



Restored Rubbing by Wilma Cannon Fairbank from a Carving on  
one of the Wu Family Tombs, Shantung, China

PLATE IV

## CHINESE RUBBINGS

THE Museum was briefly fortunate in being able to exhibit for the fortnight ending February seventeenth a small but striking collection of Chinese rubbings prepared and "restored" by Mrs. Wilma Cannon Fairbank.

The reproduction of designs on engraved or carved stones by making paper rubbings from them is an art that has, perhaps, been brought nearer to perfection in China than elsewhere. Certainly among the Chinese and Japanese such rubbings attain to be regarded as works of art in themselves, quite apart from their value as reproductions of the inscriptions or sculptured designs from which they are directly derived.

The method of making a rubbing is simplicity itself, although not a little skill is required to produce ones of high quality and sharp definition. A tough but thin rice paper is moistened and laid over the surface of the stone to be rubbed, and with a fine stiff brush it is beaten into the lines of the engraving or into the depressions of the low relief. Before the paper dries, the craftsman goes all over the surface thus prepared with a flat pad covered with India ink, with the result that the engraved lines or depressed areas remain white while all the rest of the paper is evenly blackened. The paper is then skinned off and dried.

Mrs. Fairbank seems to have elaborated successfully this ancient Chinese technique, and she terms hers "restored" rubbings. With great fidelity she either increases the intensity of the ink in some or all of the black areas, or sharpens the whiteness of the engraved lines or depressions, the effect being a far more attractive reproduction, especially valuable when the original carvings have been obscured by the wear and tear of the surface, as was well illustrated in the exhibition by two rubbings of a single stone, one a rubbing of the usual sort, the other after being "restored" by Mrs. Fairbank. Further, she has by skillful selection been able to produce isolated examples of unusual charm, such as the horse shown in Plate IV.

Space does not permit a detailed description of all the examples shown, which ranged in date from the second to the eighth century A. D. and represented works of art originally executed in the Han, Wei, and T'ang Dynasties.