

Murals of Tombs in Liao Dynasty and the Traffic of the Silk Road

Juan FENG^{1,a}, Hongxing Ma^{2,b}

¹College of Fine Arts, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China

²School of Continuing Education, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China

^a 2171201002@cnu.edu.cn, ^b5933@cnu.edu.cn

ABSTRACT. The murals in the tombs of Liao Dynasty reflect the cosmological concept of Qidan people. This paper takes the figure paintings and flower and bird paintings in Liao tombs as the research object to explore the relationship between schema and cosmology, as well as the transportation between the East and the west developed by Liao Dynasty. The change of Liao Dynasty fresco style in different periods reflects the change of cosmology under the influence of multi-ethnic culture.

KEYWORDS: Liao dynasty, Mural in tomb, The silk road

1. Introduction

Liao Dynasty was a minority political power coexisting with the late Tang Dynasty, the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song Dynasty which is a regime with Qidan nationality as the main body and multi-ethnic mixed Dynasty. According to Liao history, Yelubao built Longhua state in the second year (902) and the altar the throne in Longhua state (916) with the name of Qidan. It had frequent cultural exchanges with the surrounding ethnic groups such as the Western Xia regime and Uighur regime.

The earliest written records of Liao Dynasty paintings can be found in the supplement to five dynasties famous paintings and Xuanhe painting manual. Due to the lack of literature records in Liao Dynasty paintings, the abundant images found in Liao tombs provide important visual information for us to understand Liao Dynasty paintings.^[1]

During the reign of Liao Xingzong, the seventh emperor of Liao Dynasty, the five capital administrative region system was established. The five cities district have military prefectures and counties, which are under the military administration of Qidan royal or later aristocrats.

According to the biography of Yeluyu in the history of Liao Dynasty, "at the beginning of emperor Taizu's management, more military plans were planned." After the Emperor Taizong ascended the throne, he fled to the later Tang Dynasty for fear of the persecution of the empress and Emperor Taizong. He was the "leader of Dongdan state". His tomb was of high standard among the aristocratic tombs in the early Liao Dynasty and well preserved in the early Mural Tombs. The research scope of this paper is the Mural Tombs in Shang Capital and its surrounding areas which are divided into three regions according to the region.

The Hanguang Temple family tomb was located 82 kilometers northwest of Shang Capital in Liao Dynasty which is the tomb of the middle period of Liao Dynasty (985). It is the largest family tomb of Liao Dynasty so far where was found 15 kilometers southeast of Chifeng ancient city in 1994.

Halapai farm tomb located 74 kilometers away from the Shang Capital site of Liao Dynasty, which is a brick double ear chamber tomb with a square dome roof. The two walls' servant drawings are drawn according to the fixed powder version and the figures are stylized. Three Mausoleums in Shang tombs area of Liao Dynasty, namely Zu tombs, Qing tombs and Huai tombs, which located in Balin of Chifeng City.

Huai tombs belong the emperor of Liao Dynasty Yeluguang and Yelujing, which is attached to Huailing. Qing tombs are the mausoleum of Shengzong Yelongxu, Xingzong Yelongzhen and Daozong Yeluhongji, which are distributed side by side from east to west. Two funerary tombs were found in the southwest of Qing Eastern tombs in 1997 which are the funerary tombs of Xingzong's second son Xi, the great uncle of Renshou emperor Yeluhongben. At present, there are many paintings found in Qing Eastern tombs mausoleum, the two consorts of Qing Eastern tombs and Huai tomb.

2. The Painting of Flowers and Birds in the Tomb of Liao Dynasty

The image of flowers and birds in the tombs continued the image system of flowers and birds in the tombs of Tang and Five Dynasties, which was related to the orthodoxy consistent with the Central Plains constructed by the rulers of Liao Dynasty since the founding of the people's Republic of China in the early and middle period of Liao Dynasty.^[2] In addition, the system of flowers and birds spread in Tang Dynasty was selectively used and the original decorative style was adjusted based on the auspicious metaphor needed by the tombs of Liao Dynasty.

The walls of the sarcophagus in the tomb of Liao Dynasty are painted with pictures of flowers and birds in a basin which of the sarcophagus are mostly misplaced and seems to be suspended on the branches extending from the back of the basin to the top. The shape of the long and thin leaves is not consistent with that of the peony branches and leaves which painted in the way of spot dyeing which similarity to the wild geese on the right side of the west wall of the tomb of Zhao Yi in the Tang Dynasty unearthed in Anyang except the strokes. Two wild geese are symmetrically painted on both sides of the basin with one pair of wings on the right. In my opinion, it should be painted by Qidan artists in accordance with the powder version of the Tang Dynasty.

The popular theme of flowers and birds in pots and pools originated from the creation of gardens by nobles and literati in Tang Dynasty. We can see that the lines at the perspective turning point along the oval pool are drawn into acute angles and the shape lacks the sense of space.

From the image comparison we can draw the following conclusions because of the painter who drew the mural is not familiar with the basin Pool Pattern handed down in Tang Dynasty and the designer of the tomb is not drawing to decorate the wall obviously. The basin Pool Pattern of Tang tomb mural should be followed It is related to its specific auspicious meaning.

Buddhism prevailed in the Liao Dynasty. Before the founding of the people's Republic of China had established many Buddhist temples in the hinterland of the Liao Dynasty. After the Emperor Taizong of the Liao Dynasty occupied the Sixteen States of Yanyun, the culture of worshipping Buddhism in You State of the Tang and the Five Dynasties accelerated the spread of Buddhism in the Liao area.

From the royal family to the people in Liao Dynasty, they believed in Buddhism and had frequent cultural exchanges with Dunhuang, the western Xia regime and other regions. The lotus image in Liao tomb can be traced back to the Buddhist grottoes murals in the late Tang Dynasty. Number of lotus ornaments can be seen in the objects and murals unearthed from the Liao tomb, which symbolizes the wish of the tomb owner to die in heaven.^[3]

Despite the occasional war, because of the peaceful relationship between Liao and the western Xia regime and the frequent contact with Tubo, the Buddhist images of Tubo spread to the capital of Liao Dynasty along the Silk Road from west to East.

For example, the western Xia regime sent envoys to the Khitan Uighur monks, golden Buddhas and Buddhist scriptures in the winter of November. Two envoys from Uighur and Dunhuang went to the capital of Liao to celebrate the festival and were forced to dance on the Dragon Boat Festival in 941. Envoys from Jin state during Spring and Autumn period, Uighur, Dunhuang and other countries came to celebrate the Empress Dowager's birthday in 977.

From the historical records, the Buddhist images of the western Xia regime and Dunhuang are likely to be transmitted to Liao through the above-mentioned ways, which to some extent affects the changes of the painting styles of Liao.

The flower and bird images in the Liao tombs are mostly painted with the method of filling with the lines and the technique of water and ink. Because of the hurry of time or the painting level of the painters, the flower and bird images in the Liao tombs' murals inherit the painting style of the Tang and the Five Dynasties on the one hand, and on the other hand show the artistic characteristics of Qidan nationality. The development of the image style of flowers and birds in Liao tomb murals is closely related to the culture and religious belief of Liao Dynasty.^[4] Liao Dynasty attached great importance to the refined practice of Buddhism, such as burning Zhu and giving alms. Words and images are the carriers of information. The images in the tomb should be painted to convey or realize the wishes of the tomb owner.

3. The Painting of Portrait in the Tomb of Liao Dynasty

Figure painting appeared in the tomb wall decoration in the early Western Han Dynasty, and became a common image in the tomb decoration in the Tang and Five Dynasties. In the Tang Dynasty, the door officials standing on their bows are usually painted at the door of the tombs to express the funeral concept of "death is like life". According to the documents, at the beginning of the founding of the people's Republic of Liao Dynasty, the funeral etiquette system was established. In the history of Liao Dynasty, Yeluabao, the ancestor of Liao Dynasty, recorded that in 913, "the temple of Muye mountain Discuss the government and decide the good and the bad. "

At the beginning of the founding of the people's Republic of China, Emperor Taizu set up the palace guard system of uluduo, which is recorded in the annals of Liaoshi Bingwei: "after emperor Taizu became emperor, his army was divided into five parts, and the royal family was their leader. Set up a guard outside the palace gate, have a fixed entourage when traveling, and set up a guard to guard the mausoleum.

Most of the soldiers in charge of the security of the palace were the Qidan nobles. The third volume of Liaoshi: "there were soldiers in Taizu's palace in charge of daily duties. These members were usually those who were punished after breaking the law among the nobles.^[5] In the early Liao Dynasty, the figures of servants and bodyguards in Qidan aristocratic tombs were drawn according to the bodyguards of the tomb owner. In the middle and late period of Liao Dynasty, the bodyguards in the Mural Tombs of Qidan nobles continued the early realistic style. Most of the bodyguards were in the posture of holding the bone blossoms. One bodyguard was usually painted on both sides of the door of the tomb, and one or more people were painted on the two walls of the patio and the tomb.

The imperial tombs and noble tombs in Shangjing area of Liao Dynasty are characterized by realistic image, tight lines, mainly iron lines, little change in thickness, and changes in line with structure, focusing on the characterization of image features. The transition of eyebrow arch and nasal bone is delicate and accurate. The depiction of servants on both sides of the Tomb Door pays more attention to realism. The treatment of eyelid lines shows Qidan national characteristics. The costume of the early characters is realistic, the lines are concise, the later part of the tomb decoration figures are drawn in a hurry, the strokes are fast, the realism of the characters is weakened, and there are stylized and conceptualized features.

In the early period, the concave convex method was used more, the colouration is heavy with high purity and strong contrast which the flat painting was mainly used in the middle and late period. The face is divided and dyed along the structure which has strong three-dimensional character and clothes conform to the clothing system of Liao Dynasty. The colouration of clothes mainly red, green, lake blue and orange yellow. The colouration between them are typical of tea brown and black green.

The layout and arrangement of the officials pay attention to symmetry. They usually draw Qidan officials on one side and Han officials on the other side. The space between the front room and the corridor is dominated by male officials. The wall of the back room symmetrically draws female servants, which has the political characteristics of the "front hall and back bedroom" of Han tombs and the "North South Division" of Qidan characteristics.^[6]

The tomb murals of Han officials living in the Liao Dynasty are different from those of the nobles of the Liao Dynasty. For example, the wall decorations of Han family tomb are mainly for serving people, and the image configuration is symmetrical, which is the same as that of Qidan noble tomb. It shows that the funeral rites of Han family living in the middle of Liao Dynasty are similitude to that of Qidan nationality, but the selection of painting style is closer to that of Tang Dynasty and Five Dynasties.

In addition to the symmetrical male and female servants, there are more narrative images such as banquet preparation, tea and wine enjoyed by tomb owners or drum music. The images of Han style and Qidan style exist at the same time. Painting style continues the figure painting style of the Five Dynasties which is mainly realistic and different from the real person portrait in the Royal Tomb of Khitan.

4. Conclusion

The shape and image content of the tombs in the middle and late Liao Dynasty were influenced by Dunhuang Buddhism during the Uighur period on the silk road. The octagonal shape of the tombs in the middle Liao Dynasty originated from the octagonal pagoda and the underground palace of the pagoda popular in the Liao Dynasty.

On the one hand, the figures in the Liao Dynasty frescoes were influenced by the Buddhist images in the Five Dynasties of Youzhou state, on the other hand, the Tibetan patterns in Dunhuang were absorbed in the communication with the Western Xia regime and Uighur on the Silk Road, and the patterns of the Liao Dynasty tomb frescoes also reflected the influence of the prosperity of Buddhism on the patterns of tomb paintings. The Buddhist images were not only applied in temples, but also the symbol of going to heaven in Qidan noble tomb.

References

- [1] Toqta. History of Liao Dynasty [M], Beijing: Zhong Hua Book Company, 1974, pp. 317.
- [2] Kessler. Pictorial narrative in antiquity and the Middle Ages [M]. National Gallery of Art, Distributed by the University Press of New England, 1985, pp. 29.
- [3] Wu Hung. The double screen: medium and representation in Chinese painting [M]. University of Chicago Press,

1996, pp. 56.

- [4] Ye Longli. Qidan records [M], Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1985, PP. 83.
- [5] Stephen Owen The end of the Middle Ages in China:Collection of literature and culture in the middle Tang Dynasty [M], Beijing:Life, reading and Xinzhi Sanlian Bookstore, 2014, PP. 81-85.
- [6] E Pulleyblank, Kenneth K. S. Ch'en. The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism[J]. The American Historical Review, 1975, PP. 457.