

The Characteristics and Significance of the Woman in the Doorway of the Gentry in the Northern Song Dynasty

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Abstract: The main style of the picture of The Woman in the Doorway is that the door is slightly opened, and a woman holds the door and looks at the tomb door. The research background of this paper is to understand the relationship between these styles from the perspective of space, the relationship with the tomb owner's life scene, and the concept of Feng Shui in the Northern Song Dynasty, or the living person set up in order to seek good luck and avoid evil. These concepts are used as concepts for our follow-up in-depth research and interpretation of the relationship between the spiritual world of the Northern Song Dynasty gentry, special ornaments, and the social, political, economic, and cultural changes of the Northern Song Dynasty, and explain the deep meaning of The Woman in the Doorway.

1. Research Background

The Northern Song Dynasty was the dynasty after the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms in Chinese history. Zhao Kuangyin launched a mutiny, and the acclaimed emperor added him, which made a strong stroke of history. To interpret the Northern Song Dynasty, we should understand that the economy of the Northern Song Dynasty was very prosperous. It not only had strong support for the local area, but also carried out its own overseas trade. This increased the fluidity and variety of commodities and brought other techniques or crafts to the Northern Song Dynasty to enhance the quality of local commodities. For example, ceramics, silk, shipbuilding, printing, and papermaking. From this perspective, it's more understandable that the Northern Song Dynasty had a great development or accomplishment in their cultures, politics, and society. Everything got a chance to be better in quality, color distribution, and quantity. Combined with the idea of Confucianism being revived, we could definitely understand the Northern Song Dynasty in more detail. Nowadays, Confucianism is widely spread among society and in culture. People greatly appreciate his philosophy, but back to thousands of years ago, we could see how those philosophies changed history, strongly affected people in some feudal thoughts. For instance, the well-known phrase is "Male lead outside, female lead inside", or "Yin and Yang". All these well-known ideas were all spreading the idea of women inside and less power. Critically thinking about nowadays, people still have that old idea of power in men.

When we think about the Northern Song Dynasty, the first image that comes to mind will be the first establishment of paper money. However, just simply by looking at the architecture, we could conclude many different perspectives of the society. For instance, the door opening picture, also known as the half-open door, the fairy's half-open door, the woman's door, etc., is a decorative theme in tombs. The basic elements of the picture are double doors, half closed, one half open, and the person who opens the door. (Mainly female images), and the expression methods include portrait bricks and murals, brick carvings, and mixed use of the latter two. "The Woman in the doorway", which is the mainstream in the opening door, was first named by Mr. Su Bai in "The Tomb of the Song Dynasty in Baisha ". By analyzing "The Woman in the Doorway", it could show the Northern Song Dynasty in a more rounded perspective, is not just about the rapid development, but about explication of feudal thoughts contained all over the culture.

In the Northern Song Dynasty brick tombs, the theme of opening the door is common. [7]In the "Baisha Song Tomb" published in 1957, Mr. Su Bai named it "The Woman in the Doorway". "The Woman in the Doorway" is more common in the tombs of the Northern Song Dynasty, and the number is widely distributed. It is mainly found in Henan, Hebei, Shandong and other places. Most of them are murals and a few brick carvings. As a very popular theme at that time, "The Woman in the Doorway" not only has artistic value, but also plays an important role in reflecting the ideology of the ancients. [2]The Northern Song Dynasty was civil society, and the middle class of society expanded. The culture and art of the Northern Song Dynasty gradually affected the people from the upper classes. The main body of the mural tombs in the Northern Song Dynasty was the middle and lower classes of society. This paper takes the "The Woman in the Doorway" as the starting point, analyzes the new connotation, analyzes the spiritual world of the gentry class in the Northern Song Dynasty, and tries to analyze the relationship between the special decorations in the tombs of the Northern Song Dynasty and the changes in society, politics, economy, and culture in the Northern Song Dynasty. [8]

There are four main views on the meaning of the "The Woman in the Doorway". The first is combined with the concept of space. [4]The woman opens the door to indicate that there is another world behind the false door, and there are still houses or courtyards behind, and the tomb has not reached the end. This view holds that the "door" in "The Woman in the Doorway" represents the "gate of heaven", which facilitates the ascension of the tomb owner's soul, and reflects the simple belief and pursuit of the secular people on longevity and immortality. The second point of view focuses on the relationship between the "The Woman in the Doorway" and the tomb owner's life scenes, and believes that the woman in the picture is the tomb owner's wife or concubine or maid, hoping that the woman's soul will follow the tomb owner. [5] The third type associates the "The Woman in the Doorway" with the concept of Feng Shui in the Northern Song Dynasty, and believes that the orientation of the "The Woman in the Doorway" is related to the five elements of yin and yang. [3]This view holds that the "The Woman in the Doorway" is set up by the living in order to seek good luck and avoid evil, and use the dead to protect the living and the stability of the world. The fourth thinks that the "The Woman in the Doorway" is just a popular decoration at that time and has no special meaning.

This article attempts to explain the deep meaning of the "The Woman in the Doorway" on the basis of the predecessors, and believes that this picture not only represents the tomb owner's ascension of the soul through this door, but also includes the soul completing the refining ceremony from the door, resurrecting, and ascending to heaven.

2. Research methods

Using CNKI and Google Scholar as search tools, I searched for keywords such as "The Woman in the Doorway", "Gentry" and "Northern Song Dynasty", and learned about the spiritual world of the gentry in the Northern Song Dynasty and the society or culture at that time. In the process of understanding, we searched a large number of documents, a total of 15. But in the end we mainly focused on 8 articles. The information and literature on the Internet mainly talk about the meaning of "The Woman in the Doorway" from different perspectives, such as space and religion, but these have no fixed dynasty or time, and some are just opinions of different authors. However, we narrowed it down in order to be more precise about how the Song Dynasty and "The Woman in the Doorway" reflected the culture of the time. Slowly, I found that the following documents were the only ones devoted to talking about how the Song Dynasty women's opening doors allowed the author to understand the spiritual world and cultural changes at the level of the gentry in the Song Dynasty. We will include the following documents for analysis. For example, the publication date of "From Objects to Symbols—Sichuan Song Dynasty Stone Room Tomb Decorations under the Turn of Funeral Secularization" is January 2017. "Women Open the Door" Revisited-From Feng Shui in Song Dynasty, published in 2018. "Song Dynasty Tomb Decoration Research", published in 2016. "Song, Liaoning, Xia and Jin Decorative Patterns", published in 2012." A Brief Analysis of the Relief on the Opening of the Door of the Tomb of the Lady in the Song Dynasty", published in 2020. "The Reflection of the Imprisonment of Women in Architecture in Song Dynasty", published in 2007, the source is the fourth issue of "Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology: Social Science Edition" and "The Influence of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism on Song Dynasty Female Training Culture", published in 2018.

2.1. The Spiritual World of the Northern Song Dynasty Gentry in the Women's opening the door in the Tomb

In the process of turning to comprehensive secularization, the society of the Northern Song Dynasty not only paid attention to the careful pursuit of the dead, but also paid more attention to the well-being of the reborn. This turn is very clearly reflected in the field of funerals. For example, in the picture of the woman opening the door, this half-opened and concealed door, from the perspective of space, is a kind of house and the owner behind the door, and the family is a happy phenomenon. In the gentry class at that time, people built such tombs not only to respect and mourn their ancestors, but also hope that their filial piety can pray for blessings and protect their families. This simple prayer thought is very clearly reflected in the woman's opening door.

In the Northern Song Dynasty, the tendency of aesthetics gradually tended to be plain, and went deeper into life. Carefully observe the picture of the woman opening the door, it does not engrave the happy life of the royal nobles. It was a simple woman who half-covered the door, which better reflected the simple life of the gentry in the Northern Song Dynasty.

2.2. The relationship between special decoration and social, political, economic, and cultural changes in the Northern Song Dynasty

"The Reflection of Women Imprisoned in Architecture in Song Dynasty", published in 2007, the source is "Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology: Social Science Edition", Issue 4 and "The Influence of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism on Song Dynasty Female Training Culture", published in 2018.

A woman stood at the half-covered door, seemingly looking at something. The most classic picture of the woman opening the door is her relief design. At the same time, relief sculptures can

best reflect the cultural changes in the Northern Song Dynasty. The worthiest of discussion is the ideology of Neo-Confucianism formed in the Northern Song Dynasty. Neo-Confucianism brought the thought of feudal ethics to a more complete system and stage, which brought heavy shackles and restrictions on women at that time. More emphasis on female chastity and observance.

The door in the picture of the woman opening the door emphasizes the distinction between inside and outside. It also reflects the Song Dynasty's stereotyped understanding of "men lead the outside, and women lead the inside". It also reflects the close connection between women and the "door". It expresses the idea that women cannot break away from the framework of traditional norms and that women have nothing to do with other things. This picture of the woman opening the door very vividly shows us the traditional moral culture and feudal cultural thought of the Northern Song Dynasty.

2.3. Explain the deep meaning of the woman's opening door

During the Northern Song Dynasty, the government adopted measures such as recuperation and production incentives to gradually recover the social economy from the war and improve people's lives. Political and economic life gradually recovered, the social culture of the Northern Song Dynasty gradually prospered, the cultural status of the lower classes of society was improved, and cultural life was increasingly enriched. During the Northern Song Dynasty, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism were all influencing people and influencing people's outlook on life and death. The "The Woman in the Doorway" reflects the Song people's cognition of the real world and the other world, reflecting the Song people's imagination of the world after death with secular plots and human feelings. We believe that the "The Woman in the Doorway" is a passage between two worlds as the owner of the tomb. The deceased can still return to the real world through the opening picture in the tomb and can predict the future or provide help for their descendants. The gentry class in the Northern Song Dynasty gradually grew around the imperial examination system, and the morality, sense of responsibility, and life paradigm it upheld had an important influence on the trend of social values, and at the same time bound itself with Confucian moral concepts. The gentry class was deeply influenced by folk beliefs because it was born out of the commoner class. Taking into account the cultural consciousness of the gentry, we believe that the woman opening the door not only represents that the soul of the deceased reaches the other world through this door, that is, the owner of the tomb ascends to heaven, but also has the meaning of Taoist training rituals. Refinement ritual is a new Taoist ritual between the Song and Song Dynasties. The door becomes the medium of the ritual, and through the door, the soul is reborn and reborn.

"The Woman in the Doorway" deeply contains the cultural awareness of the undead transcendence and spiritual worship of the gentry class in the Northern Song Dynasty, and has far-reaching enlightenment significance.

Wang Jianli's sarcophagus was discovered in Damalan Village, Yuncu Town, Yushe County in 1995. The sarcophagus is made of bluestone and is divided into three parts: the lid, the body, and the seat. The coffin lid is made of one stone, and the coffin body and the coffin seat are made of one stone. The left and right sides of the coffin face are symmetrically embossed with a group of two rows of bird and auspicious cloud patterns. There are two-panel doors in the middle of the lower part of the coffin body, the right panel door is half open, and there is a half-length young woman in the crack of the door, opening the door for the woman. Sparrows and auspicious clouds often appeared in the themes of heaven in ancient times. The sarcophagus engraved on this sarcophagus represents heaven and is related to the "The Woman in the Doorway" on the body of the coffin. It can be guessed that the "The Woman in the Doorway" should be related to the ancient concept of heaven associated. The coffin unearthed from Songlin's tomb in the Later Shu Dynasty in Pengshan,

Sichuan also has three groups of embossed cloud patterns and skylarks on the coffin lid. In this coffin, it can be clearly seen that the door on the coffin is open, which means that the inside and outside of the sarcophagus are connected.

There are two ways of interpreting the opening of the door on the sarcophagus. The first view is from the outside to the inside, that is, the door enters the coffin as the soul of the tomb owner, that is, the passage leading to heaven. This view holds that the coffin symbolizes heaven, and the tomb owner is placed in the coffin after death. The picture of the woman opening the door symbolizes that her soul ascends to heaven through this door. The problem that arises here is that in ancient times, coffins were all man-made and small in size. Although the appearance was carved with symbolic reliefs, it was very different from heaven in people's concept at that time. Is it really a symbol of heaven? From the perspective of material and cultural development, people at that time made coffins, and they clearly knew that the coffin was a small and dark space. This refers to the gate of heaven in the concept of people at that time, which is not logical.

This article believes that the door in the picture of the woman opening the door should be the second interpretation, that is to say, from inside out, reflecting the soul leaving the hall and entering heaven. A coffin is only a place for the owner of the tomb to stay, and a place for its cultivation. After the cultivation is completed, the soul of the owner of the tomb will leave the coffin. Folk Taoism flourished in the Song Dynasty, and the following will explain the "The Woman in the Doorway" in connection with the Taoist ritual of refining.

3. Conclusions

Refining the ritual has always been one of the most representative rituals in the Taoist fasting rituals. "Being reborn by refining, turning into a real person", the Taoist ritual rituals are roughly the same, and they all embody the doctrine of saving the dead and saving the life, but due to the different eras and regions, each has different characteristics. [6]In most of the ancient alchemy rituals, after enjoying the Dharma food and the combination of water and fire, the deceased still needs to pass through the Dharma Bridge in order to surpass the heavenly realm, that is, through the "Tongtian Dharma Bridge". "Lingbao Jade Mirror" volume 15 records: "Zhaoxuandu officials' talisman: the four station god's lead dragons to stand on the four sides of the pavilion, and the jade girls and golden boys each hold their own lotus flowers, and they are listed on the left and right. [1]When the refining is completed, they even have their own bridges. In order to reach the sky with a great Dharma bridge, pass through the barrier in one qi, lead the souls of the dead, and ascend to heaven." The woman leaning against the door in the picture of the opening of the door should be some kind of immortal who guides and protects the dead. At the left and right of the pavilion, there are Jade Girl Golden Boys. After the deceased souls are trained in the pavilion, they leave the pavilion gate. Under the escort of the Jade Girl Jintong, they pass the Tongtian Dharma Bridge and enter heaven. Combining the Taoist rituals of refining and the examples of women's opening doors in tombs, this paper argues that the women in the images of women's openings are similar to the jade girls in Taoism, and they also serve as a guide to go through the rituals of refining in the coffin. The soul of the dead, ascending to heaven through the bridge.

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