

HIGHLIGHTS OF DECORATIVE
DESIGNS ON THE MEMORIAL
TABLETS OF THE TANG DYNASTY

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唐代墓誌 紋飾選編

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序一

唐墓雙紋飾

唐代墓誌，是我國珍貴的民族文化遺產的組成部分之一。它不但為研究我國歷史提供了可靠的依據，同時也使我國古代文學、書法、繪畫，得到充分的反映，尤其圖案藝術，在不斷的繼承和發展中登峯造極。

繪畫，反映在墓誌上的主要是圖案。圖案的創作有悠久的歷史，在中國美術史上佔有重要地位。彩陶文化時期，在圖案的創作上就飽含了生機，以後在發展變化中更顯示了時代特色和民族精神。它由萌芽到茁壯成長，由抽象到寫實，由生澀到熟練，始終凝聚着傳統圖案創作的特點，沿着民族藝術的道路向前發展。到了唐代，便如盛開之花，噴芳吐艷。

自 50 年代，配合基本建設，陝西省關中地區出土的大量唐代墓誌中，內容非常豐富，其中一部分雕刻十分精彩。諸如：《尉遲恭墓誌》、《楊執一墓誌》、《王大禮墓誌》、《張怙墓誌》等等，形式和雕刻風格各異。它綜合了歷史、文學、書法和美術，並不同程度的顯示了時代特色和藝術風格上的個性。方正的造型，華麗的辭章，精湛的書法，工巧的圖案，組成了一個完美的整體，閃爍着唐代藝術的光輝。

唐代墓誌皆為正方形的石質，其厚約為 15 厘米左右，有誌有蓋，稱為一合。凡有蓋的誌石，多為覆斗形，刻飾分為三層：上部的平面為蓋，篆書或楷書死者的官銜和姓氏。蓋邊有飾紋，斜面稱殺，是主要的裝飾部分。斜面以下為側，飾紋從簡。誌石上的刻飾均在誌側面。

墓誌刻飾的主要目的是美化。內容以花草，鳥獸等為

主，其形式和風格極富於變化；有的對稱，有的連續，有的並列排比，有的分組成型，朱紋與白紋相兼，陽面與陰面並用。在虛實的變化中，以線條的造型為主。線的功力與變化十分突出，以刀代筆，鑿刻技法嫻熟，線條圓轉流利，氣韻生動，在繁複的刻飾中給人的富麗堂皇之感。流動的線條塑造出生姿勃勃的形象，襯托着幽揚典雅的銘文，氣氛嚴肅端莊，其藝術魅力，經久不息，在我國藝術史上永遠煥發着光彩。

墓誌的刻飾，受限於一定的範圍內。在狹長的面積裏，章法以平列取勢。在均衡中突破局限，在平穩中極力誇張。流動旋轉的弧線，如雲似水；飛躍奔騰的鳥獸，其勢欲出。其內容大體上可分為四類：

一、花草變形圖案。

變形圖案的主要內容是花草。它可以獨立進行裝飾，在變化中任意充滿空間，或增或減，或疏或密，任其擺佈。這種內容在唐墓誌中是普遍存在的。墓誌蓋上出現最多的是牡丹紋，還有荷花、菊花、茶花等。在狹長的面積裏，多採用曲線的延續手法。它可長可短，能曲能伸，反復出現，並且在變形中形成卷曲的線條。這是唐墓誌刻飾的主要特徵。

“~”形曲線在圖案藝術創作中普遍出現，到了唐代，尤其在石刻中，更得到了充分的應用。這種“~”與“太極圖”中的曲線相象。遠在新石器時代的彩陶紡輪上即出現了動人的“太極圖”紋樣，（據 1956 年《考古通訊》第三期）。“太極圖”迴旋不止，上下相隨，陰陽相生，一虛

一實，既對立又統一，相反相成，為後來圖案藝術的發展，創造了無限的前景。這種曲線的並列，重複，即可變成各種造型優美的圖案，尤其在圓的範圍內。

仰韶文化時期的彩陶紋樣中盛行抽象圖案，對後來圖案藝術的發展影響很大。它形象雖不具體，却仍然來自生活現實。遠古時期，人們對大自然現象不能理解。風、雨、雷、電、水、火等在人們頭腦裏留下了深刻的印象。所以在陶器上出現了尤如長空飛雲，大地野火的抽象圖形裝點着人們的生活。也有以線的排列，重複，黑白對比的方法創造了多種風格的幾何紋來美化器物。

在漫長的歲月裏，人們在創造，繼承和發展中，圖案藝術逐漸趨於寫實，各種風格的裝飾出現在殿、堂、廟宇、棺、槨、墓誌。在長期的實踐中，工藝大師們加深了對生活的觀察和理解，使圖案藝術既有經過提煉，誇張、變形的美感，又接近真實形象。所以，唐墓誌刻飾大致可以分辨出花草的屬種。雖與自然真實仍有很大距離，但可以看出具體形象。其表現形式是以民族藝術的傳統技法“線”來塑造形象。這種在墓誌上的線所鑄造的物象大部分成卷曲狀，運動感很強。它粗細一致，流暢自然，既有“鐵線描”挺拔勁健的力量感，又有“遊絲描”連綿柔潤的韻律。

凡以曲線組成的圖案，皆以延續的方法佈滿空間。支線隨主線運轉，自然卷曲，如行雲流水，不悖不慙。這種風格在唐墓誌上已經非常完備，成熟。

北朝至隋時期出現在造像記上的延續形菊花圖案還是比較生澀的。如，西安碑林西廊北周武成二年造像石與隋開皇四年造像石上的刻飾，主線與支線幾乎成直角，韻律和節奏感與唐墓誌刻飾相比都負一籌，但它却是走向頂峯不可缺少的階梯。

二、變形圖案與寫實動物相兼。

圖案與動物相兼的手法，也是唐代石刻圖案中主要表現形式之一。圖案的內容為藤蔓花草，而寫實動物則以四神，十二屬相，野鳧、鴛鴦、白鶴及如豹似虎，如鹿似兔的神怪等為主要對象。四神，在墓誌上是按方向定位的，前為朱雀，后為玄武，左為青龍，右為白虎。十二屬相多

在墓誌側出現。它代表十二地支（子、丑、寅、卯、辰、巳、午、未、申、酉、戌、亥）而用來記人的出生年的十二種動物，即鼠、牛、虎、兔、龍、蛇、馬、羊、猴、鷄、狗、豬等，每邊三個圖形，佈於四側。也有少數的刻在墓誌蓋的盃邊上。如1972年陝西乾縣唐高宗乾陵範圍內出土的景雲二年“大唐故章懷太子並妃清河房氏墓誌”，就是這樣佈局的。

對於各種動物形象的塑造是很成功的。當代雕刻家在非常熟悉生活的基礎上，加以豐富的想像和藝術誇張，使其既真實，又有美感，在概括中突出特徵，在誇張中表現出局部的裝飾效果。如前肘的旋毛，后胯的雲紋，朱雀、玄武頸部的幾何紋等。其中大部分的飛禽，走獸在狹小的面積裏作出較大的動態，或奔跑，或騰飛；或昂首闊步，或引頸長嘯，都十分生動，兼以翻卷的雲紋，花草紋，藤蔓紋等，形成了完整的畫面。1955年西安東郊郭家灘出土的“史思禮墓誌”殺面所刻四神，朱雀振翅，玄武滾動，青龍吟，白虎嘯，體態如生。1972年陝西乾縣出土的“雍王賢墓誌”所刻十二生肖，或展翅長鳴，或回首尋覓，各盡其態，呈現出一派“獸狂顧而求群兮，鳥相鳴而舉翼”的動人場面。襯以流動的雲紋，水波紋，形象更為生動。

在延續的卷曲圖案中兼以鳥獸，不但無雜亂之感，而且給畫面增加了層次，增添了生氣，充實了內容。因為變形圖案與寫實動物之間，形體的變化，線條的組織都有明顯的區別，把圖案作為陪襯，更加突出了主題。這是唐墓誌刻飾上特有的效果。

十二生肖的形象，一種是寫實的，另一種是神化的。神化的形象着交襟長袍，執笏板端坐，不像寫實的生肖那樣輕佻。肖像以外，以龕形或複龕形罩之，也有的成固定的雲形，內部皆以雲紋補空，每邊三組。大的墓誌，飾面較大，以團雲旋轉其間，顯得更有生氣。如，1956年西安東郊寒森寨出土的元和十二年“秦朝儉墓誌”誌側圖案是一件成熟的作品，陽面面積較大，對比強烈，增強了裝飾效果。

這種神化十二生肖的形式以後影響到五代和宋，並且在不斷的變化。如：西安碑林陳列的五代開平四年“石彥

辭墓誌”誌側的十二屬相頭部却出現在文吏的頭冠上，龕外飾花形圖案，龕內佈白，風格別致。宋代的“安守忠墓誌”誌側十二屬相的位置上出現的是褒衣博帶，雙手執笏的僧像，由龕形變成長方形，內飾葉形圖案。

三、雲紋和水紋。

雲紋、水紋的刻飾並不多，它和花草圖案一樣，可以獨立進行裝飾。在形式上仍然是分為變形圖案和近于寫實風格的兩種。以圖案形式出現的是二方連續的排列，不受一定模式的限制，僅以面積的大小、長短而應變。另一種是主圖居中，以對稱的形式向兩邊排列。如，1972年陝西醴泉縣昭陵範圍出土的永淳元年“臨川公主墓誌”的殺面與側面，均以定形的朵雲飾之，每邊三朵，四面對稱，誌側，則以對稱排列佈滿狹長的面積。這方墓誌及蓋的刻飾雖然簡單，但刀法却十分熟練。從刀筆中可以看出作者乃是久經雕刻藝術生涯的巨匠。它平刀鏟底，不加修飾，實處為陽，虛處為陰，風格獨特。又如，1956年西安東郊出土的貞元六年“楊萬榮墓誌”誌側飾近于自然界的雲形，細觀其狀，仍然是以排列法連成雲帶，以線條的疏密表現雲的厚度。刀法不是勻稱的旋轉，而如同毛筆行在紙上，抑、揚、頓、挫，強弱變化有致。這種飾紋在唐墓誌刻飾中並不多見。

四、幾何圖形。

幾何形圖案，在墓誌刻飾中起輔助作用，其中有四方對角紋，回形紋和連珠紋，這些圖形出現在補白和填空的位置，在墓誌蓋盃面的四角或盃與殺之間的邊緣上。雖然佔面積很小，但與大面積的流動線條相襯，直線與曲線形成鮮明的對比，剛柔相濟，出現了迥然不同的效果。

在唐墓誌刻飾中，還有一種變化較大的圖案，它近于抽象，佈局隨器物形狀變化。這種圖形有其歷史淵源，秦漢銅器上就有它的踪跡。以後在北魏“苟景墓誌”，隋“范安貴墓誌”以至唐“張士貴墓誌”上，都有這種圖案出現。可見這種圖形在工藝師中形成了固定的楷模，所以代

代相傳，經久不衰。

墓誌蓋的三道刻飾的面積隨時間在不斷變化。早期盃面較大，殺面與側面都比較窄小，主要飾面集中在盃邊。這種形製在初唐，隋，北魏，都比較類似。以後殺面逐漸擴大，盃面縮小，側面更窄，把主要飾面放在盃邊和殺面，誌銜面積縮小。如，1953年咸陽底張灣北原出土的“張去奢墓誌”，邊長為90厘米，篆蓋僅28厘米。如此形狀的墓誌和刻飾在唐代諸誌中還很多。

墓誌及蓋上刻飾的形式，部位和內容等，並不是固定的。從數十方比較精彩的墓誌雕刻中可以看出，內容與形製是配合的，風格和形式隨位置與面積大小而變化。多數的墓誌蓋上是把主要部分放在盃邊和殺面。盃邊狹小者，僅以花頭飾之，線條從簡。也有的誌和蓋全以牡丹圖案佈滿其間，刀法與線條一致，其效果渾然一體，富麗飽滿。如，1974年陝西醴泉縣煙霞村出土的總章三年“李勣墓誌”，昭陵東南出土的上元二年“阿史那忠墓誌”等，就是這種風格。所以刻飾的佈局和內容的安排，是工藝師因形狀和習慣而定，並沒有固定的楷模，但却保持了時代的共性。

墓誌蓋覆斗形的出現，顯然是來自生活實踐，出于工藝大師的創造。凡蓋形器物，皆成凸起之狀，又因誌蓋是方形，所以自然成覆斗形。唐代墓誌刻飾的豐碩成果，歸屬於勞動者的創造和民間工藝師的聰敏才智。這種藝術形式隨着時代變化，沿着民族藝術的道路發展，並顯示了不同的時代特色，為我國石刻圖案藝術寶庫積累了珍貴的財富。

賀梓城 張鴻修

一九八九年四月十八日

PREFACE I

Decorative Designs On the Memorial Tablets of the Tang Dynasty

The memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty form an integral part of China's precious cultural legacy. They not only provide sources of materials for the study of the Tang-dynasty history, but also take as a combined whole the ancient Chinese literature, calligraphy, painting and decorative art in particular. In the Tang Dynasty, art of design developed constantly, carried on traditions and reached the peak of perfection.

The memorial tablets are chiefly decorated with designs. The creation of decorative patterns dates back to the remote past, and occupies a prominent position in the history of Chinese fine arts. The decorative patterns which emerged during the period of Painted Pottery Culture are full of vigor and vitality, and reflective of the national spirit and the features of the times. Decorative designs developed from the embryonic stage and found their way from abstraction to realistic representation or from immaturity to excellence. On their way to perfection, they constantly absorbed the creative features of traditional patterns, and carried on the traditions of the national arts. Towards the establishment of the Tang Dynasty, they were in full bloom, and sent out a delicate fragrance.

The memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty excavated across the Central Shaanxi Plains since the 1950's are rich in content, and part of them are fine and exquisite in carving style. Take for example the memorial tablets respectively of Wei Chigong, Yang Zhiyi, Wang Dali and Zhang Yu. The decorative designs on these memorial tablets vary from one to another both in form and carving style. These cultural legacies take history, literature, calligraphy and fine arts as an integral whole, and in varying degrees, exhibit the features of the times and the individuality in carving style. Square characters, flowery inscriptions, exquisite calligraphy and delicate patterns constitute a combined whole, and they radiate with the artistic rays of the Tang Dynasty.

The memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty, which are shaped out of a square stone slab about fifteen centimetres in thickness, have a cover to be complete with. The cover, in most cases, resembles a frustrum of a cone. The decorative designs on the cover fall into three categories. The

helmet or rather the horizontal plane carries the tomb occupant's name and his official rank in seal characters or square scripts. The margins on the horizontal plane are decorated with varied patterns. The inclined plane is the major section for decorations. The vertical plane below the inclined section is adorned with simple patterns. The decorative carvings on the memorial tablet, with no exception, find themselves on the profile planes.

The use of decorative patterns is aimed at beautification. With respect to the motif, flowers, plants, birds and animals dominate, and they vary considerably both in form and style. Some are connected or symmetrical; some are juxtaposed or balanced; others are engraved in sets. Line drawing alternates with line engraving; shading and lighting are equally adopted; linear formation underlines the changes in emptiness and solidness. Lines are apparently vigorous and flexible, and flow as easily and smoothly as the romantic charm requires. They are created under a carving knife, and the skills required prove to be delicate and exquisite. Lifelike patterns take shape as lines flow smoothly, and set off flowery inscriptions. Decorative designs exhibit an overwhelming artistic charm, and display an impressive sense of splendor. Consequently, they still radiate a myriad of rays in the history of the Chinese fine arts.

Decorative patterns on the memorial tablet are limited in scope. With regard to the narrow and small plane, ornamental designs are well-balanced in organisation. They are free from spatial limitations and remarkably exaggerative in style. Flowing and whorly curves are like drifting clouds and running water. Flying birds and galloping animals are lifelike as if to move out of the decorative patterns. Decorative designs roughly fall into four categories according to their content:

1. Stylized flower-and-plant patterns

Stylized patterns focus on flowers and plants in content. They independently serve the purpose of decoration. Through linear addition or omission, flowers and plants are freely spaced as the changes require. This form of decorative pattern is universally existent on the memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty. In most cases, the cover of the mem-

are positioned on the memorial tablet on the basis of direction: the Scarlet Phoenix on the obverse, the Tortoise and Snake on the reverse, the Blue Dragon on the left and the White Tiger on the right. In most cases, the Twelve Animals appear on the profile planes of the memorial tablet. They represent the duodecimal cycle of years or rather the Earthly Branches, known as I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and XII. Each of the Twelve Animals is used to mark the year of one's birth. They are referred to the mouse, the bull, the tiger, the hare, the dragon, the serpent, the horse, the goat, the monkey, the cock, the dog and the pig. Each of the four profile planes carries three animals. Besides, the minority of the animals find themselves on the margins of the horizontal plane of the cover. The same is true of the memorial tablet meant to Crown Prince Zhang Huai and his consort, nee Fang, which was excavated in the periphery of Emperor Gao Zong's Mausoleum in 1972.

The figuration of various animals prove to be a great success. Thanks to the then carvers rich life experience, extraordinary imagination and their artistic exaggeration, the animals under their knives are realistically carved and awaken a sense of beauty. Summa highlights their unique features, and local decorative effect grows out of exaggeration. The whorly hairs on the elbow, the cloud pattern on the hip and the geometrical design on the necks of the Scarlet Phoenix and the Black Tortoise serve as typical examples. Limited to the narrow and small space, most of the flying birds and four-footed animals exhibit a full sense of activity. Some are on the run or rise to the sky; others stride forward proudly or make a long roar. They actually present a vivid and lifelike picture. These animals, together with cloud patterns, flower-and-plant patterns and trailing-plant designs, constitute a complete whole. One example is Shi SiLi's memorial tablet excavated in Guojiatan on the eastern outskirts of Xi'an in 1955. The Four Gods engraved on the inclined planes of its cover are full of vigor and vitality. The Scarlet Phoenix flutters its wings; the Tortoise and Snake trundles; the White Tiger roars; and the Blue Dragon chants. Another example is the Twelve Animals on Li Xian's memorial tablet unearthed in Qianxian County in 1977. The Twelve Animals vary from one to another both in posture and carriage. Some spread the wings or demonstrate the singing voices; others look back or hunt for prey. "Beasts looking all about to seek company and birds singing together and raising their wings" feature the whole scene. The Twelve Animals are set off against water cloud patterns and ripple designs. The scene appears all the more vivid and vivacious.

The combination of continuous crimped patterns with birds and animals does not create a sense of disorder, but reinforces the arrangement of the tableau and enriches its content. Stylized patterns and realistically-carved animals

are kept separate through figurative variation and linear organisation. The motif is obviously set off from stylized patterns. In this respect, the decorative designs on the memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty are typical.

The images of the Twelve Animals are either mythical or realistically wrought. Unlike frivolous realistically-carved images, the mythical ones wear long robes and sit straight with a memo tablet in hands. The images are framed in a niche or a double niche. Cloud patterns are used to fill the vacancy inside the niche, with three sets on each side. The decorative planes of a large-sized memorial tablet are dotted with cloud clusters, and appear fairly vigorous. Take for example Qin Zhaojian's memorial tablet marked by the twelfth year of Yuanhe reign and excavated in Hansenzhai on the eastern outskirts of Xi'an in 1956. The images of the Twelve Animals are clearly set off from the background. The engraved patterns on the profile planes show a striking contrast between the motif and their foils, and strengthen the decorative effect.

This expressional form of the mythological Twelve Animals exerted an influence on the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty, and underwent constant changes. Take Shi Yanci's memorial tablet for example. The tablet takes its source from the fourth year of Kaiping reign of the Five Dynasties and is now exhibited in Xi'an Forest of steles. The heads of the Twelve Animals on its profile planes find themselves on the cap of a civil official. The outside of the niche is adorned with floral patterns while the inside is dotted with balaams. This style of carving is original and distinctive. The profile planes of An Shouzhong's memorial tablet of the Song Dynasty are engraved with the images of Buddhist monks, belted and well-dressed and with memo tablets in hands. The niche turns into an oblong shape. The inside of the niche is festooned with floral patterns. There exists a striking contrast between these images and those of the Twelve Animals in the Tang Dynasty.

III. Cloud and water patterns

Like floral-and-plant patterns, cloud and water patterns, though inferior in number, also serve the function of decoration independently. In style, they are of two types: stylized and realistically-carved. The arrangement of two-side connected patterns does not subordinate itself to a particular form or model, but changes with the size of a carving plane. In some other cases, the subjective pattern appears in the middle, and other patterns are arranged in both directions. Take for example Princess Linchuan's memorial tablet marked by the first year of Yongchun reign and excavated in the periphery of Zhaoling Mausoleum in 1972. Both the vertical and inclined planes on the cover of the tablet are festooned with clouds which fall into a pattern. Each plane carries three cloud patterns. The profile planes are filled with such patterns in a symmetrical form.

These patterns are simple but exquisitely wrought. Judging from the carving style, the creator must have been a consummate and professionally experienced craftsman. The ground was scraped even with a knife. The solid part was in relief while the empty part in intaglio. The carving style was unique and distinctive. Take Yang Wanrong's memorial tablet for example. The tablet took its source from the sixth year of Zhenyuan reign and was unearthed on the eastern outskirts of Xi'an in 1956. Its profile planes are embellished with clouds close to life. The clouds are well-arranged, and take the shape of a ribbon. The thickness of the clouds is reflected by the density of lines. The lines do not flow evenly but vary in style from vigorousness to litheness. This style proves to be distinctive and unconventional.

IV. Geometrical patterns

Geometrical patterns which consist of the fret, the linked-pellet design and the confronting-quadrangle design supplement the decorative patterns of the memorial tablets. These supplementary designs fill the blank spaces on the horizontal plane or between the horizontal and inclined planes. Though they cover a small area, they serve as a foil to the flowing lines that dominate the planes. Consequently, there exists a striking contrast between straight lines and curved lines. In other words, vigorous lines and supple curves complement each other, and produce distinctive decorative effect.

Abstract patterns also fall under the decorative designs on the memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty, and show a wide variation with the shape of a particular object. These patterns have their own historical origins. The bronze vessels of the Qin and Han dynasties bear such patterns. The same is also true of Gou Jing's memorial tablet of the Northern Wei Dynasty, Fan Angui's memorial tablet of the Shui Dynasty and Zhang Shigui's memorial tablet of the Tang Dynasty. Obviously, this type of decorative pattern was finalised in the minds of ancient craftsmen, and was passed on from generation to generation.

The three planes on the cover of the memorial tablet showed a constant variation in area with the lapse of time. In the early days, the horizontal plane was larger than the inclined and vertical planes. Major decorative patterns dominated on the margins of the horizontal plane. This form of structure remained relatively the same in Northern Wei Dynasty, the Shui Dynasty and the early Tang Dynasty. In later days, the inclined plane tended to expand; the horizontal plane lessened; and the vertical plane narrowed. Major decorative designs were placed on the inclined plane and the margins of the horizontal plane. The space specified for the inscription and the tomb occupant's rank became narrow and small. Take Zhang Qushe's memorial tablet for example. It was excavated in Dizhangwan, Xianyang in 1953. The side of the cover is ninety centime-

tres in length, but the section with seal characters is only twenty-eighty centimetres. These features are also reflected on many other memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty.

With respect to content, form and location, decorative designs both on the memorial tablet and its cover show a wide variation. Judging from dozens of exquisitely-carved memorial tablets, content conforms itself to the shape of the tablet; style and form change with location and the size of the plane. In most cases, major decorative designs are arranged on the inclined plane and on the margins of the horizontal plane. Narrow and small margins are only decorated with floral-petal designs engraved in simple lines. Some memorial tablets and their covers are filled with peony designs. The engraving style conforms itself to the use of lines. The tableau is an integral whole and full of vigor and vitality. One example is Li Ji's memorial tablet marked by the third year of Zongzhang and unearthed in Yanxia Village, Liquan County, in 1974. The other is Arshinar Zhong's memorial tablet marked by the second year of Shangyuan reign and excavated southeast of Zhaoling Mausoleum. The layout of decorative designs and the arrangement of their content do not fall into a particular pattern, but depend on the carver's creative habits and the shape of a tablet, and retain the general characters of the times.

The cover of the memorial tablet resembles a frustrum of a cone. Apparently, this creative work resulted from the ancient craftsman's life experience and his wisdom and imagination. The cover takes a protruding shape, and its planes are square. Hence, it is like a frustrum of a cone.

The decorative designs on the memorial tablets of the Tang Dynasty are attributed to the ancient labourer's creativity and the folk artists' wisdom and imagination. This form of art varied from generation to generation, absorbed the artistic features of the times, carried on the traditions of the national arts and considerably enriched the treasure house of China's art of design.

He Zicheng
Zhang Hongxiu
April 18, 1987

序二

四神·十二生肖

(一)

青龍、白虎、朱雀、玄武並稱“四神”，也稱“四靈”或“四象”是神化了的四種動物。

它象徵祥瑞，辟凶邪，是中國古代人們崇拜的戰勝困難的力量，降福于人類的神靈，廣泛的應用于天文，戰爭和社會生活。

四神，也是方位之神。中國古代天文學家把四方的恒星加以選擇，分爲二十八個星宿，作爲觀測天象的標誌。古人又把二十八宿按方位分成四組，每組七宿，以所形成的圖象與四方匹配，分別爲東方龍，西方虎，南方雀，北方龜。遠在我國殷代前後，就把東方出現的群星想象爲一條龍，西方出現的群星想象爲一只虎，南方出現的群星想象爲一只鳥，北方出現的群星想象爲龜蛇形象。春秋戰國時期，五方配五色的說法流行後，這四種形象就標上了顏色，成爲青龍、白虎、朱雀、玄武。

“龍”，水族之首，是想象中的神化動物。人們在對龍的形象的創造中，發揮了豐富的想象，綜合了多種走獸和爬行動物的特徵，如鹿角，虎眼，獅鼻、牛唇、鷹爪、馬鬃、魚鱗、蜃腹、蛇身，並在廣泛的應用中形成固定的楷模。所以牠頭有角，體有鱗，口賽盆，牙似劍，頷下生鬚，兩目如鈴；背有鱗，腳生爪，能潛淵，會昇天，神通廣大，在人們心目中成爲尊貴的神靈。二十八宿定位以後，東方七宿：角、亢、氏、房、心、尾、箕，組成龍象，即爲青龍，稱爲東方之神。《淮南子·天文訓》：“天神之貴也，莫貴于青龍”。所以，威懾于世的帝王也被認爲

是龍的化身，美其名曰：“真龍天子”。

“虎”，自然界的猛獸，享有威名，穴居山巔，爲獸中之王。《元秘樞經》：“白虎者，歲中凶神也。”其形象威武，吼聲如雷，正氣凜然，所以被譽爲能驅惡辟邪。二十八宿體系形成後，由西方七宿：奎、婁、胃、昂、畢、觜、參組成虎象，即爲白虎，稱之爲西方之神。

“鳳”，想象中的神鳥，棲梧桐，食竹實，象徵尊貴祥瑞。牠集中了多種動物的局部特徵，形成“鴻前麟后，蛇頸魚尾，龍文龜身，燕頷鷄喙，五色備舉”的形象，含有德、義、仁、信、正、武的美意。秦大帝國建立後，鳳凰以出類拔萃的鳥類代表，晉升爲“鳥中之王”。漢代把鳳比作皇權，皇帝乘坐的車稱爲鳳輦，皇后的頭冠稱之爲鳳冠；皇宮稱爲鳳闕，宮廷所用華蓋稱之爲鳳蓋等。同時在各種器物上出現多種形式寓意尊貴祥瑞的鳳的形象，並起到美化作用。漢代空心磚上的朱鳥是近于孔雀的形象，以後在創造和變化中逐漸形成獨特的鳳的楷模。二十八宿中，南方七宿：井、鬼、柳、星、張、翼、軫組成鳥象，即爲朱雀，稱爲南方之神。

“龜”，水陸兩棲，其性沉靜，長壽。《莊子·秋水》：“吾聞楚有神龜，死已三千歲矣”。《楚辭·遠遊》：“玄武謂龜蛇，位在北方故曰玄，身有鱗甲故曰武”，所以龜即玄武。玄武由北方七宿：斗、牛、虛、危、室、壁組成龜蛇相纏之象，稱爲北方之神。

二十八宿分佈在太陽係天區，按其方位組成四個星象。古代人根據四象的出沒和運行時刻以定春、夏、秋、

冬，安排農務，在計時和生產中發揮過重要作用。四神的形成，波及日本、朝鮮和東南亞等地，在日本寺院的陳列中亦有古代木雕的青龍、白虎、朱雀、玄武，其作用和含義與中國四神相同。

四神，古代用在軍事方面，自然形成方陣，即前朱雀，後玄武，左青龍，右白虎。“鳳為火精，在天為朱雀”。牠勇猛快速，為開路先鋒，玄武沉着緩慢，宜壓陣，退却在後。青龍、白虎為左右邊鋒，奮勇當先，一往無前，是常勝將軍。

四神圖象盛行於漢代和南北朝，隋、唐、宋、元時期，得到更廣泛的應用。墓葬和地面建築材料上都有不同形式的“四神”出現。用在建築上則為辟邪並起到裝飾作用。刻在墓誌上畫在墓壁上則為鎮墓，並表示方位，畫在梁柱上則為美化，並象徵祥瑞。漢代的四神多出現在空心磚和瓦當上，使用中仍然按方位配置。製作以模壓成型，線條凸起，構成形象。造型誇張，結構簡練，在較大的變化中突出的表現了漢代造型藝術宏大雄渾的特點。空心磚上的四神，多呈對稱佈局，即同一平面上有同樣的形象向對出現。這種形式的利用，其主要目的是為佈滿長方形面積的空間，同時也產生了很好的裝飾效果。這四種體態不一的形象為建築藝術增添了不少色彩。瓦當上的四神姿態，隨着圓形的瓦面而應變，呈浮雕效果。整齊排列的瓦當，統一的内容和造型，使典雅的民族建築更加壯麗。

四神，也是石刻藝術的重要題材，尤其在墓誌上得到了充分的表現，範圍之廣，數量之多，都是無可比擬的。南北朝時期，墓誌或墓誌蓋上多刻有四神，雕刻技法和藝術造詣都達了很高的水平。四種形象及陪襯物，在民間藝人的刀下應韻而生。西安碑林中，北魏神龜二年的《元暉墓誌》上的刻飾就是典型一例。作者就其平面的形狀恰當佈局，採用平底淺雕的手法，產生陰陽相濟的效果，雲紋和草紋巧妙的填補空隙，成為完美的整體。在狹小的面積裏，青龍對舞，白虎長嘯，朱雀飛奔，玄武滾動，生姿勃勃。這種風格的刻飾，在北魏墓誌中為數不少，到了唐代更為盛行。在出土的唐代墓誌中，大部分刻有四神，而且

被裝飾在主要的位置——墓誌蓋的殺面。主題周圍以雲紋和水紋補滿空間，雕刻技巧嫻熟，線條流暢圓轉，白紋與陰面相間，主題突出。如，唐天寶十四年《高元珪墓誌蓋》上的四神就有代表性：青龍執水，白虎巡山，朱雀駕祥雲，玄武踏青波，形象如生。

元代和明代，出現在墓誌上的裝飾以龍鳳為最多。在應用中，龍代表男性，鳳代表女性。合葬的墓誌上，上下為二龍戲珠，左右為雙鳳對舞。雕刻風格剔透玲瓏，工巧細膩，型神具備。有的女性墓誌的四周全為鳳的形象，如，《明·浩封鎮國中尉恭人張氏墓誌》，四邊八鳳，效果協調統一，非常精彩。

在民間傳說中：“龍生九子不成龍，各有所好”。九子：夔、螭、蒲牢、狴犴、饕餮、霸下、睚眦、狻猊、椒圖，分別以不同的習性和形象，在生活中被人們象徵性的應用於碑石，殿堂屋頂，鐘鈕、獄門、鼎、橋梁、刀柄、香爐、鋪首。從而更豐富了社會生活內容，同時也起到了美化作用，為民族文化藝術增添了特色，並使其典型化。

清代，碑石上出現的幾乎全是龍的形象，以各種風格和不同形式鑿刻於碑邊，碑冠，碑座和誌石的邊緣。碑座和碑冠上的龍多呈浮雕狀，而且對稱。平面雕刻多呈白紋，龍首為朱紋，體態和相貌已經定型而且逐漸趨於寫實的雕刻風格。其動者有在空中游動之感；靜者有海底盤卧之狀，如西安碑林藏清代康熙四十四年的《賜鄂海碑》，四周雕刻九龍。頂端一龍正面盤卧，下面二龍戲珠，兩側六龍相對，十分精彩。

隨着時代的變遷，社會的進化，迷信思想淡薄，刻石之風衰微，四神的遺留，成為歷史陳跡。

(二)

十二生肖，就是十二屬相，即鼠、牛、虎、兔、龍、蛇、馬、羊、猴、雞、狗、豬，是計年的形象標誌，與地支子、丑、寅、卯、辰、巳、午、未、申、酉、戌、亥相對應為：子鼠、丑牛、寅虎、卯兔、辰龍、巳蛇、午馬、未羊、申猴、酉雞、戌狗、亥豬。天干：甲、乙、丙、

丁、戊、己、庚、辛、壬、癸與地支相配，如甲子年屬鼠，丙寅年屬虎，丁卯年屬兔等，輪轉一周六十年。人出生在某年就屬某物。

十二屬相與時辰相配的順序，據說是以各種屬相的習性而定。每種動物在一天之內最能表現其個性和特徵的時刻，就對應那個時辰。子時（23—次日1時）鼠最活躍，故以鼠配。丑時（1—3時）牛在反芻，故以牛配。寅時（3—5時）虎嘯山崗，故以虎配。卯時（5—7時）月亮（玉兔）還閃着銀光，故以兔相配。辰時（7—9時）群龍執水，故以龍配。巳時（9—11時）蛇避行人，故以蛇配。午時（11—13時）陰陽交替，馬為陰類，故以馬配。未時（13—15時）羊吃草不影響草再生，故以羊配。申時（15—17時）山猴吼叫，故以猴配。酉時（17—19時）鷄歸宿，故以鷄配。戌時（19—21時）狗守夜，故以狗配。亥時（21—23時）豬沉睡，故以豬相配。如此兩小時為一個時辰，十二種動物正好輪轉一晝夜。

《陔餘叢考》卷三十四謂十二屬相之說起于東漢，漢以前未有言之者。但據說出土文物中在我國春秋戰國時期就曾應用十二屬相卜筮，以後應用範圍逐漸擴大。陰陽學也曾以屬相和出生時辰，推算人的秉性，平生作為和婚姻等。在隋唐時期被廣泛用于墓葬。十二生肖供墓主在地府裏算計年月和時辰。其形式有木雕、泥塑（陶）和線刻等。以線刻形式出現的十二生肖主要表現在石槨和墓誌上。出現在墓誌上的在墓誌的四側和墓誌蓋的盃邊上，位置仍然按順序排列，每邊三個形象，分為四組，上下鼠、

馬相對，即為子午線。

在墓葬裏的十二生肖的形象和形式在不斷變化。隋、開皇二十年的馬禪墓誌按方位書刻地支天干名稱，並和八卦相配，這種形式並不多見。初唐李壽墓石槨底座周圍十二形象，是寫實手法表現的，大部分是靜止的狀態，旁邊襯以簡單的背景。出現在墓誌上的却以花草圖案作為襯托，突出的顯示了裝飾的效果。對十二形象的刻劃都非常成功，或奔跑，或佇立；或攀登、或騰飛，都充分體現了每種動物的習性。另一種十二生肖的形象是神化的。神化的動物為人體獸首，着長袍，執笏板端坐，神態莊重。肖象以外為龕形，內以雲紋襯之。這種形式以後影響到五代及宋，並且在不斷變化。五代開平四年的《石彥辭墓誌》側，十二生肖的頭出現在文吏的冠上，龕外飾花形圖案，龕內空白。到了宋代，有的墓誌側却成了褒衣博帶，雙手執笏的僧像，由龕形變為長方形，內以葉形圖案襯之，如《安守忠墓誌》誌側就是這樣。如此看來，墓誌線刻的十二生肖是在不斷的演變中，木俑陶俑和三彩十二生肖也是隨葬品，大部分是以神化的姿態出現，獸頭人身，着長袍直立。這種形式不及石刻普遍，唐宋以後，刻石之風逐漸淡薄。十二生肖只是在中國歷法上與天干地支對應使用。

張鴻修

一九八九年八月二十二日

PREFACE II

The Four Gods and the Twelve Animals

(1)

The Four Gods are referred to the Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, the Scarlet Phoenix and the Tortoise and Snake and otherwise known as the Four Deities or the Four Images. These deified animals were worshiped in the hearts of the ancient Chinese people since they symbolized auspicious omens, exorcised evil spirits, motivated the ancients to surmount difficulties, and bestowed good fortune upon mankind. Therefore, they were applied to wars, astronomy and social life.

The Four Gods are also known as the gods of direction. On a selective basis, the ancient Chinese astronomers classified the stars in the four directions into twenty-eight constellations, which was intended for astronomical observation. On the basis of direction, these constellations were subdivided into four star clusters, with seven in each. Each star cluster formed an image, and represented one direction. Around the Yin Dynasty, the four star clusters were respectively imagined as a dragon, a tiger, a bird and a mixture of tortoise and snake. During the period of the Warring states, each of these images was associated with a particular colour; hence, the Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, the Scarlet Phoenix and the Black Tortoise and Snake.

The dragon, chief of the aquatic family, was an imaginary mythological animal. The ancients allowed the imagination its full play to give shape to the image. The deified animal, therefore, assumed the features of many reptiles and four-footed animals. Take for example the deer's antlers, the tiger's eyes, the lion's nose, the bull's lips, the hawk's paws, the horse's mane, the fish's scales, the clam's belly and the serpent's body. The image of such features turned into an accepted model after years of extensive use. The dragon had two antlers on the head and scales all over the body. Its mouth was big as a basin, and its teeth were as sharp as a sword. It grew palpi under its jaws. Its two eyes were as large as bells. It had dorsal fins and forceful paws. Infinitely resourceful, the mythological dragon could

hide in deep waters and soar up to the heaven. Thus, it was accepted as an honourable god in the minds of the ancient people. The twenty-eight constellations had their fixed positions. The eastern seven star constellations formed an image of dragon, the Blue Dragon or rather the God of the East. Huainan's Astronomical Terms with Exegeses says, "No deities are more honourable than the Blue Dragon". The majestic-looking feudal emperor, therefore, was accepted as an incarnation of the Blue Dragon, or the Son of Heaven by euphemistic name.

The tiger, beast of prey in Nature or king of ferocious animals, dwelled in the mountain lair and enjoyed a high reputation for its might and power. The Classic on Origin, Esoteric Treatises and Basic Factors says, "The White Tiger is the God of Power during a year." The mythical animal possessed a severe and belligerent countenance; its roars reverberated like threatening thunder; and it boasted an awe-inspiring sense of justice. Therefore, the deity was held in esteem for its unusual ability to exterminate evil spirits. The western seven star constellations formed an image of tiger, the White Tiger or the God of the West.

The phoenix was an imaginary penta-coloured mythical bird. The bird perched on the Chinese parasol tree, and lived on bamboo shoots. It was a symbol of high dignity and propitious omen. The mythological bird assumed partial features of multiple animals. Take for example the swan goose's upper part, the kylin's lower part, the serpent's neck, the fish's tail, the dragon's scales, the tortoise's body, the swallow's jaw and the cock's beak. This deified bird symbolized morals, justice, benevolence, trust, righteousness and valiantness. Upon the establishment of the Qin Empire, the phoenix stood out of the common run and was promoted to King of Birds. Phoenix was authoritatively accepted as a symbol of imperial power in the Han Dynasty. The word "phoenix" was much used within the limits of the imperial court. His Majesty's carriage was known as the phoenix carriage. His consort's headdress was called the phoenix headgear. The imperial palace turned into the phoenix palace. The canopy over an imperial carriage was

known as the phoenix canopy. Various phoenix images found themselves on multiple vessels to produce decorative effect. The scarlet bird engraved on the hollow brick of the Han Dynasty was close to the image of phoenix. The image turned into an accepted model in unique style through creative procedures. The southern seven constellations formed an image of a bird, known as the Scarlet Phoenix or rather the God of the South.

The tortoise, an amphibious reptile, was featured by placidity and longevity. In his *Autumn Water*, Zhuangzhou remarked, "I ever heard of a supernatural tortoise in the Kingdom of Chu. He lived a life of three thousand years." The *Long Excursion in the Ballads of Chu* says, "Xuanwu refers to a combined image of tortoise and snake. Xuan is derived from its location in the north while Wu stems from the scales and shells on its body." The northern seven star constellations formed an image of a tortoise entangled with a snake, otherwise known as the God of the North.

The twenty-eight star constellations are distributed in the vast skies of the solar system, and constitute four celestial images. In line with the regularity of their appearance and the cycle of their movement, the ancients classified a whole year into spring, summer, autumn and winter, and made arrangements for farm work accordingly. In summary, the Four Images played an important role in dating and production in the remote past. The formation of the Four Gods exercised a strong influence in Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia. In some of Japan's temples are exhibited today the ancient wood carvings of the Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, the Scarlet Phoenix and the Tortoise and Snake. With regard to their uses and implications, these images are typically Chinese.

The Four Gods also served military purposes in the ancient times. They were applied to the formation of battle array, the Scarlet Phoenix in the front, the Tortoise and Snake in the rear, the Blue Dragon on the left and the White Tiger on the right. "The phoenix is a fiery spirit or the Scarlet Phoenix when in the sky." Alert and valiant, she mounted a frontal attack. Placid and slow, the Tortoise and Snake stabilized battle formation in the rear. The Blue Dragon and the White Tiger, the left and right wings, advanced bravely and achieved outstanding military exploits.

The images of the Four Gods were popular in the Han Dynasty as well as in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. The dynasties of the Shui, Tang, Song and Yuan witnessed more extensive use of these images. In various forms they appeared both on underground memorial tab-

lets and ground construction materials. The images on building materials exorcised evil spirits and meanwhile, produced decorative effect. Those on memorial tablets and tomb walls shut up demons and indicated directions. The images engraved on beams and pillars served the purpose of beautification and symbolized propitious omens. On the basis of direction, the four images of the Han Dynasty were mostly engraved on hollow bricks and tiles. Through mould pressing, they took shape with lines in relief. The decorative designs were exaggerative in formative style and succinct in structure. Major linear variations reflected the vigorous and magnificent features of the Han's figurative arts. The images on hollow bricks were positioned in symmetry. In other words, two images within the same category turned up thereon face to face. This patterning made it possible to fill up the space within a rectangular area and to produce excellent decorative effect. The four images in different attitudes contributed considerably to the development of architectural arts. The Four Gods varied in posture with the arc-shaped tile surface, and they were set off in relief. The well-arranged tiles with unified content and decorative patterns added a lot to the elegance and splendour of China's national architecture.

The Four Gods also constituted the main subject matter of stone carvings. The same was especially true of ancient memorial tablets. Both in scope and quantity, the use of the Four Gods was unmatched. From the Northern Dynasty to the Southern Dynasty, the memorial tablet and its cover were alternatively decorated with such images. These decorative patterns were reflective of excellent carving skills and profound artistic attainments. The four images and their foils emerged as the romantic charm required under the carving knife of the folk artisan. A typical case is the decorative pattern on Yuanhui's memorial tablet housed in Xi'an Forest Steles. In line with the plane surface, the carver skillfully coordinated the part with the whole, and adopted the bas-relief method to balance light with shade. The cloud pattern and the plant design were used to fill the vacancy in an ingenious way. The decorative designs on the tablet formed an integrated whole. Limited to the narrow and small area, the Blue Dragon dances; the White Tiger roars; the Black Phoenix dashes; and the Tortoise and Snake rolls. The four images are full of vigor and vitality. Decorative designs in this style proved to be very popular on the memorial tablets in the Northern Wei Dynasty and especially in the Tang Dynasty. The majority of the Tang-dynasty memorial tablets excavated were

decorated with the Four Gods. In most cases, the inclined plane of the cover was the major section for decoration. The motif is set off from surrounding cloud patterns and water designs. The carving skills are consummate; the lines are smooth and dexterous; and the dark alternates with the light. A typical case is Gao Yuanguì's memorial tablet marked by the fourteenth year of the Tianbao reign of the Tang Dynasty. The Four Gods thereon are true to life. The Blue Dragon has water in control; the White Tiger patrols on the mountain; the Scarlet Phoenix mounts the clouds; and the Tortoise and Snake floats in the azure ripples.

Decorative designs on the memorial tablets of the Ming and Yuan dynasties focus on the Blue Dragon and the Scarlet Phoenix. The dragon represented male while the phoenix stood for female. The memorial tablet in a conjugal joint tomb was engraved up and down with two dragons playing with a pearl, and also decorated left and right with two phoenixes dancing face to face. These ornamental images are not only beautifully wrought, but minute, exquisite and true to life. The memorial tablet within the tomb of a woman occupant was sometimes ornamented with phoenix images on all its four sides. Take for example the memorial tablet of some woman tomb occupant, nee Liu. The four sides of her memorial tablet were decorated with eight phoenixes, exquisitely carved and well-balanced.

A popular legend says, "The Blue Dragon has nine children. They look different. Each has its own likes and dislikes." The nine young dragons, respectively known as Bixi, Chiwen, Pulao, Bi'an, Taotie, Baxia, Yazhi, Suanni and Jiaotu, assumed different features and characteristics. These images were symbolically carved on the stone tablet, the roof of a hall, the gate of a prison, the handle of a knife, the incense burner and on the bridge and the daily vessel. The patterns not only enriched the ancient's experience of life and produced decorative effect, but also added lustre to the national culture and arts.

In the Qing Dynasty, the stone tablets, almost with no omission, were engraved with dragon images. In various forms they presented themselves on the top, the edge or the seat of a tablet and elsewhere. The dragon images both on the top and the seat of the tablet are well-balanced and set off in relief. The surface carving is composed of white lines while the head of the dragon is of vermilion ones. The images fall into a pattern both in shape and countenance. The engraving style is tending to realistic expression. Some are active as if floating in the air; others are tranquil as if

winding themselves under the sea. Take for example the stone tablet of E'hai marked by the forty-fourth year of Kangxi's reign of the Qing Dynasty and now housed in Xi'an Forest of Steles. The periphery of the tablet is ornamented with nine dragons, the one on the top in prone position, the two at the bottom playing with a pearl and the six on both sides face to face. They are exquisitely engraved and pleasant to look at.

Nevertheless, alongside the changes of the times, the development of the society and the extermination of superstitious ideas, stone carving has been on the wane, and the Four Gods have been accepted as a historical legacy.

(2)

The Twelve Animals, otherwise known as the symbols of the duodecimal cycle of years, are composed of the mouse, the bull, the tiger, the hare, the dragon, the serpent, the horse, the goat, the monkey, the cock, the dog and the pig. These animals function as distinctive year-marking symbols. They are used together with the twelve phases or rather the Earthly Branches: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XII. Specifically, the mouse corresponds to the first phase; the bull matches with the second; and the rest can be deduced accordingly. In addition, the Earthly Branches are also matched in order of sequence with the Heavenly Stems, known as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J. Therefore, sixty years make one cycle, and each year is associated with a particular animal. For instance, a person who is born in the year AI is a Mouse, The year BII is represented by the bull, and others down the line.

The habits and characteristics of the Twelve Animals sustain the sequence in which they are matched with the twelve hour periods within a single day. At the time I (23:00-1:00) the mouse is the most active; at II (1:00-3:00) the bull chews the cud; at III (3:00-5:00) the tiger roars on the hill; at IV (5:00-7:00) the moon (the Jade Hare) still shimmers; at V (7:00-9:00) dragons have water in control; at VI (9:00-11:00) the serpent disappears from view; VII (11:00-13:00) is when the Positive replaces the Negative (the horse included in the Negative category); at VIII (13:00-15:00) the goat grazes without affecting the reproduction of grass; IX (15:00-17:00) is when the monkey clatters on the mountain; X (17:00-19:00) is when the cock retires for the night; at XI (19:00-21:00) the dog keeps watch; and at XII (21:00-23:00) the pig is sunk in sleep. Two hours make one cycle, and the Twelve Animals take turns around the clock.

According to Volume 34, Textural Research on Miscellaneous Subjects, the version of the Twelve Animals originates just from the Eastern Han Dynasty. However, the cultural relics excavated indicate that this point of view is not reliable. The Twelve Animals are said to have served the purpose of divination during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Period and to have been applied far and wide over the successive years. In the Shui and Tang Dynasties, they were used extensively beneath the cemetery. The tomb occupant could date and tell hour phases with the aid of the Twelve Animals. They varied in form from wood carving, clay sculpture to line engraving. Those in incised lines make their appearance on the stone outer coffin and the memorial tablet. Those engraved on the profile planes of a memorial tablet and on the margins of its cover are positioned in order of sequence. Each profile plane carries three images. The mouse and the horse stand opposite each other from top to bottom. This arrangement indicates the meridian line.

The Twelve Animals in tombs incessantly changed both in style and form. Ma Zhi's memorial tablet, marked by the twentieth year of Kaihuang reign of the Shui Dynasty, carries the names of both the Earthly Branches and the Heavenly Stems, which are complete with the Eight Diagrams. This form of representation is almost unprecedented. The periphery of the pedestal of the stone outer coffin in Li Shou's tomb is ornamented with the images of the Twelve Animals which assume realistic features. The majority are at a standstill, and profile against simple background. The Twelve Animals on the memorial tablet are set off against flower-and-plant patterns; this arrangement considerably indicates decorative excellence. The images are exquisitely wrought. Running briskly, standing still, clammering hard or flying swiftly reflects each animal's habit and characteristic. In some other cases, the Twelve Animals bear mythical characteristics. This type of animal retains its facial features, but has a human build. Dressed in a long robe and sitting still with a memo tablet in hand, the animal looks solemn and dignified. The animal is framed in a niche and set off against cloud patterns. This style of representation exerted an influence on the Five Dynasties and the Song Dynasty, and showed changes with the passage of time. Take for example the profile plane of Shi Yanci's memorial tablet marked by the fourth year of Kaiping reign of the Five Dynasties. The heads of the Twelve Animals turn up on the cap of a civil official. The outside section of the niche is decorated with floral

patterns, but the inside remains empty. In the Song Dynasty, the profile plane of the memorial tablet was engraved with the image of a belted and well-dressed Buddhist monk. The niche turned into an oblong shape, and the inside section was decorated with leaf patterns. The same is true of the profile plane of An Shouzhong's memorial tablet. Judging from this, the Twelve Animals in incised lines showed variations with the lapse of the times. The Twelve Animals also functioned as funeral objects. They were of three types: wooden, pottery and tri-coloured. The majority appeared in mythological forms. This style of representation is typical of stone carvings. The tide of stone carving has been on the wane from the Tang Dynasty onwards. The Twelve Animals, together with the Heavenly stems and the Earthly Branches have been used in the Chinese lunar calendar.

Zhang Hongxiu
June 26, 1987

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