weaving is very refined, the colors solid and the style natural.

Some tapestries bear the names of well-known weavers, such as those of Chu K'o-jou, Shen Tzu-fan, Wu Hsü and Wu Ch'i. We do not know too much about Shen and Wu, but Chu K'o-jou was a girl, a native of Yun-chien, who was both talented in painting and tapestry weaving. In the reign of Kao-tsung of Southern Sung, she was famous for her tapestry work. The figures, trees and rocks and birds and flowers she depicted are inimitable, full of antique air and purity; she controlled the composition of the weaving as easily as if she were using a brush. Hers was an exceptional accomplishment. There are five leaves by her in the album *Lou-hui chi-chin*; the composition of the cartoons are models of Sung album painting and the weaving carries them out in style and elegance.

Of Shen Tzu-fan's works, there are three, LANDSCAPE (color pl. 8), DOVES ON A FLOWERING PEACH BRANCH (color pl. 9) and PICTORIAL RENDERING OF THE SPIRIT OF THE VERSE "AUTUMN MOUNTAINS" (black-and-white pl. 3). The use of colors and the weaving style all indicate work by the same hand. There exist also two other panels of landscape (color pls. 6, 7 and black-and-white pl. 2) and one of birds and flowers (black-and-white pl. 28) which may also be his work though they are unsigned, or they could be later imitations of his work. The outlines of the pear blossoms and the neck and body of the bird in the birds and flowers panel have been traced in ink; the weaving

technique is also similar to PARADISE FLYCATCHER; SIGN OF SPRING RENEWAL AND LONGEVITY (black-and-white pl. 30) and BIRDS AND FLOWERS OF THE EARLY SPRING (color pl. 13).

The tapestry bearing the signature of Wu Hsü is THE FLAT PEACH; SYMBOL OF IMMORTALITY (black-and-white pl. 14). Its composition is similar to PEACH of the Ming dynasty (color pl. 62). In the Ming panel is inscribed a poem by Shen Chou of that dynasty and there is a notation that it was made by Wu Hsü of Yen-ling, with a seal "Tse Juen." This may be a false annotation; see detailed explanation.

Of Buddhist portraits of the Sung dynasty, there are two in the Museum collection, both very fine works. They are KUAN-YIN BODHISATTVA (color pl. 40) and TATHĀGATA BUDDHA (black-and-white pl. 34). The lines and colors of the first are subdued and this work seems to be of early date. As for tapestries of figures, ASSEMBLY OF IMMORTALS OFFERING GOOD WISHES FOR LONG LIFE (black-and-white pl. 36) is the most outstanding. The panel is small and there is no subsidiary background decoration to the eight immortals and the old man of longevity portrayed, but the fine presentation of the figures and the quaint straightforwardness of the weaving reveal it to be work of a master hand.

Tapestry-weaving of calligraphy is more difficult than that of painting. *Ts'uan-tsu ying-hua* says, "There are many strokes in the same direction as the warp threads, and there are also diagonal lines. In weaving the diagonal lines, it is difficult to avoid spaces and slits. The weaver must be extremely diligent and watchful." Only with this constant watchfulness, taking into account many factors, can the forcefulness and grace of the calligraphy be brought forth. There are eight pieces of tapestry-weaving of calligraphy in the collection, five being of Mi Fei of the Sung dynasty, all very successfully done.

In conclusion, Sung tapestries are not numerous and we can briefly summarize as follows: the subject matter is on a high level, the style is straightforward and honest and the colors are classic and elegant. Occasionally the weft threads slant and the closeness of the weave is not always even, but the weaving does carry out fully the intended purpose of the cartoon. After the completion of weaving, brushwork was used only rarely; when it was used, it was merely to amend the details, and not as an element of the organized plan before weaving. The achievement of Sung tapestry tops those of subsequent periods. From here on, though techniques may become more refined, the brush was also more frequently used. With the tendency to employ both media, the classic, simple elegance of Sung tapestry was lost and a tradition of painted tapestry began.

There are not many Yüan tapestries extant; in the Museum there are only three: two of birds and flowers (color pls. 45, 47) and one THE TATHĀGATA BUDDHA, TANTRIC FORM OF SHIVA (black-and-white pl. 47). From these few pieces it is not easy to comment on the work of that period. *Ts'uan-tsu ying-hua* quotes

a passage from Ts'un Su T'ang catalogue of tapestry and embroidery which gives this description: "Silk tapestry which flourished in Southern Sung was made even more widely during the Yüan dynasty. Imperial robes were laced with gold threads and the designs were more elaborate than during the previous dynasty, though perhaps not so refined. After the fall of Liao Chin, the Mongols came into central China and their military feats shook the world. Tributes of woven silks and unusual brocades came from everywhere, such as the Ching Tien Fang Chih (also called Mohammedan brocade) from Burma, and the woolen woven textiles from Persia. *Cheng-hai-chuan* in Yüan history writes that boys and girls and artisans were assembled to form a center at Hungchow, and there were established over three hundred households producing the woven gold and colored fabrics of the western regions. Buddhism was followed in the Yüan dynasty, and the flags, pennants and costumes of the priests, plus the coverings for sacred scriptures and the statues were all embossed with gold and many colors. With new customs came new vogues, which is only logical, and the designs of the woven and embroidered works were greatly transformed. In records of costumes, painting, sculpture and woven fabrics, we see that the western style was a decided influence. In silk tapestry it is apparent that golden and ornate colors were over-used in the Yüan dynasty. In fact, silk tapestry and woven fabric of gold were intermixed so that one could not distinguish one from the other..." Chu Ch'i-ch'ien writes in Ts'un Su T'ang catalogue of tapestry and embroidery: "A factory was established in Hung-chou where capable weavers were gathered. Weavers of gold fabrics from the western regions were also settled in Hung-chou. With this center pursuing this craft, new trends developed. However other tapestry weavers continued to reside in Wu-hui, devoted to both farming and weaving. Occasionally looms were brought out to weave tribute tapestries. These workers followed steadfastly in the old style and their art was not influenced by the blankets and coarse robes (of the west). The tradition of Yun-chien was unbroken." From these two descriptions, we see that tapestry-weaving thrived in the Yüan dynasty.

In the early Ming dynasty only imperial pennants and flags for boats were woven, otherwise tapestry-weaving ceased until the Hsüan-te period. Chu Ch'i-ch'ien writes in Ts'un Su T'ang catalogue of tapestry and embroidery: "The emperor Ming Tai-tsu, weary of the extravagance of the Yüan tapestries, dispensed with the custom of annual tribute of such goods, and forbade the use of silk tapestry. Only pennants and flags for boats were woven for which the technique was similar to tapestry. In the Hsüan-te period, the art was revived and an imperial factory was set up. Skilled craftsmen came from the south and the industry again prospered as in the times of Hsüan-ho. In imitating well-known T'ang and Sung works and in reproducing calligraphies and paintings of the emperors, the weavers' skill was not inferior to those of Sung and Yüan. Up to the end of the Ming dynasty, this art continued to flourish." He also says, "That this art has not died out is due to the patronage of Emperor Hsüan-tsung. I am profoundly moved

when I read his writings. If one were to take the fine examples of weaving of this period, they would be comparable in quality to the porcelain and bronzes of his reign." *Ming-hui-tien* mentions that there were twenty-three weavers working in the imperial factory. The revival of tapestry art must largely be credited to Emperor Hsüan-tsung. Especially in fashion were imitations of Sung works and as a result a great many of the works of that period are mistaken today as products of Sung.

During the Cheng-hua period, silk tapestry was also very popular. Wang Ch'i writes in *Yu-yen-tsa-chi*, "The art of tapestry-weaving, abandoned for a long time since the times of Sung, is once more very much in evidence and the products are as varied and artful as inventiveness and imagination dictate. The works portraying figures are especially superior."

The Ming tapestries in the Museum consist of eight hanging scrolls and two albums with a total of 24 leaves, altogether 32 panels. From the point of view of pictorial style and weaving technique, we must consider the technique of the period was clever but lacked artistic worth. The works were spirited but lacked emotional appeal. Silk tapestry had become a purely technical craft.

Most of the silk tapestries of the Ch'ing dynasty were produced during the Ch'ien-lung reign. The weaving technique was intricate, the threads were smooth and close and the tension uniform, unmatched by previous dynasties. The colors were bright and refreshing, the content complex and as a rule the tapestries were in large panels.

The silk tapestries of Ch'ing had in a sense become painted tapestries; that is on top of the weaving, brush was used liberally to add on colors, compensating for the inadequacy of the weaving. This method had been used in the Sung dynasty, but it was only to fill in details left out in the weaving. In the Ming dynasty areas in the tapestry where brush was used increased until in the Ch'ing dynasty only broad designs were woven and all the details and the shading of light and dark relied completely on painting. We can consider this a decline of the technique but in terms of the end result, it may also be regarded as advancement or variation of technique.

In summing up, the skills of Sung tapestry are the most substantial, the intention of the painting was best expressed and therefore artistic attainment was also highest. After Yüan, this pursuit of high standards was abandoned and attention was paid more and more to intricacy of weaving; the designs became more stylized and the manner of weaving fixed. In the Ch'ing dynasty, refinement of technique was pursued further. Colors were elaborate and the use of the brush was greatly increased.

In this volume detailed explanations accompany the color plates and the approximate numbers of warp and weft threads per inch of each panel are also given for reference.

## NOTES ON THE PLATES

### 1.2 ABODE OF IMMORTALS

*Sung dynasty, album leaf*  
size: 28.1 cm × 35.7 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 78-80, weft 256-480

Silk tapestry of abode of immortals amid magic mountains against brown background.

The colors are elegant, the delineations sharp and the upper part of the frame is embellished with cloud formations. It is the last leaf in the album *Ming-hua Chi-chen* and the content is similar to the fifth leaf of *Lou-hui Chi-chin* (black-and-white pl. 6) and to ACCUMULATING COUNTERS IN AN IMMORTAL ABODE (color pls. 3, 4). Among the three, the design of this panel shows harsher outlines and the colors are paler. The brown ground may be of raw silk. The weaving skill is steadfast and the threads are tight and close. This tapestry was in the collection of Liang Ch'ing-piao of the Ch'ing dynasty.

It bears the seals of Liang Ch'ing-piao and the imperial seals of Chia-ch'ing of the Ch'ing dynasty.

### 3.4 ACCUMULATING COUNTERS IN AN IMMORTAL ABODE

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 45.3 cm × 26.9 cm, with up-  
per silk panel for inscription,  
18.7 cm × 26.9 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 68-70, weft 200-320

Silk tapestry of a pavilion on a fairy isle, with clouds and flying cranes on white ground.

Though this panel is rather small in size, it is the finest work in tapestry in terms of original design, weaving and choice use of colors. All parts conform to a general pattern, and the style is both ingenuous and interesting. The content corresponds to ABODE OF IMMORTALS, the last leaf in the album *Ming-hua Chi-chen* and the fifth leaf of *Lou-hui Chi-chin*, but the workmanship is far superior in this panel. The content shows only half of the subject matter of the other two scrolls. The cranes, peaks and human figures have been somewhat damaged, and these parts have been painted over with a brush. This panel might have served as a covering for a handscroll of calligraphy or painting, later being remounted as a hanging scroll. The inscription by Yü Chi in the scroll's upper division or *shih-t'ang*, was made in the Yüan dynasty, so it was already a hanging scroll in the Yüan dynasty. The inscription reads: "Silk tapestry began in the Sung dynasty and today this art is practiced but cannot compare in refinement. This scroll is splendid with landscape, human figures and a pavilion on an isle. It is outstanding in refinement and interest. It was in the collection of Chung-shan. Inscribed in the tenth month of 1344, Yü Chi of Szechuan. Three seals: Shao, Yen and Yü Chi."

This panel is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part III* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the seals reading "Jih-tsoo cheng-ts'ang" and "Chung-shan-fu yin" and the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty. On the legend "Accumulating Counters in an Immortal Abode," *Tung-po Chih-lin* writes: "Three old men met and asked of each other's age. One said, 'Each time the ocean turns into a mulberry field, I take down one counter. I have accumulated ten counters.'" This legend is often referred to in wishing for long life on a birthday.

### 5 ESCAPING SUMMER HEAT IN A STREAMSIDE PAVILION

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 157.4 cm × 63 cm  
double plied silk  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 40-44, weft 110-180

Silk tapestry of human figures, flowers and plants on white ground.

Done in the manner of folk art, the pictorial composition of this panel is loosely constructed; the colors are muted but not elegant.



It is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part III* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

The imperial seals of Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty are impressed upon it.

## 6.7 LANDSCAPE

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 89.8 cm x 35.5 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 44-46, weft 120-240

Silk tapestry of distant mountains and white clouds, with a fishing boat moored by a cliff. Inside the thatched hut a man sitting is reading a book.

The content resembles LANDSCAPE by Shen Tzu-fan of the Sung dynasty (color pl. 8) and PICTORIAL RENDERING OF THE SPIRIT OF THE VERSE "AUTUMN MOUNTAINS" of the Sung dynasty (black-and-white pl. 3); however, the placement of the left and right elements is reversed. This is an example of silk tapestry being identical on both sides so that either side may be mounted as the obverse. The weaver seems not to have understood the principles of painting, merely copying the warp and weft lines of Shen's finished tapestry, hence the depicting of the mountains is slightly awkward. The colors of the weft threads are not harmonious and the points of change of color are quite abrupt; the weave is loose and soft. This is probably a copy work of the Sung dynasty. The faces of the figures, the boat awning, the windows, the leaves and parts of the trees' outlines have been painted over in black ink.

This panel was in the collection of Liang Ch'ing-piao of the Ch'ing dynasty and is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part II* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the seals of Liang Ch'ing-piao and the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

## 8 SHEN TZU-FAN, LANDSCAPE

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 83.3 cm x 35.8 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 54, weft 96-224

Silk tapestry of distant mountains amid clouds, of a thatched pavilion on a cliff. Moored below the cliff is a boat. The signature "Tzu-fan" is in the right lower corner.

The weaving is exceptionally fine and seems to exhibit the essence of the "blue-green" style of landscape painting. It corresponds to PICTORIAL RENDERING OF THE SPIRIT OF THE VERSE "AUTUMN MOUNTAINS" (black-and-white pl. 3) and the coloring and weaving technique are about the same. However in this panel the laying on of dark and light weft threads is unnatural in some places and the outlines do not clearly express the brushstrokes as in the other tapestry. These two tapestries were probably done one after the other. The faces of the figures, the boat awning and part of the mountains, clouds, leaves, tree trunks and outlines of the rocks have been painted over with a brush.

It is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part II* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

## 9.10 SHEN TZU-FAN, DOVES ON A FLOWERING PEACH BRANCH

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 95.7 cm x 38 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 50-54, weft 128-224

Silk tapestry of a pair of doves on a flowering peach branch on white ground. Signature "Tzu-fan."

This panel is a superb example of silk tapestry surviving from the Sung dynasty. The two elements of painting and weaving are beautifully combined. Although the subject is only of birds and flowers, it is of the same caliber as the LANDSCAPE by Shen Tzu-fan (color pl. 8). The blend-

ing of the colors of the weft threads is unmatched in subtilty and the weaving skill is smooth and unencumbered. In the spirit of serious realistic paintings of birds and flowers of the Sung dynasty, the weaver has created a work of pure art, not to be compared to by the usual congratulatory tapestries. On the outlines of flower petals and the leaves, black, blue, light green weft threads have been used as necessary. The backs of the birds and the neck of the right bird have been touched up by ink, as if they were probably overlooked in the weaving. This panel gives the feeling of permanent freshness, due to its superb technique and the high quality silk threads used. The brown weft threads, however, because of the strong corrosive dye, are in part frayed and in these sections the warp threads are exposed.

The panel was in the collection of Liang Ch'ing-piao and is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part II* and in Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the seals of Liang Ch'ing-piao and the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

### 11•12 TWO MAGPIES ON A BRANCH OF CASSIA

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 91.7 cm×44.8 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 58-74, weft 96-224

Silk tapestry of two magpies resting on a branch of cassia on white ground. One is pretending to be asleep, while the other is watchful.

The colors are pale and elegant and the weaving has captured the intention of the original painting. In style, it resembles DOVES ON A FLOWERING PEACH BRANCH by Shen Tzu-fan (color pls. 9, 10), also in the use of color and the weaving technique; however, the tension of the weave is uneven. The main cassia branch has been worked with blue, black and brown threads in a pattern, while the upper right branch is depicted with a zigzag design. This imaginative touch gives added interest.

This panel is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part II*.

It bears the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

### 13 BIRDS AND FLOWERS OF THE EARLY SPRING

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 166.5 cm×71.5 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 38-42, weft 128-160

Silk tapestry of plum flower, bamboo, rock, narcissus, and camellia with a pair each of pheasants and mynahs, on white ground.

The colors are pale and elegant. The original cartoon portrays a very lifelike scene and the weaving follows this through. Similar to PURE FRUIT OF IMMORTALITY (black-and-white pl. 19), this work is unquestionably of the Sung dynasty. The weave is not too even. The outlines of the plum branch, of the flower petals and of the feathers of the pheasants have been painted over by brush. Among extant Sung dynasty tapestries, this panel shows the most extensive use of manual retouching.

It is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part III* and in Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*. It bears the imperial seals of Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

### 14 AFTER BAMBOOS AND PLUM BLOSSOM BY CHAO CH'ANG

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 99 cm×41.7 cm  
double plied silk  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 58-66, weft 176-240

Silk tapestry based on a painting by Chao Ch'ang of two magpies resting on plum branches. One is pretending to be asleep, while the other is looking down. There are also bamboos and a rose branch. In the right upper corner the title, Chao Ch'ang's name and two seals, "Chao Ch'ang" and "T'ien Shui" are given.

The colors are elegant and subdued. As the panel has been hanging for a long time, the light areas of the plum blossoms and the rose are faded.



The weave, of plied silk, is even and tight, and the practiced degree of skill shown in the weaving carries out the cartoon very well.

The panel bears the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

#### 15•16 FLOWERS AND BIRDS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 115.1 cm X 54.8 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 40, weft 180

Silk tapestry of a pair of mandarin ducks on the bank of a lotus pond, on brown ground. The lotus and the gardenias are in bloom. A pair of long-tailed birds are resting on an upper pomegranate branch.

The style of the cartoon of this panel is between bird and flower painting and folk painting. The contours and the back feathers of the mandarin ducks are somewhat stiff. Double strands of silk threads have been used and as a result the lines of separation such as those near the stalk of the lotus are very marked.

There are two distinct features to this panel not usually found in other tapestries: silk possibly from undomesticated silkworms was used for the weft of the brown ground and this has turned white; and on the back of the male mandarin duck, gold thread has been intertwined with two strands of silk to depict the feathers, giving an additional dimension. The woven seal at the right upper corner is not very distinct and has been painted over in red; the characters are *Chung-ho wei-yü*.

This panel was in the collection of Hsiang Yüan-pien and bears one of his seals and the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

#### 17•18•19 CRAPE-MYRTLE AND FUNGUS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 94 cm X 60.3 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 38, weft 112-128

Silk tapestry of two birds on a branch of crape-myrtle. In the lower right corner is a clear brook. On the left bank amidst the rocks are cherry-apple, *Amarantus gangetica*, and wild chrysanthemum. The fungus grows near the grass.

This panel is for presentation on a birthday. In weaving technique and use of material, it is similar to MAGPIES AND FLOWERS (color pls. 20, 21). In the weaving, the warp and weft positions have been reversed, so that the warp threads run sideways and the weft threads run lengthwise; that is to say, the piece was woven vertically. Except for the ground, the flowers, the brook and portions of the birds' feathers which employ silk, the rest of the design has been carried out with linen fibers, thus increasing the feeling of solidity in the leaves, rocks and branches. The cherry-apple blossoms and leaves in the right lower corner are most lifelike. The coloring throughout is mild and harmonious and the centers of the crape-myrtle blossoms have been dotted over with a brush. Each detail has been carefully done, making a very fine panel.

It bears the imperial seals of Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

#### 20•21 MAGPIES AND FLOWERS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 113.2 cm X 68.1 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 48, weft 96-112

Silk tapestry of two magpies on peach blossom branches, one on an upper branch, one on a lower branch, facing one another. Growing beside the rocks are hydrangeas, roses, wild chrysanthemums, camellia and bamboos.

This panel is for presentation as a gift on the birth of a son. In the weaving, the warp and weft positions have been reversed; the piece was woven vertically. The flowers and the bodies of the magpies have been woven of silk; the rest of linen fibers. The colors have been carefully se-

lected and are natural, and the linen threads give a substantial feeling. This may have been by request of the purchaser or just an experiment on the part of the weaver. Both the magpies and the flowers have been successfully done. This panel is exceptionally fine. It is listed in Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the imperial seals of Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty.

## 22·23 PEACOCKS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 167 cm×227.7 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 36-40, weft 96-128

Silk tapestry of two peacocks playing among peonies, hibiscuses and rocks on white ground. Pairs of swallows, butterflies and bees are flying in the air. In the upper left corner, the title and the inscription "Second year of K'ai-pao (year 969) third month, made by Hsi Shan Hua of San-liu-t'ang" are woven, together with a seal "Hsiao Tzu Hou Yi."

This piece is for presentation as a wedding gift. In the original drawing the peony petal outlines and the feathers of the peacocks were possibly traced in gold, as was common in this type of painting, but in the weaving colored threads have been substituted. The colors are flamboyant throughout and the weaving technique may be compared to A PAIR OF GEESE AND HIBISCUS (color pls. 24, 25), ALBUM OF FLOWERS (color pls. 52 to 56) and FLOWERS AND BIRDS (color pls. 15, 16).

The panel is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part I* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

The imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty are upon it.

## 24·25 A PAIR OF GEESE AND HIBISCUS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 64.4 cm×70.2 cm  
double plied silk  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 40-42, weft 120-180

Silk tapestry of a pair of geese on the waterside on light blue ground. Nearby are a cassia branch, lotuses, hibiscuses and reeds.

This panel was possibly made for presentation at a wedding. The selection of colors is not particularly distinguished. The feathers of the geese and the water waves are done in a patterned manner. The weaving technique is rather stylized, as for instance in the two-color shading of the branches and the rocks, a saw-tooth pattern is used.

This panel is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part I* and in Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's *K'o-ssu shu-hua lu*.

It bears the imperial seals of Ch'ien-lung, Chia-ch'ing and Hsüan-t'ung of the Ch'ing dynasty and eleven seals of the collector, Keng Chao-chung.

## 26·27 FLOWERS AND BIRDS

*Sung dynasty, hanging scroll*  
size: 75.8 cm×81.7 cm  
number of threads per inch:  
warp 56-60, weft 96-144

Silk tapestry of lotus blossoms in an autumn pond on white ground. Some are blooming, some are wilted and one has developed a seed pod. A pair of mandarin ducks are playing in the water, and at the left a dragonfly flies toward the pond.

As this scroll has been hanging for a long time, the white ground has turned brown, and the original colors of the lotus blossoms are faded, now almost indistinguishable from the white ground. The weaving technique is very fine and captures the expressive intent of painting. The feathers of the mandarin ducks are patterned like fish scales, and the two colors used in the wings of the dragonfly are joined in a saw-tooth design. The lotus stems are standardized. These features may be due to intentional stylization or merely due to the convenience of weaving.

The panel is listed in *Shih-ch'ü pao-chi, Part III* and Chu Ch'i-ch'ien's