# The Formation of Tomb Portraiture and The Visual Culture of The Northern Dynasties in China (4th-6th centuries)

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April 2021

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

## ABSTRACT

This thesis studies tomb portraits – images of the deceased depicted on tomb walls – of the Northern dynasties in China within this period's visual culture. While painting images of the tomb occupants on tomb walls had been a common practice in China in the 2nd century CE, it was in the Northern dynasties (386 - 581 CE) that the tomb portraits started to play a significant role in the tombs. The portraits began to occupy the main wall facing the tomb entrance, and stuck to a frontal pose. I believe these changes are closely related to the diverse visual culture of the Northern dynasties and, in my thesis, I explore the formation of the tomb portraits within this background. The Northern dynasties were a series of dynasties ruled by one of the non-Han Chinese ethnic groups, the Xianbei, over northern China. It was in this period that a complex web of cultural, ethnic, and religious exchanges was formed.

Drawing inspiration from the studies on the visual culture, portraiture, and Chinese funerary art, I challenge the conventional perspective of the binary division of Han/non-Han cultures and the traditional framework of image-sitter studies in portraiture. By placing the tomb portraits in the hybrid visual environment of the Northern dynasties, I illustrate the fluidities of frontal images in religious icons and mortuary portraits and the permeabilities of the religious and funerary spaces. Finally, with the sponsors' specific focus on icons and interactions with the religious art, the tomb portraits were formed as the absolute center of the tomb space.

Cette thèse examine les portraits de tombeaux, c'est-à-dire les images de défunts dépeints sur les murs des tombeaux, des dynasties du Nord de la Chine dans la culture visuelle de cette période. Alors que peindre l'image des occupants sur les murs des tombeaux était une pratique courante en Chine au IIe siècle de notre ère, c'est surtout dans les dynasties du Nord (386-581 CE) que ces portraits ont commencé à jouer un rôle important dans les tombeaux : ils ont commencé à occuper le mur principal face à l'entrée du tombeau, et se sont concentrés sur une pose surtout frontale. Je soutiens que ces changements sont étroitement liés à la diversité de la culture visuelle des dynasties du Nord. Dans ma thèse, j'explore la création des portraits de tombeaux dans ce contexte spécifique. Les dynasties du Nord étaient une série de dynasties dirigées par les Xianbei, un des groupes ethniques chinois non-Han, au nord de la Chine. C'est à cette époque qu'un réseau complexe d'échanges culturels, ethniques et religieux s'est formé.

En m'inspirant des études sur la culture visuelle, le portrait et l'art funéraire chinois, je conteste la perspective conventionnelle de la division binaire des cultures Han / non-Han et le cadre traditionnel des études de l'image-modèle dans l'art du portrait. En situant les portraits de tombeaux dans l'environnement visuel hybride des dynasties nordiques, j'illustre la fluidité des images frontales dans les icônes religieuses et les portraits mortuaires, ainsi que la perméabilité des espaces religieux et funéraires. Enfin, avec l'attention particulière des commanditaires sur les icônes et les interactions avec l'art religieux, les portraits de tombeaux ont été formés comme le centre absolu de l'espace du tombeau.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to those who have given me support during this project. First, I would like to thank my advisor Professor Jeehee Hong. The topic of my thesis has taken its shape in her classes about ritual art in China. Inspired by the readings about Chinese portraits and funerary art, I started to focus on the tomb portraits from the Northern dynasties. Her continuous guidance motivated me to frame and reframe the structure, and deliver a well-structured thesis, despite the worries and challenges I faced because of the large number of tombs I included in it. Her classes also broadened my mind in studying Chinese art, especially in knowing the diversity and complexity of the visual culture in medieval China. I also owe much to Professor Rongdao Lai. She taught me many classes about ancient Chinese literature, greatly improving my ability in doing textual research. I am also grateful to Professor Angela Vanhaelen. It was during taking her classes that I worked on the second draft of the thesis. Her readings on global art history and cross-cultural studies gave me valuable insights into the subject of my thesis.

This research is supported by the MITACS Research Training Awards. I want to express my thanks for their support. I am also grateful to Paulina Kralka from the British Library for her generous help and advice in my writing. Finally, I want to thank my husband Kai Wang and my family who have continuously supported me both in my life and in my study. It is their unconditional support that gave me the determination and confidence to finish this project and pursue my dream.

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## Introduction

Decorating tomb walls with pictorial representations of its occupants was a common practice in China from as early as the 2nd century CE. These images of the deceased can be loosely referred to "tomb portraits"[1] because they not only depict specific individuals in the real world but also occupy the center of a pictorial frame. However, this practice did not replace another, more common non-figural way of representing the deceased in China by having an empty seat called a "spirit seat" (Lingwei 靈位). This situation started to change in the Northern Dynasties, a period when northern China was ruled by a series of dynasties from one of the non-Han Chinese ethnic groups, the Xianbei, from 386 to 581 CE (Appendix 1).

The Northern states were first founded by the Tuoba 拓跋, a branch of the Inner Asian Xianbei people. They spoke an Altaic language, probably an early form of Mongolian[2] , however, there are no surviving texts in their native tongue. Most of the primary sources about their origin that we rely on today are the official annals of the Northern Wei, *Wei shu* 魏書, which were not completed until more than 150 years after the Tuobas have established their states (in the middle of the 6th century). Other records about them survive in the books of the coeval southern states like *Song Shu* 宋書, *Nanqi Shu* 南齊書, and the books compiled in the Tang dynasty (618－907 CE) like *Bei Shi* 北史, *Beiqi Shu* 北齊書, *Beizhou Shu* 北周書. Therefore, due to limited sources, the roots of their culture are hard to trace. Archeological findings provide us with some evidence of their origins. Based on the material evidence, archaeologists

[1] I borrowed this term from Jeehee Hong. See "Changing Roles of the Tomb Portrait: Burial Practices and Ancestral Worship of the Non-Literati Elite in North China (1000-1400)," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* Vol. 44 (2014): 203.

[2] Scott Pearce, "Northern Wei," in *The Six Dynasties, 220-589*, eds. Albert E. Dien and Keith Nathaniel Knapp, The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 155.

suggest the Tuoba core tribes originally lived in the forested lands in the northeastern corner of China's Inner Mongolia. When the Huns' Empire collapsed and they left southern Inner Mongolia in the 1st century CE, the Tuoba tribes grasped at the chance to migrate south to a "great swamp," which is believed to be a large lake on the Inner Mongolian plateau called Hulun Nur. They lived a nomadic life in this area.[3]

When the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) fell, China split into three parts: Wei, Shu, Wu, and temporarily united as Western Jin (265-317 CE). After Western Jin's collapse, north China was divided into many smaller states during what was called the sixteen kingdom period, and was controlled by Han and non-Han regimes. It was during this period that the Tuobas established a state called Dai 代 and set their capital at Shengle (盛樂 near modern-day Horinger in Inner Mongolia) (fig. 1.1). Then, when Tuoba Gui 拓跋珪 took the reign, he changed the name of the state from Dai to Wei 魏, which is currently referred to as Northern Wei 北魏, and relocated his capital from Shengle to Pingcheng (平城 present-day Datong, Shanxi) in 398 CE.[4] In 493 CE, after the state has been centered at Pingcheng for almost a century, Emperor Xiaowen 孝文帝 relocated the capital to Luoyang (洛陽 present-day Luoyang, Henan), which was regarded as the center of the Central Plain and Chinese civilization.[5] About three decades after moving the capital, in 534 CE, the rulers of the Northern Wei failed to deal with the growing problems of the state and lost their power to the warlords, Gao Huan 高歡 and Yuwen Tai 宇文泰. The former established the Eastern Wei-Northern Qi state 東魏-北齊 in the east with Yecheng (鄴城 present-day Ci county, Hebei) as the capital; the latter founded the Western

[3] WS 1.2. For a review of archaeological sources, see Su Bai 宿白, "Dongbei, Neimenggu Diqu de Xianbei Yiji: Xianbei Yiji Jilu Zhi Yi," 东北、内蒙古地区的鲜卑遗迹——鲜卑遗迹辑录之一 *Wenwu* (1977. 05): 42-54.
[4] Scott Pearce, "Northern Wei," 160.
[5] Ibid, 175.

Wei-Northern Zhou state 西魏-北周 in the west with Chang'an (長安 present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi) as the capital. In 577 CE, the Northern Zhou defeated the Northern Qi and soon gained control of the southern state, the Chen. Before conquest by the North, the coeval southern states were continuously controlled by four successive Han regimes, the Liu-Song, Southern Qi, Liang and Chen (Appendix 1). Because of the continuous confrontations between the north and the south, this period has been called the Northern and Southern Dynasties (4th - 6th c. CE). Only after Yang Jian 楊堅 seized control over the Northern Zhou and established the Sui Dynasty, did this divisive period end.

It was in this period that the portraits of tomb occupants took their distinct form. First, rather than showing the deceased from either three-quarter or frontal view like in the Han tombs, artists began to stick to a strictly frontal pose. Portraying the tomb occupants in frontal view staring into the real space was a significant change and refers to what Wu Hung called "the iconic mode of images."[6] On the other hand, the way of depicting other figures in three-quarter view engaged in the surrounding pictorial events refers to "the episodic mode of images."[7] Indeed, because of their narrative quality, whether the images of the episodic mode would qualify as portraits is an open-ended issue. Second, the portraits began to occupy the "main wall" of the tomb, which refers to the wall facing the entrance. At the same time, the coffin, which usually occupied critical locations in Han tombs, was placed aside in the burial chamber in most 6th-century tombs, thus reinforcing the portrait on the main wall as the absolute focus of the ritual structure.[8] This practice, giving such a prominent

[6] For the discussion of the iconic and episodic modes of images, see Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989), 133.
[7] Ibid.
[8] See Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 74.

significance to the tomb portraits, was absent in mural tombs from previous periods.

Distinctiveness of the pictorial representations of the deceased in this period has been noticed by scholars and resulted in extensive study of the mural tombs. Wu Hung pointed out the importance of the deceased's images in the tombs of this period. Briefly, he proposed they may be related to tomb portraits in a 2nd-century tomb found in Hebei and the 4th-century tombs in Liaoning and North Korea.[9] Zheng Yan attempted to trace the lineage of these representations and hypothesized how the imagery was transmitted. He contended that the imagery first appeared in the Central Plain in the 2nd century and was circulated to the "remote" areas of northeast China and North Korea when Chinese moved there because of the turmoil of war in the Central Plain. The imagery reappeared in the Central Plain after the Northern Wei united north China.[10] Based on his studies, most scholars who focused on the Northern dynasties' mural tombs traced the tomb portraits' iconographical origins to northeast China and the Han Dynasty.[11]

The studies of the Northern dynasties tombs are mostly focused on three regions: Datong, Luoyang, and Ci County (fig. 1.1). They were originally the capitals that the series of the Northern dynasties located and, consequently, where the most mural tombs from this period were found. Wei Zheng divided the mural tombs in Datong from the Pingcheng period (398－494 CE), when the capital of the Northern Wei was in Pingcheng, into three phases, by comparing the mural themes in the undated tombs with the tombs bearing inscriptions of exact construction dates.[12] According to the

[9] Ibid., 74.

[10] See Zheng Yan 郑岩. *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao Bi Hua Mu Yan Jiu* 魏晋南北朝壁画墓研究 (Beijing: Beijing Wen Wu Chu Ban She 2016), 190-197.

[11] See Cao Lijuan 曹丽娟, "Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Yanjiu" 大同沙岭北魏壁画墓研究 (MA thesis, Central Academy of Fine Arts, 2009), 25-31.

[12] See Wei Zheng 韦正, "Shanxi Datong Beiwei Muzang Bihua Yanjiu" 山西大同北魏墓葬壁画研究, in *Bi Shang Guan: Xi Du Shanxi Gudai Bihua* 壁上观——细读山西古代壁画, ed. Shanghai Bo Wu Guan (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chuban She, 2018), 96-111.

difference in panting mediums, Zhang Qingjie divided the funerary paintings in Datong from the Pingcheng period into paintings on walls, paintings in stone halls, and lacquer paintings on coffins. He briefly discussed each tomb's paintings and summarized the characteristics of their subject matters, including the increasing importance of the tomb portraits and images depicting ox-carts and horses.[13] Bonnie Cheng conducted a systematic study of the tombs from the late Northern dynasties, the middle and late 6th century. She related the tombs' assemblage to the social and political considerations of their constructors. She suggested the changes of the funerary artistic program indicate a shift in the funerary functions from the protection of the deceased to the display of social status[14]. By studying the architectural structure and the mural themes in the tombs from the late 6th century excavated in Ci County, Zheng Yan suggested the subjects and the layout of the paintings follow an officially codified convention and thus called them the "Yecheng Model" 鄴城规制.[15]

Thanks to these pioneering studies, we can now grasp a general picture of the Northern dynasties tombs and the tomb portraits. However, some critical aspects of the Northern dynasties tombs and portraits might have been neglected in previous scholarship. The above-mentioned studies about tomb portraits have mostly focused on tracing the subjects' iconographical origin to Han tombs and thus emphasized their inheritance of Han traditions. However, what should be noted is, as briefly mentioned above, the ways of representing the tomb occupants in the Han dynasty were not limited to the frontal portraits. In fact, these frontal images of the deceased can only be linked to two examples in Han tombs, which I will discuss in the second part of

[13] See Zhang Qinjie 张庆捷, "Xiangei Lingyige Shijie De Huazuo – Beiwei Pingcheng Muzang Bihua" 献给另一个世界的画作——北魏平城墓葬壁画, in *Bi Shang Guan: Xi Du Shanxi Gudai Bihua*, 82-95.
[14] See Bonnie Cheng, "Fabricating life out of death: Sixth century funerary monuments and the negotiation of cultural traditions," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003), 17.
[15] See Zheng Yan 郑岩, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao Bi Hua Mu*, 181-199.

this thesis. Why did the frontal portraits persistently appear in the Northern dynasties tombs and played an increasingly important role in the tombs? This question should be further considered.

Besides, while some of the individual mural tombs from this period have been vigorously discussed, little attention was paid to the overall decoration transformation of the Northern-dynasties tombs. Specifically, while the evidence shows that tomb portraits were popular in the 5$^{th}$-century tombs found in Datong, very few examples dating to the late 5th and early 6th centuries were found in Luoyang, the successive capital of the Northern Wei. However, in the mid and late 6th century, tomb portraits became the essential part of most late Northern dynasties tombs found in Ci County and other areas. How could this comparative lack of tomb portraits in Luoyang during the late 5th and early 6th century be explained? This is a noticeable issue that few scholars have discussed thus far. What should be pointed out is that the Northern-dynasties tombs, sponsored by aristocrats and high-ranked officials, should be considered as a dynamic whole, in which the funerary decorative concepts related to their changing consideration. Therefore, to better understand how tomb portraiture was shaped as the center of the mortuary space, I will conduct a systematic scrutinization of the mural tombs from the concerned dynasties.

Two issues concerning this period are noteworthy. The Northern dynasties' visual culture might have changed dramatically because of a swift demographic transition and the increasing production of Buddhist architectures and arts sponsored mainly by the imperial family and aristocrats. In the first half of the 5th century, the Northern Wei attempted to unite north China and gradually conquered many surrounding states. When the Northern Wei conquered a state, it usually forced people from that area to immigrate to Pingcheng and its surrounding area. Examples include,

among others, Dunhuang, Chang'an, Longcheng, which were all important centers of Buddhist activity in this period. Many court-supported Buddhist projects ensued by relying on the immigrant laborers. How many of those immigrants had been previously engaged in the production of local artworks, and how would they have contributed to the creation of the new state's visual culture? What kinds of ideas and forms did those image-making and space-making activities bring to the new capital? These questions are critical to understanding the shift in funerary decorations, which are a vital part of the Northern dynasties' visual culture.

Another issue is the ritual context in the Northern Wei, including funerary rituals, divinations, and deity worship. While it is impossible to grasp a whole image of the Xianbei ruling class's belief and rituals due to limited historical records, the above-mentioned Chinese textual sources indicate that they had similar practices to other tribes in Inner Asia.[16] Most importantly, a lot of these rituals involved the use of images. In addition, they seem to have employed both the Inner Asian rituals and Chinese ritual codes of the worship of heaven, when they gained control of the Central Plain. Only under the rule of Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471-499 CE), who showed a deep commitment to Chinese culture, was the Chinese model decisively adopted as a rule.[17] There is no doubt that the sway between different traditions was out of their political considerations. However, what should be noted is that the Tuoba-Xianbeis were different from another Xianbei tribe, the Murongs, who lived with Han Chinese in northeast China for hundreds of years and gradually accepted many Han customs in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Unlike the Murongs, the Tuoba-Xianbeis had lived in the Central Plain for a relatively short period, building their regime there over the course

[16] For the discussion of the rituals in early Northern Wei, See Scott Pearce, "Northern Wei," 157 and 169.
[17] Ibid, 169.

of several decades.[18] Thus, the nomadic traditions were still active and played a significant role in the early period of the dynasties.

Therefore, considering their relatively recent migration to the Central Plain, the Xianbei ruling class was less familiar to a great number of Chinese ritual traditions. These ritual traditions were usually recorded in the traditional Confucian canon about rituals, *Li Ji* (*Book of rites* 禮記) or *Yi Li* (*Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* 儀禮), and were regarded as orthodox by their predecessors, the Han and the other two Chinese-controlled short-lived regimes, the Wei and the Jin. Besides, while the rituals recorded in these books were continuously considered orthodox by the Chinese officials since the Han dynasty, such documents are too abstract and general to provide a description of a standard way of conducting the rituals. Thus, rather than identifying which funeral ritual tradition the Northern Wei aristocrats followed, it is more productive to scrutinize in what kinds of ritual contexts the tomb portraits appeared in the Northern Wei.

With this background, the practice of making portraits of the deceased and the importance attached to it should be considered in the context of visual culture and ritual in this period. A review of the scholarly debate on the Northern dynasties visual culture and portraiture will help frame my current study. Katherine R. Tsiang and Bonnie Cheng's perspectives on cultural exchanges and self-consciousness provided insights helpful in considering the diversities of this period's visual culture. In their separate studies of the artistic objects from the Northern dynasties, they both mention the problem of previous scholarship assuming an "influential model" to explain the change in the art of the Northern dynasties.[19] That is, modern scholars claimed that

[18] See Ma Changshou 马长寿, *Wuhuan Yu Xianbei* 乌桓与鲜卑 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chuban She, 1962), 24, and 34-40.
[19] Katherine R. Tsiang, "Changing Patterns of Divinity and Reform in the Late Northern Wei," *The Art Bulletin* 84,

the non-Han Xianbei-ruled Northern Wei accepted the influence of the Chinese-controlled South or inherited the traditional Chinese style, indicating a Sinocentric framework of the cultural development from “primitive” and tribal to “advanced” and Han. Tsiang and Cheng suggest that, rather than defining the iconography as a mark of one culture or another, we should consider what kind of cultural ideas were shaped in this ethnic and cultural mingling period.[20] Inspired by them, rather than recognize these portraits as “inherited” from a single culture, I will examine the tomb portraits within the web of cultural interactions of the Northern dynasties.

Another aspect concerning the tomb portraits is the study of portraiture. Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski in their review of Chinese ancestral portraits pointed out that the critique of Chinese portraits seems to be based on the judging standard of Western portraiture. That is, the core of evaluating a portrait relies on whether the portrait has revealed a person's soul; recently concerns are given also to the interactions between the sitter, the artist, and the viewers.[21] Stuart and Rawski noted that relying solely on the criterion established by the Western scholars will lead to the misinterpretations of Chinese portraits.[22] Thus, they proposed placing portraits back in their specific cultural setting to properly consider them.[23] What we should be cautious of for the current subject is that tomb portraits have been persistently linked with funerary rituals and ancestor worship from as early as the Han dynasty. The study should extend beyond aesthetics or pure artistic qualities, and relate to many more aspects, including funerary rituals and ancestral venerations. Thus, whether a portrait

no. 2 (2002): 224.

[20] Bonnie Cheng, "The Space Between: Locating "Culture" in Artistic Exchange," *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 85 and 106.

[21] Jan Stuart, Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, Freer Gallery of Art., Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution) *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 2001), 17.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

is realistic, idealistic, or stereotyped should be considered carefully with its potential audience and the specific milieus in mind.

Collectively, questions about how a likeness should be depicted and what its significance is should be considered on conceptual and artistic levels. I suggest that both aspects had taken shape in the overall visual culture of the Northern dynasties and thus attempt to examine the tomb portraits through the lens of the visual culture of this period.

My study is divided into three parts. In Chapter 1, I will use Xu Xianxiu's tomb as a case study to hypothetically reconstruct the visual experience of a viewer entering the tomb. This is a tomb of a high-ranked official located in the important Northern Qi military center, Taiyuan. The murals in Xu's tomb are one of the best-preserved paintings among the ones found in the late 6th-century tombs. I will examine how the figures painted in the passageway lead the imaginary audience to enter the tomb and how the audience was stopped and confronted with the tomb portraits in the burial chamber. I will also compare the tomb portraits with the painted figures and figurines found in the tomb, and other contemporary tomb portraits to explore whether the tomb portraits genuinely represent the appearance of the deceased. By doing so, I will ask questions like why the presence of the tomb portraits in the tombs matters and why such importance was attached to it.

Bearing these questions, in Chapter 2, I will systematically examine the tombs and tomb portraits of the Northern dynasties. Considering the fact that most noteworthy tombs were discovered around the capitals, I will divide the tombs of the Northern dynasties to the Shengle, Pingcheng, Luoyang, and Yecheng periods. Focusing on the tomb portraits, I will discuss the mural tombs found around these areas, and trace the origins, painting modes, and functions of the tomb portraits.

However, due to the fact that the excavated mural tombs of the Western Wei-Northern Zhou states are largely damaged, we lack the material evidence that helps conclude whether the tomb portraits existed in the tombs in these states' territories (Xi'an and its surrounding area). Thus, for the purpose of my current research, I will not discuss the tombs from these states.

In Chapter 3, by exploring the Northern Wei ritual context and visual culture of this period, I will attempt to explain why the making of the funerary portrait of the deceased was of such importance in the Northern dynasties and how the portraits were shaped as the center of the funerary space. I will explore what the ritual context of the Tuoba-Xianbeis looked like when they moved to the Central Plain. I will also examine how the conception of the funerary portrait and the making of the funerary space were transformed in this period when numerous Buddhist religious arts flourished in north China.

## Chapter 1

## The Case of Xu Xianxiu's Tomb

### 1.1 The Condition of the Tomb

The tomb of Xu Xianxiu, dating to 571 CE, is located in the eastern part of present-day Taiyuan City (fig. 1.1), formerly known as Jinyang, the second capital and the most critical military center of the Northern Qi. Facing south, the tomb (fig. 1.2) consists of a single 6.5×6.3 meter brick chamber, a short brick entryway with stone doors, and a fifteen-meter-long earthen passageway. As I will discuss in more detail below, this is the typical structure for the late Northern dynasties tombs. The chamber is almost square and constructed with a four-sided vaulted ceiling. An elevated brick platform was constructed against the west wall. Few grave goods were found in the tomb since it has been robbed at least five times before it was officially

excavated in 2000.[24]

The tomb epitaph identifies Xu Xianxiu as an important military official of the Northern Qi.[25] Both his father and grandfather served as officials in the garrisons during the Northern Wei period. Xu Xianxiu started his military career by following the Northern Wei general Er Zhurong 爾朱榮. He then followed Er's follower, Gao Huan, who later seized control of the state and established Eastern Wei by manipulating the young Emperor Xiaojing 孝靜帝. When Gao Huan's son, Gao Yang 高洋, usurped the throne and established the Northern Qi (550-577 CE), Xu served a series of significant military and civil positions. Because of his outstanding military achievements, he was conferred as Prince Wu'an 武安王 under the reign of Emperor Wucheng (武成帝 r. 561-565 CE) and later promoted to Defender-in-Chief 太尉, the head of imperial armies, under the reign of Gao Wei (高緯 r. 570-577 CE). In 571 CE, Xu died at the age of seventy in his home in Jinyang.

The most remarkable aspect of this tomb are the well-preserved mural paintings, which cover more than 300 square meters of wall surface and depict more than 200 human figures.[26] Except for the south end of the passage wall, the ceiling, and the east side of the south wall in the burial chamber, most of the murals survived intact. The mural paintings can be divided into three groups according to their location: the passageway, entryway, and the burial chamber. The passageway was decorated with a group of honor guards. They are led by a pair of supernatural guardian figures, which unfortunately have been damaged, on both sides of the passage. Both the entrance and

[24] Taiyuan Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 太原市文物考古研究所, "Xu Xianxiu Mu Gaishu" 徐显秀墓概述, in *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu* 北齐徐显秀墓 (Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She 2005.9), 2.
[25] For the inscriptions of the epitaph, see Shanxi Sheng Kaogu Yanjiu Suo 山西省考古研究所 and Taiyuan Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiu Suo 太原市文物考古研究所, "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao" 太原北齐徐显秀墓发掘简报, *Wenwu* (2003. 10): 4-40.
[26] Taiyuan Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, "Xu Xianxiu Mu Gaishu," 5.

entryway are flanked by painted armed guard figures. Paintings in the burial chamber can also be divided into three distinct parts (fig. 1.7). Paintings on the east wall and the east side of the south wall represent a procession leading an ornate ox-cart; while paintings on the west wall and the west side of the south wall represent another parade group surrounding a riderless horse. The ox-cart and horse groups in the burial chamber, and the painted figures in the passageway and entryway, loosely form a consistent large-scale procession moving out of the tomb. On the north wall, there is a relatively static scene featuring a couple facing frontally towards the burial chamber space. They are generally identified as Xu Xianxiu and his wife. The tomb couple is depicted as enjoying a banquet under a tent with servants attending to them and musicians amusing them. Above those human figures there are supernatural creatures, flying lotus blossoms and buds.

The tomb has attracted a lot of scholarly attention because it has the best-preserved murals amongst the excavated Northern Qi tombs and, therefore, helps reconstruct the Northern Qi tombs' decoration scheme. Zheng Yan proposed a loose type of decoration scheme referred to the "Yecheng model," which dominated the decoration of the aristocratic tombs found in the Northern Qi capital — Yecheng — and around the city of Jinyang.[27] In this model, the tomb usually contains a single brick chamber, a brick entryway, and an elongated earthen passageway; the elongated passageway is decorated with procession scenes; the single chamber is decorated with the portraits of the tomb occupants on the main wall, which is usually the north wall facing the tomb entrance; an ox-cart and a riderless horse are decorated on either the east or the west wall of the burial chamber. Diverse mythical creatures and auspicious patterns are painted above the figures from the passageway to the tomb chamber and a

[27] Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 181-190.

painting of celestial world appears on the ceiling of the burial chamber.[28] Rather than representations of daily life as was common in Han tomb imagery, Zheng emphasized that the iconography of ox-cart and horse acted as symbols of the social status of the tomb occupant.[29] By relating to the Han tombs' procession scene, Wu Hung proposed that both the portraits and the procession in this pictorial program served the purpose of initiating a posthumous journey towards immortality.[30] Luo Shiping, Rong Xinjiang, and Zheng Yan have also noticed the foreign cultural aspects present in the paintings such as the mink coat and the pearl-roundel pattern.[31]

While all these considerations are significant to understanding the tomb murals and the tomb portraits, few scholars have discussed the viewers' experience of entering the tombs. Because the tomb was designed to be sealed forever, the concept of viewing is complicated in the study of mortuary art. However, some scholars have pointed out the specificity of the passageway in this period in which the viewer's experience was shaped in a particular manner. Wu Hung noted that compared to Han tombs, which usually contain several chambers like a mansion and a short undecorated passage, the Northern Qi tombs are characterized by an elongated passage and a single room, emphasizing the process of entering the tomb.[32] Zheng Yan noted that the passageway of most Northern Qi tombs would be filled with earth when a tomb was sealed, which implies that the elaborate murals of the passageway were not prepared for the dead but the viewers who would enter the tomb before it

[28] Ibid, 195-199.
[29] Ibid, 198.
[30] Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 74, and 204-217.
[31] Luo Shiping 罗世平, "Beiqi Xin Huafeng: Canguan Taiyuan Xu Xianxiu Mu Bihua Suigan" 北齐新画风——参观太原徐显秀墓壁画随感, *Wenwu* (2003.10): 63-65; Luo Shiping, "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Bihua De Huhua Yinsu" 太原北齐徐显秀墓壁画的胡化因素, in *Yishu Shi Yanjiu 艺术史研究*, vol.5 (Guangzhou: Zhongshan Daxue Chuban She, 2003), 223-241; Rong Xinjiang 荣新江, "Luetan Xu Xianxiu Mu Bihua De Pusa Lianzhu Wen" 略谈徐显秀墓壁画的菩萨连珠纹, *Wenwu* (2003. 10): 66-68.
[32] Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 73.

was sealed.[33]

However, some critical features of the paintings that may have inspired the viewership are less discussed in the scholarly literature. That is, what makes Xu's and other Northern Qi tombs distinctive are the visual features like the life size of the figures and the figures' gazing, which are absent in the tombs found in China in the previous periods. These features imply the existence of living viewers in the physical space: by staring out of the pictorial space, the painted figures seem to be designed to inspire interactions with viewers in the physical space; the scale of the painted figures seems to have been created for the living rather than the soul of the deceased since the latter was conceptual and not confined by the physical space. Bonnie Cheng's observation of the life-sized figures in the tomb (dated to 550 CE) of a Rouran Princess, Princess Ruru 茹茹公主, found at the Ci County is consistent with my current discussion. She noted that the honor guards appeared in the Princess's tomb murals were an important part of the ritual and social exhibition and their frontality and life sized scale indicate their dual roles in the tomb space -- to view and be viewed.[34] While the painted figures in Xu's tomb are not all shown in frontal view, their life-sized scales and gazing may also indicate similar roles. However, I do not mean the images in the tomb were prepared exclusively for the living because while the painted entertainers and attendants stare out of the pictorial plane into the physical space, they still belong to the pictorial narrative. Thus, the viewership might be multiple. Nevertheless, for the current discussion, it is undeniable that the abovementioned visual features emphasize the visual experience of the living.

According to the general convention of tomb making in early and medieval cases

[33] Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 193.
[34] Bonnie Cheng, "Fabricating life out of death," 113.

in China, the tomb occupant and their descendants were usually the sponsors of the tombs, who were often in conversation with artisans who actually painted murals therein. It is possible that the sponsors would visit the tomb and supervise the construction of the tomb before it was sealed. For example, there is a record about an Eastern Han scholar, Zhao Qi 趙岐, painting his image himself in his tomb.[35] While this behavior was documented as an unusual case in historical sources, it does stress the tomb occupants would design the tomb themselves. One of the Northern dynasties cases is that of Sima Jinlong 司馬金龍, an aristocrat and scholar of the Northern Wei and the descendant of the rulers of the Southern Han-controlled state, the Eastern Jin. The tomb objects, such as the famous lacquer panels decorated with the images of the Confucian classic of filial piety, were usually related to his personal Chinese-scholar identity by scholars. In this case, the voice of the tomb occupant was reflected in the choice of burial goods. Thus, the sponsors of Xu's tomb, including Xu Xianxiu's family members and even himself, may have designed the tomb according to their viewing experience. Furthermore, the figures in the passageway and the burial chamber and the images of the tomb occupants loosely form a consistent procession scene in the tomb. Separating them into images for the living and images for the dead may run counter to the mural design. Therefore, I suggest that a hypothetical reconstruction of the contemporary living viewers' viewing experience of entering the tomb is beneficial to illustrate the design of the murals, especially the relationship between the procession scenes and the tomb portraits.

### 1.2 Imagining the Visual Experience of Contemporary Viewers Entering the Tomb

[35] See Fan Ye 范晔, *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書，Wuyan Shi Lunzhao Liezhuan 吳延史盧趙列傳, Vol. 64 卷 64 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2000), 2124.

In the following part, I will reconstruct the process of the imaginary contemporary living viewers entering the tomb to explore the visual experience provided by the murals. When the viewers arrived at the tumulus, they would see a passageway sloping down from the ground level to the level of the tomb entrance (fig. 1.3). The passage gradually narrows, it is 3.35-meter wide at the south end and 2.75-meter wide at the north end. About five to six people could enter the tomb at the same time. They would first see a pair of supernatural guardian figures leading the painted processions. A large group of honor guards painted on each side of the passage walls is arranged along the sloping ground, which means that the spectators would pass them one by one when walking into the tomb. The guards are painted moving out of the tomb space, in the opposite direction than the viewers. The painted figures' size ranges from 1.42 - 1.77 meters in height,[36] making them almost life-size, which would give one the impression of passing by a real-life procession, rather than looking at a painting.

The spectators would see two groups of honor guards painted on the passage walls. The first group consists of 26 armed soldiers (fig. 1.4) on each side of the corridor. Some of them hold standards with streaming banners; some wear swords, and some bear trumpets over their shoulders, others follow the procession without any prop. Almost all of them are painted in a three-quarter view. The figures painted in the foreground are all facing towards the entrance, while figures standing behind them, especially those standing in the background, turn back towards the tomb. Their turning heads create a sense of dynamism in the procession scene and invite the viewers to walk forward to the tomb space, as there are more critical figures waiting in the burial chamber. Moving forward, the viewers would see the second group of

[36] Shanxi Sheng Kaogu Yanjiu Suo, “Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao,” 16.

guards consisting of about fifteen figures and several horses painted on both walls of the slightly narrowed passageway (fig. 1.5). As in the first group, most figures are painted in a three-quarter view, facing the entrance or looking back to the burial chamber. Strikingly, some figures do not walk ahead to the entrance or look inward at the burial chamber. Instead, they are represented in frontal views, looking directly at the viewers who pass by them. Therefore, they can be regarded as fluid figures between the pictorial space and the physical space since they not only participate in the depicted events but also engage in a strong interaction with the viewers. By staring into the physical space, these frontal figures attract the viewers' attention. Then, when the viewers would move forward to the entryway, they would pass the tomb door, which is flanked by two painted guard figures equipped with weapons resembling whips (fig. 1.6).

As the audience would enter the burial chamber, they would find themselves surrounded by an overwhelmingly large group of figures (fig. 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10). The figures painted on the east, west, and south walls all walk toward the tomb entrance, tending to join the procession painted on the passageway. In contrast, the main-wall figures stand or sit solemnly as they wait for the viewers to pay respect to the tomb's occupants sitting in the center.

Unlike the procession scene painted on the passage walls, in which figures are generally depicted in movement, the painted figures on the east and west walls are shown in between moving and static states. Take the west wall as an example. The groom, the man holding the canopy, and the woman behind the horse (fig. 1.11) were deliberately grouped near the horse, which is the central image on this wall. They are painted in a frontal view and stand still, staring into the tomb space. These figures form a stable triangle framing the horse and thus transform the moving procession

into a static tableau, allowing those stopping in the burial chamber to appreciate it. Then, when the spectators' eyes would look over the painting, they would find several figures amid the crowd, similar to the figures painted in the passageway, turning their heads back (fig. 1.8, 1.9). But now, what these figures look at is evident. They are looking at the tomb occupants painted on the main wall.

When the audience would follow these figures' example to turn their eyes to the main wall, they would find themselves confronting a hierarchical and static scene (fig. 1.10). The tomb occupants sit frontally on a couch under a high, square tent decorated with black bands, enjoying the food offered to them. A folded screen is placed behind them. Close to the couple are two female attendants holding trays with lacquer vessels. Several musicians stand at each side of the tent and play different instruments. Some figures hold umbrella-like canopies and a large ceremonial fan made of peacock feathers visible in the background. The lavishness of these objects prepared exclusively to the sitters distinguishes them from other figures. The enclosed tent space distances them from the attendants painted on the sides and the audience present in the physical space.

Unlike the figures painted on the east and west walls, most of whom face the tomb's entrance and seem ready to move towards the entrance, the figures painted on this wall are static and most of them are turning their head toward the central sitters, creating a strong central presence. They can be divided into three groups according to the directions they face. The first group includes two musicians playing lute-like instruments on each side. They stand in the foreground in frontal view and stare out of the pictorial space. Because of their gazing into the physical space, they play an important role in connecting the viewers and the tomb occupants. They seem to invite the viewers to enjoy the music and call them to join the attendant group to serve or

revere the painted tomb occupants. In this way, the viewers were also involved in the hierarchical relations in the painting.

The second group consists of the figures facing the couple, including the other musicians, the female servants holding vessels, and some other attendants. Noteworthily, the closer they are to the couple, the lower they bow their heads. They seem to show reverence to the deceased. The third group of attendants includes those who face either the east or west side. They are the servants standing in the far back and facing in random directions. This group of figures stands further from the couple, at the periphery of the central scene. Probably because they stand far from the center, none of them bow their heads, and their relatively unimportant location allows them to engage in neither the performance nor the service.

Finally, the presence of the life-size figures painted on the four walls of the burial chamber helps the viewers to focus on the central tomb portraits (fig. 1.12). The life-sized figures provide experience of a real encounter, blurring the borders between the pictorial plane and physical space. They cast an overwhelming power by standing as if they were a real group of honor guards in front of the viewers, staring directly at them and leading them to focus on the tomb portraits. When the viewers' eyes would turn to the portraits, they would find themselves becoming the recipient of the tomb occupants' gazing. This strong face-to-face connection formed between the painting and the audience further reinforces the power that portraits have over the viewers. Therefore, the whole tomb murals give one a sense of virtual participation in the funerary rite.

**1.3 Do the Portraits Faithfully Represent the Tomb Occupants?**

Whether the tomb occupants' images truly represented their external appearance is a significant issue for the current discussion. Since they face the viewers frontally

and occupy the absolute center of the tomb space without active involvement in the pictorial events, I suggest that the primary reason for their presence was not to engage in an ideal afterlife or to launch a journey towards immortality, but to evoke interactions with the imagined audience. Therefore, the relationship between viewers and the portraits is a critical issue for understanding the portrait-making practices.

A review of the traditional ways of representing the deceased in the tombs in China is necessary to understand the importance of tomb portraits in Xu's and other Northern dynasties tombs. According to Wu Hung's study, an aniconic representation of the deceased's presence appeared in China as early as in the early 2nd century BCE.[37] Practices such as the preparation of an empty seat or simply a raised platform, framing it with a tent or a screen, and distributing sacrificial vessels and sometimes with figurines in front of the seat, were adequate to demarcate the "spirit seat" prepared for the deceased's soul, which was believed to reside in the tombs.[38] This practice was shared by aristocrats, low-ranked officials, and even commoners during Han and post-Han periods.[39] During those times, the center of ancestral worship shifted from lineage temples to tombs of individuals and the "spirit seat" framed an important worship space in the tomb.[40] Examples can be seen from the early-2nd-century BCE Mawangdui tomb 1 in Changsha of Hunan Province (fig. 1.13) to Foyemiaowan Tomb 133 of the 3rd century found near Dunhuang, Gansu province (fig. 1.14). What is more, as I have briefly mentioned in the introduction, this practice was a more popular mode than the visual representation of the deceased before the Northern dynasties. This context of representing the deceased indicates that the

[37] For the study of the spirit seat, see Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 63-68.
[38] A concept of the posthumous soul prevailed in the Han dynasty, claiming that after a person dies, the legitimate place for his two souls – the light, spiritual hun and the heavier, physical po – would be his tomb. For the discussion of the concept of the souls of this period, see Wu, ibid, 67.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, 67-68.

existence of the deceased's likeness was not required in the traditional funerary space in China. Thus, if the deceased's visual existence had long been unnecessary to indicate the presence of the deceased's soul, was it necessary for the likeness in Xu's tomb to replicate the deceased's physical appearance, or could the visual accuracy be achieved in the tomb decoration? To answer these questions, I will conduct a series of analyses of the painted figures' faces and tomb figurines.

Looking closer at the deceased couples' images, we find certain careful adjustments that the painters made. Under the finished colored lips of Xu Xianxiu (fig. 1.15a), a black curved line indicating the original drawing of the lower lip is still visible. The face of Xu's wife (fig. 1.16a) underwent similar adjustments. The painter first painted her right eye smaller and then repainted it, giving it an elongated appearance with the eye's corner tilting up. These details indicate that the painter treated the portraits of the tomb occupants with great care. However, from these adjustments it cannot be assumed that the portraits were carefully modelled after the couples' appearance. Comparing faces of the tomb's occupants with other frontal faces found in the surrounding murals, one will conclude that they follow the same convention and were probably drawn from the same prototype. Most of the frontal male figures (fig. 1.15b-d) as well as Xu have a slightly rounded square face with single-edged eyelids, a long nose, and small but thick lips. The only differentiating features are small details like the mustache. Similarly, more faces resembling the female occupant's face can be found on the burial chamber's north and the east walls (fig. 16b-d). They all have identical straight and thin eyebrows, and small, sometimes long eyes, as well as the same kinds of slightly rounded square faces, long noses, and small plump lips as the frontal male figures do.

This similarity indicates that the painters might have relied on a particular

repertoire of standardized faces to finish these large group scenes. Therefore, to create a grand procession consisting of seemingly individualized honor guards, they would only need to assemble these standardized figures and add or change a few specific details. Numerous examples of this practice can be found in the murals. Similar figures with slightly different details like hairstyles and whiskers appear on the west wall of the passageway (fig. 1.17); faces of servants and musicians standing on the west side of the north wall seem like a series of drawings of the same female from different angles (fig. 1.18). They all suggest that the painters created these figures with the help of a series of drawings of similar faces from different angles. The most striking similarity can be found in two honor-guards images painted in the middle of the passageway's east and west walls. Their strong resemblance is not only because of their similar faces but also due to the similar figural composition (fig. 1.19-20). Two men stand next to each other and face the same direction, while the third man faces the opposite direction. These examples indicate that the painters' preparatory drawings, probably painting manuals, might have included not only individual figures but also group drawings that have been specifically designed for composing procession scenes in tombs. This is probably because similar subjects dominated the tomb murals created in this short period (only about 20 years), exclusively in the area of Jinyang and Yecheng, making the circulation of drawings feasible and desirable.

While the paintings may have usually relied on the same drawings, some individualized faces also appear in the murals. These examples are not rare: a woman holding a canopy behind the horse has eyes set at a wide distance and her eyeballs are rolling to one side (fig. 1.21); a woman standing behind the horse has a rounder face and shorter eyes compared to other painted females (fig. 1.22); a man painted on the entryway has a face with arching eyebrows, protruding cheekbones and jaw (fig.

1.23). Besides, some other figures have high noses, deeply set eyes, and full beards, thus indicating their distinctive ethnic identity (fig. 1.24-26). However, they are by no means individual likenesses of real peoples. Similar profile views of foreigners' faces prove that they were also drawn from the same prototype. Two foreign figures (fig. 1.25-26) on the east wall were painted from the same angle, but they face opposite directions. Both of them have distinctive long and high noses, and the same type of beard on their chins. Therefore, rather than replicate actual individuals, making individualized images had a functional purpose. It is worth noting that most of the individualized figures occupy important positions in the paintings, and thus they serve as essential components to make the image resemble the real world marked with diversity in a more faithful and plausible way.

These diversified faces also can be found in tomb figurines, and the functional reason for making them is even more apparent. The most distinctive figurine is a horse rider with braided hair (fig. 1.27a-c). Because of its distinctive hairstyle, it was usually understood as a figurine of a Turkish cavalryman. His exaggerated facial features, including the excessively tilted eyes, over-curved eyebrows and whiskers, serve the purpose to identify his distinctiveness, especially compared to other figurines, which all have the same faces (fig. 28a-c). It could be argued that the reason for this discrepancy is different making techniques. The Turkish-like figurine's strip-shaped hands and round body (fig. 1.27b-c) indicate that it was made by hand or using a combination of hand-forming and moulding techniques. The rigid and close-packed body shape and flat back characteristic of the other figurines (fig. 1.29a-b) demonstrate that they were made using molds that can be impressed in clay hundreds or thousands of times to duplicate the same shape. But why did the artisans bother to produce the individualized type of figurines with a more complex and time-

consuming technique, rather than stick to the more effortless molding technique? It is important to recognize that the purpose of making figures and figurines with distinctive facial features was to show a diverse army consisting of people from different ethnic groups and serving different functions.

Another figurine with a distinct facial expression (fig. 1.30a-b) further proves this point. He has an impressive menacing face, while his four limbs are glued to his body, indicating he was also pressed out of a mold. These types of figurines are usually referred to as "warrior figurines guarding the tomb" (Zhenmu Wushi Yong 鎮墓武士俑), and were usually placed near the entrance to protect the deceased from evil spirits. Their menacing faces accord with the purpose of frightening those who attempt to invade the tomb. Therefore, this evidence further indicates that whether a figurine has a recognizable face is not related to technical limitations, wish to replicate real persons, or the style that the artisan followed, but only relevant to the function they served in tombs. The figures and figurines in Xu's tomb are better viewed not as individualized portraits of particular subjects, but as types of images, fulfilling the maker's desire to create a plausible diversified honor guard and a fully functional army.

As demonstrated above, the couple's portraits are not individualized. In contrast, they strictly follow the same conventions of common frontal figures (fig. 1.32-33) depicted in other contemporary tomb murals. It is impossible for the viewers to discern the appearance of Xu and his wife through their portraits. In fact, making visually accurate portraits of individuals was neither purposeful nor common, as it was usually considered a taboo in early medieval China.[41] Following this concept,

[41] The taboo of making images has been discussed by Zheng Yan. According to Zheng's studies, making images for oneself when he/she was alive is considered to be a dangerous behavior. The images are considered as the spirit of the human origin and thus the spirit will be hurt or cursed easily through using the images. But this taboo is complex and sometimes portraits of individuals, like beauties or scholars, were made by themselves or others. See

whether the painter would have had a chance to make a person's image when he/she was still alive is an open question. By contrast, it is more beneficial to consider Richard Brilliant's observation on portraiture: "the fabrication of reputable individuals relies on representation conventions — standing, sitting, somberly dressed figures — to conform to the expectation of society."[42] A comparison with the tomb portraits in other Northern Qi tombs will further our understanding of the conventions in tomb portraiture of reputable individuals. Constructed respectively in 576 CE and 571 CE, both the tomb of the aristocrat Gao Run 高潤 and the tomb of an official with the given name of Daogui 道貴 contain similar portraits (fig. 1.32-33) on the north main wall. While the painstakingly painted strands of hair on a mink coat and beard in the portrait of Xu Xianxiu (fig. 1.31) indicate a more delicate representation, the three tomb occupants are all depicted in a static, stiff and formal frontal pose. Furthermore, even though Xu Xianxiu died at the age of seventy, he was still depicted as an unaged man. This feature also appears in the tomb portraits of Gao Run and Daogui despite their different ages.[43] Therefore, the portraits are constructed and idealized likenesses of the people portrayed as Hans Belting stated,[44] concealing the individual's idiosyncrasies. Their formal stillness indicates solemnity and formality, which are the features best representing a person with dignity in a formulaic way.[45] The above-mentioned standardized face is formal, correct and thus was suitable for the depictions of tomb occupants. The layered luxury items and central positions of

Zheng Yan, *Shizhe De Mianju: Hantang Muzang Yishu Yanjiu* 逝者的面具:汉唐墓葬艺术研究 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chuban She, 2013. 2), 175-181.

[42] Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 11.

[43] According to the tomb epitaphs' inscriptions, Gaorun died at the age of thirty two, Daogui died at the age of seventy six. See Cixian Wenhua Guan 磁县文化馆, "Hebei Cixian Beiqi Gaorun Mu" 河北磁县北齐高润墓, *Kaogu* (1979, 03): 242-243; and Jinan Shi Bowu Guan 济南市博物馆, "Jinan Shi Majia Zhuang Beiqi Mu" 济南市马家庄北齐墓, *Wenwu* (1985, 10): 48.

[44] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13.

[45] Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 11.

the tomb couple further help the viewers identify them, rather than the similitude between the images and the subjects.

However, the tomb occupants and the surrounding figures were not depicted in this way when tomb portraiture appeared in China as early as the Han dynasty and did not always occupy the center of the funerary space before the Northern dynasties. Therefore, some critical questions concerning the portraits arise: how were the tomb portraits and the design of the murals shaped into their current form? Why did the presence of a visual representation of the tomb occupants matter if lifelikeness and accuracy were not necessary? In the second and third chapters, I will try to answer these questions by analyzing the earlier forms of tomb portraits and the specific visual culture of the Northern dynasties.

## Chapter 2

## Tombs and Tomb Portraits in the Northern Dynasties

To understand how the tomb portraiture adopted the frontal view convention, I will scrutinize the tombs and the tomb portraits produced during the Northern dynasties. I divide the tombs and their paintings into four groups, corresponding to periods in which they were created: Shengle period (258－398 CE), Pingcheng period (398－494 CE), Luoyang period (494－534 CE), and Yecheng period (534-577 CE).[46] This periodization is based on subsequent capitals of the Northern states, where most of the tombs were found, and indicates regional characteristics in graves' decoration as capitals changed.

### 2.1 The Shengle Period

[46] Some scholars have named different stages of the development of the Northern dynasties based on their subsequent capitals, see Wang Kai 王凯, *Beiwei Shengle Shidai* 北魏盛乐时代 (Huhhot: Neimenggu Renmin Chuban She, 2003), 1-10; Li Ping 李凭, *Beiwei Pingcheng Shidai* 北魏平城时代 (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chuban She, 2000), 1-3.

Shengle was established as the capital of Dai by the leader of the Tuobas, Tuoba Liwei 拓跋力微, in 258 CE, and the Tuoba-Xianbeis were active at Shengle and its surrounding area before Tuoba Gui moved the capital to Pingcheng in 398 CE.[47] The tombs found in and around this area are mostly vertical-pit tombs, which are usually open pits dug into the ground. The entrance to the burial chamber is from above. Some other tombs found in this period are earthen cave tombs, which are excavated from the ground with a vertical or narrow sloping passageway and a small rear chamber containing the coffin. Among the fifteen tombs found in the Xianbei cemetery of Chenwugou in Ulanqab of Inner Mongolia, fourteen have the vertical-pit structure (fig. 2.1) and there is only one example of an earthen cave tomb.[48] According to the archeologists' studies, they were all built before the capital was moved to Pingcheng.[49] While the identity of the deceased buried in these tombs is unknown due to the lack of written records and evidence, an aristocrat's tomb dated to the end of the 4th century, just after the capital was moved from Shengle to Pingcheng, was found in Meidai village of Horinger.[50] A tiger seal bestowed by the emperor found in the tomb confirms that the tomb occupant was a high-ranking officer. It is a brick-chambered tomb with a vertical entrance on the west side (fig. 2.2). The tomb is 3×1.4 meter large and contains a 2.4×1.04 meter coffin, making it too small for a visitor to enter. Among the examples mentioned above, no tomb portraits or any murals were found. Some features like the absence of passageway and the narrow tomb space indicate that the tombs in this period were not designed to be entered or

[47] Su Bai, "Shengle, Pingcheng Yidai De Tuoba Xianbei--Beiwei Yiji: Xianbei Yiji Zhi Er" 盛乐、平城一带的拓跋鲜卑——北魏遗迹——鲜卑遗迹辑录之二, *Wenwu* (1977. 11): 38.
[48] Neimenggu Zizhiqu Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 内蒙古自治区文物考古研究所, Wulanchabu Shi Bowuguan 乌兰察布市博物馆, and Huade Xian Wenwu Guanli Suo 化德县文物管理所, "Huade Xian Chenwugou Xianbei Mudi Fajue Jianbao" 化德县陈武沟鲜卑墓地发掘简报, *Caoyuan Wenwu* (2014. 01): 47.
[49] Ibid, 60.
[50] Su Bai, "Shengle, Pingcheng Yidai De Tuoba Xianbei," 40.

viewed by the living.

### 2.2 The Pingcheng Period

When Tuoba Gui established the state Wei, he moved the capital from Shengle to Pingcheng in 398 CE. The capital was settled for almost a century, and the Northern Wei rulers united most parts of north China before the capital was moved again to Luoyang in 494 CE. In this period, single-chambered tombs with long passageways began to appear in Pingcheng. They gradually became the dominant tomb structure in this area in the middle of the 5th century.[51] However, the Xianbei people did not invent this tomb structure; it had existed in China in the Eastern Han (25-220 CE) and was preserved in the Northwest in the 3rd and 4th centuries during political turmoil in Central China and reappeared again in Central China in the Pingcheng period.

The change in tomb structure during the Pingcheng period coincided with the appearance of mural paintings and tomb portraits. However, in this period, tomb portraits were represented not only on walls but also on stone sarcophagi and lacquered wooden coffins. They are mostly located in the southeast suburb of Datong, in which hundreds of tombs of the Northern Wei were found. The tombs that contain portraits painted on the walls are all found in Datong, including Poduoluo's 破多羅 tomb (fig. 2.3) found in Shaling village, Liang Bahu's 梁拔胡 tomb (fig. 2.4) found at a present-day power station, and a tomb found on Yunboli Road (fig. 2.5). While the directions that these tombs face are not consistent, all the tomb portraits painted in these tombs are located on the main wall facing the entrance. The stone sarcophagi painted with tomb portraits include Xie Xing's 解興 sarcophagus (fig. 2.6) and a stone sarcophagus found in Zhijiabao (fig. 2.7). These sarcophagi were constructed to

[51] Wang Yanqing 王雁卿, "Beiwei Pingcheng Muzang Faxian Ji Qi Xingzhi Yanjiu" 北魏平城墓葬发现及其形制研究, in *Shanxi Sheng Kaogu Xuehui Lunwen Ji* (2006. 00), 189-190.

resemble Chinese wooden house with a roof, a door, four walls and a floor composed of stone slabs (fig. 2.8-9). Scholars usually called these sarcophagi "stone hall" 石堂.[52] Noteworthily, both of these portraits are painted on the main wall of the sarcophagus, which would face the entrance, similarly to the tomb's main wall.[53] Despite no intact examples of wooden coffins with painted tomb portraits surviving, the lacquer remains of coffins found in Poduoluo's tomb (fig. 2.10) and in Guyuan in Ningxia region provide clues to their original appearance (fig. 2.11). According to scholars' reconstruction of the coffins, the tomb portraits would have been placed on the front panel of the coffin, which is close to the head of the deceased and is wider than the rear panel.[54] The tomb portraits found in this period are probably not limited to just the above-described types since some of the coffins, sarcophagi, and tombs excavated today have been damaged and thus it is not possible to assess the full extent of funerary portraiture of the time. But it is noteworthy that among five mural tombs found in this period, three of them, which are the above-mentioned mural tombs, were painted with tomb portraits on walls.

As the early tombs constructed for the Xianbei people did not contain portraits or

[52] The inscription on the lintel of the door in Xie Xing's sarcophagus even names the sarcophagus as "stone hall." For the discussion of "stone hall," see Zhang Qingjie 张庆捷, "Beiwei Shitang Guanchuang Yu Fushu Bihua Wenzi: Yi Xin Faxian Xiexing Shitiang Weili Tantao Zangsu Wenhua de Bianqian" 北魏石堂棺床与附属壁画文字——以新发现解兴石堂为例探讨葬俗文化的变迁, in *Liangge Shijie de Paihuai: Zhonggu Shiqi Sangzang Guannian Fengsu Yu Liyi Zhidu Xueshu Yantaohui Lunwen Ji* 两个世界的徘徊 : 中古时期丧葬观念风俗与礼仪制度学术研讨会论文集, ed. Zhongguo Kaogu Yanjiu Zhong Xin 北京大学中国考古学研究中心 (Beijing: Ke Xue Chu Ban She, 2016), 233-249.

[53] There are four paintings painted on Xie Xing's stone hall. One of them is located on its facade. It was painted with a pair of guards, supernatural animals, as well as kitchen scenes and grazing scenes on either side of the doors. The other three paintings were painted on the left, right, and back walls inside the stone hall. The back wall facing the entrance of the stone hall was painted with the images of the tomb occupants, ox-cart and saddleless horse. The left and right walls were painted with musicians. They are playing music instruments and facing toward the tomb occupants. There are four paintings decorating the Zhijiabao sarcophagus. They were all painted on the four walls inside the sarcophagus. According to the archeological report, the sarcophagus found in Zhijiabao were arranged in a north-south direction with the entrance facing the south. The north wall was painted with the images of the tomb occupants and servants. The west and east walls were respectively decorated with female and male servants holding lotus and facing towards the tomb occupants. The south wall was painted with ox-cart on the west side, saddleless horse on the east side, and two female servants on the door. For the descriptions of the paintings decorated on these two sarcophagi, see Zhang, ibid., 233-249, and Wang Yintian 王银田 and Liu Junxi 刘俊喜, "Datong Zhijiabao Beiwei Mu Shitang Bihua" 大同智家堡北魏墓石堂壁画, *Wenwu* (2001.07), 42-49.

[54] See Cao Lijuan, "Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Yanjiu," 7-19.

any murals, what should be asked here is where the tradition of tomb portraiture came from. Since most of the tomb portraits in the mural tombs are not preserved well, analyzing the tomb portraits created in different media is necessary. Except for the tomb portrait painted on the Guyuan coffin, in which the tomb occupant sits in a relaxed pose with his face turning to one side and his legs dangling, indicating a foreign pictorial model,[55] almost all follow the same pictorial convention. The deceased are usually depicted sitting frontally on a platform placed under an architectural structure or a tent, backed by folding screens and attended by servants. A loose robe typically conceals the figures' body shape, but their cross-legged or kneeling position is visible under the robe. They usually hold an object that has been identified as a fly whisk in their right hand, while their left hand rests on a small table. Scholars have noted that the earliest surviving examples of tomb portraits were found in the Anping tomb (fig. 2.12) dated 174 CE excavated in Hebei province and another Eastern Han tomb from Xia county in Shanxi province.[56] Initially, the male tomb occupants were depicted alone, only later did the portraits of couples shown together emerge. After the Han dynasty, this type of tomb portrait disappeared in the Central plain in the 3rd and 4th centuries and appeared in northeast China and North Korea. Examples can be seen in the tomb portrait painted on a stone sarcophagus found in Beijing (fig.2.13), Dong Shou's 冬壽 portrait found in Anak tomb no.3 (fig. 2.14), and the tomb portraits in Tokhungri tomb (fig. 2.15). The latter two tombs belong to the Koguryo Kingdom in Korea. Examples were even found in southwest China, in Yunnan province. Scholars attribute this spread to the chaos in the Central plain caused by wars in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Many Han people immigrated to

[55] Sun Ji noted the tomb portrait relates to the figures in the banquet scenes in the mural paintings of Balalyk Tepe made by the Hephthalites in terms of its painting style and the specific way that the figure holds the cup. See Sun Ji 孙机, "Guyuan Beiwei Qiguan Hua Yanjiu" 固原北魏漆棺画研究, *Wenwu* (1989. 09), 40-41.
[56] Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 74; Zheng Yan, *Shizhe De Mianju*, 201-202.

"remote" areas to escape the turmoil and thus brought their traditions with them.[57] When Northern dynasties united north China and occupied some of these areas, this type of tomb portrait reappeared in central China.

Comparing the faces in these portraits, one can hardly identify individual features. In the male tomb portrait painted on the wall of Anping tomb, Anak tomb, and on the coffin from Poduoluo's tomb (fig. 2.16-18), similar elongated and oval faces, dark and thick eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, long noses, and goatee beards can be seen. Zheng Yan has argued that their similarities must indicate a shared pictorial model; Audrey Spiro has assumed that some portraits are even "virtually identical" and "interchangeable."[58]

While it is significant to emphasize the relations between these tomb portraits, what should be further noted is the tomb portraits in earlier tombs are not consistently shown in frontal view, and they usually appear in different locations inside the tombs, especially in the side chambers. Examples can be seen in the tomb portraits in the Anping tomb and several other tombs found in northeast China.[59] What should be asked is why the tomb portraits in the Pingcheng period are so persistently depicted in frontal view and why they occupy the absolute center of the space. As many scholars have noted, the relation between tomb portraits and the icon of Queen Mother of the West 西王母 provides an answer to the question posed above.[60] Queen Mother of the West was a goddess in Chinese indigenous beliefs and mythology. The worship of this deity became extremely popular in the 1st century BCE. When the Buddha's

[57] Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 23-43.
[58] Zheng Yan, "Muzhu Huaxiang Yanjiu," 墓主画像研究, *Liu Dunyuan Xiansheng Jinian Wenji* 刘敦愿先生纪念文集, ed. Shandong Daxue Kaigu Xue Xi 山东大学考古学系 (Jinan: Shandong Daxue Chuban She, 1998), 450-468; Andrey Spiro, *Contemplating the Ancients: Aesthetic and Social Issues in Early Chinese Portraiture* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990), 39-41.
[59] For the study of the tombs of the 4th and 5th centuries found in Northeast China, see Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 23-43.
[60] Chen Lvsheng 陈履生, *Shenhua Zhushen Yanjiu* 神话主神研究 (Beijing: Zijincheng Chuban She, 1987), 29; and Zheng Yan, Shizhe De Mianju, 182-184.

frontal sitting icon was introduced to China around the 1st century CE, her images started to borrow from these depictions.[61] She was usually depicted as sitting on a throne under a canopy in frontal view (fig. 2.19). Other figures surrounding her were usually depicted in profile view worshiping her. Wu Hung has noted that this was a remarkable change in Chinese figure painting since before the frontal images of Queen Mother of the West appeared, figures were mostly shown in profile.[62] He has termed this traditional composition of figures as episodic representation, in which the figures are always engaged in certain events and interact with each other. He called a symmetrical composition with frontal figures in the center an iconic representation, in which the central figure is depicted in a frontal view, ignoring the surrounding crowds and staring at the viewers outside the picture plane.[63] The significance of this iconic depiction relies on the presence of viewers or worshipers in the physical space. Therefore, the shift in the pose of Queen Mother of the West is not a coincidence. It is strictly related to the prevalent worship of the goddess. Alongside the prevalence of the iconic function of the frontal posture, frontal tomb portraits began to appear, and their persistent appearance in tombs reveals a visual interest in the presence of icons in the funerary spaces of Northern dynasties. This is related to the drastic transformation of the visual culture in the Pingcheng period brought by the Xianbei traditions and the prevalent Buddhist culture, which I will detail in the next chapter.

It is important for the current discussion to stress the relations and differences between tomb murals in this period and those of the late 6th century. In this period, the ox-cart and horse motifs started to appear together and occupy more important space, like the main wall in case of Poduoluo and Liang Bahu's tombs. Since the

[61] Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989), 132-136.
[62] Ibid, 134.
[63] Ibid, 134-135.

paintings in Liang Bahu and the Yunboli tombs have been damaged or faded to different degrees, I will focus on Poduoluo's tomb to illustrate the features of the tomb murals in this period. This tomb contains relatively complete and well-preserved paintings on each wall. According to the inscriptions found on the lacquer remains, the tomb belonged to a Xianbei aristocratic couple.[64] Poduoluo's tomb is the earliest tomb decorated with murals found from the Pingcheng period and the earliest one decorated with tomb portraits. Facing west, it is a single-chambered brick tomb constructed with an earthen passageway at the west end, a brick entryway, and a chamber at the east end (fig. 2.20). In the burial chamber, the east wall is decorated with the tomb portraits (fig. 2.3). The north wall is painted with a procession scene featuring a male figure sitting inside a carriage at the east side of the north wall, which is believed to be the male occupant of the tomb (fig. 2.21). The south wall is painted with an outdoor banquet scene with a female figure sitting inside an architectural structure, which is believed to be the female tomb occupant (fig. 2.22); the west wall is decorated with guarding warriors on each side (fig. 2.23). Above the main scenes on these four walls there is a row of screens decorated with supernatural animals and guarding warriors. The entryway is painted with warrior figures and supernatural animals on either side wall (fig. 2.24). The ceiling of the entryway is decorated with the images of Fuxi 伏羲 and Nüwa 女媧, a pair of indigenous Chinese deities. The passageway has been largely damaged, and no mural paintings are found in this section.

Several features of Poduoluo's tomb should be noted. Figures painted on the north, east, and south walls in the burial chamber are all small figures and are

[64] For the study of the tomb occupants, see Datong Shi Kaogu Yanjiu Suo 大同市考古研究所, "Shanxi Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao" 山西大同沙岭北魏壁画墓发掘简报, *Wenwu* (2006. 10): 10-12.

arranged in several rows one next to another to avoid overlapping or blocking each other. On the main, east wall of the tomb, the images are divided into three sections. The upper section is decorated with a row of female and male servants. They are arranged neatly on a red line, which can be seen in a close-up image of the female servants (fig. 2.25). In the middle section, the tomb occupants are depicted sitting in a house flanked by a tree on each side. The ox-cart and horse appear under the tree on the north side, while on the south side several servants pay respect to the tomb occupants. In the lowest section of this wall, another row of servants is painted. As can be seen in the pictures (fig. 2.21-22), this division feature is even more pronounced in the paintings on the south and north wall. Due to the limited space, I will not describe them in detail here.

Another noteworthy feature is that most of the attendant figures in the paintings seem to be "copied" from the same models. In other words, faces, poses, and robes in one group of figures are almost identical without any specific features like hairstyles or facial hair to distinguish them as individual figures as in Xu Xianxiu's tomb. Looking closely at the painted attendants, one will find that they are distributed within their frames one next to another, captured in the same poses. The female attendants painted in the upper section of the east wall (fig. 2.25) are dressed in the same kind of long robe with bands flowing in the same direction; they all bow their heads towards the same direction and move their hands forward. Similarly, the banquet guests on the south wall all sit in the same kneeling pose one next to another without their bodies overlapping (fig. 2.26). While their faces are damaged, faces of the attendants preserved in the Yunboli tomb can further attest to this copying feature (fig. 2.27). The guests depicted aside the tomb occupants in the Yunboli tomb all have the same face depicted in three-quarter view; they all hold a cup in their right hand and rest the

left hand on their kneeling legs. The only distinguishing feature are the two types of robes worn by alternating figures. It is clear that giving the faces an individualized appearance was not the intention of these paintings. By avoiding overlapping, the painters showed a complete body of each figure. It seems that showing complete figures of similar attendants with different attributes was enough to denote groups like musicians or guests. While these features were also common in Han tombs, what should be noted is that they have vanished in Xu's and other late 6th century tombs. These small painted figures resemble *mingqi* (spirit articles 明器), which are Chinese burial objects prepared for the dead in China.[65] They are usually small in size and can be made in large numbers to fulfill the needs of the deceased in the afterlife. Compared to the large size of guarding figures painted on the west wall and the entryway (fig. 2.23-24), the function of the small painted figures is more prominent. Guarding figures near the entrance of the tomb were meant to protect its occupants. Therefore, the life-size guardians were intended for the intruders, while the small figures painted on other walls of the burial chamber were intended for the dead. Thus, the small figures engaged in different narrative scenes painted on each of the walls, represented the deceased's perfect afterlife.

To sum up, several features that are different from the painted attendants in Xu's tomb can be pointed out in these paintings: they are small nearly-identical figures divided in rows on the wall; they are engaged in their specific activities; none of these attendant figures stare into the physical space. Compared to the full-size figures painted in Xu's tomb, they do not inspire interaction or emphasize the viewers

[65] Mingqi are portable funerary goods, mainly objects and figurines, produced for the dead. Since they were made to satisfy the spirit of the dead, they are distinguished from daily objects. They usually resemble real objects but did not have an utilitarian purpose. Tomb figurines, as a type of mingqi, were made to substitute human sacrifices and bear different roles, like attendants and servants, in the tombs. Most tomb figurines were miniatures and were mass produced using molds. Wu Hung believed that the pictorial figures that appeared in Chinese tomb art from the Han dynasty onwards were meant to substitute the sculptural figurines. For the discussion on *mingqi*, see Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 87-111.

existence. They form self-sufficient narratives on each wall of the tomb. The tomb occupants' repeated images further prove that the paintings on each wall are autonomous scenes showing aspects of their afterlife. Unlike the painted figures in Xu's tomb, which emphasize the present moment when the viewer encounters them, the figures in this tomb still belong to their particular narratives' eternal time even though the portraits have already started to break this eternality with their frontality.

As a result, the mural tombs of the Pingcheng period link the Han tombs and the Northern Qi tombs. While the iconic portraits have been placed in the center in the single burial chamber, the figures divided into rows and self-sufficient narratives still dominated the murals. The tomb space was not a space prepared for a living audience, but one created to represent different scenes of the deceased's ideal afterlife.

**2.3 The Luoyang Period**

The Luoyang period started when Emperor Xiaowen moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 494 CE and ended when the state collapsed in 534 CE. There are not many tombs with murals found from the Luoyang period, and most of the paintings have been damaged to varying degrees.[66] These include Yuan Yi's 元乂 tomb (526 CE), Wang Wen's 王溫 tomb (532 CE), and Yuan Yi's 元懌 tomb (525 CE). They are all located on Mang mountain, the royal and aristocratic cemetery of the Northern Wei situated in Luoyang's northeast. They are all single-chambered tombs facing south. In Yuan Yi's 元懌 tomb, only two guardian figures painted on either wall of the entryway, as well as some animals and clouds painted on the ceiling of the burial chamber remain. In Yuan Yi's 元乂 tomb, only the paintings on the

[66] The remains of mural paintings can also be found in some other tombs located in Luoyang, Shandong, and Inner Mongolia, but they are seriously damaged and faded, and thus the subjects of the paintings can hardly be recognized. Regarding the study of the tombs of this period, see Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 101-102.

upper part of the four walls and ceiling of the burial chamber remain. The ceiling is painted with the images of constellations, and the upper tier of the walls are decorated with the thunder god and symbolic animals of the four directions. Tomb portraits can only be found in Wang Wen's tomb (fig. 2.28). It is the only painting preserved in this tomb, and is located on the east wall rather than the main, north wall. In this painting, the deceased couple sits in an architectural structure decorated with a mullioned window and curtains. A folded screen is placed behind their backs, and food is placed in front of them. Outside of the structure, three attendants stand on both sides of the couple.

Noteworthily, the remaining paintings found in these three tombs are mostly typical subjects that were depicted in the same positions in the Northern Qi tombs. Therefore, the abovementioned tombs indicate that the traditional layout of the mural paintings prevalent in the Northern Qi had already been loosely shaped in the Luoyang period. Another critical phenomenon is that the mode of dividing figures into rows or frames in the burial chamber of the Pingcheng-period tombs disappeared in the mural painting of Wang Wen’s tomb. According to the drawing provided in the archeological report, the figures on the east wall exist in the same space and are depicted as a narrative whole. While the report does not mention the figures’ exact size, it is clear that they are not arranged in sections in this tomb. All these features indicate that the mural tombs in the Luoyang period can also be seen as a transitional period in relation to the Northern Qi tombs. I will explore the visual culture of this period to highlight their connections in the next chapter.

**2.4 The Yecheng Period**

The Yecheng period started when the Eastern Wei established the capital in Yecheng in 534 CE and ended in 577 CE when the Northern Zhou conquered the

Northern Qi. As mentioned in the first chapter, the tombs' mural decorations in this period follow a systematic layout. The most remarkable feature is that tomb portraits occupy an absolutely central position in the space, which is the main wall of the single-chambered tomb. The tombs that are decorated with portraits are found mainly in two locations, Ci County of Hebei Province and Taiyuan of Shanxi province. In Ci County, the tomb portraits can be found in Princess Ruru's tomb, a tomb found in Wanzhang village, and Gao Run's tomb. In Taiyuan, tomb portraits can be found in Lourui's 婁睿 tomb, Xu Xianxiu's tomb and a tomb found on site of a thermal power station (fig. 2.29). Another tomb containing images of its occupants (fig.2.30) has recently been excavated in Shuozhou in Shanxi province, which was an important garrison of Northern dynasties. In Shandong province, tomb portraits were found in Daogui's tomb in Jinan and Cuifen's 崔芬 tomb in Linqu County. Because of the specific locations of the tombs found in Shandong province, which was controlled successively by the southern and northern regimes, examples in this area show features implying interactions between the two regions. Therefore, they do not follow the "Yecheng model."

Except for the tombs found in Shandong, the layout of the murals in all tombs mentioned above loosely follow the "Yecheng model." They are brick single-chambered tombs facing south and constructed with an elongated passageway. Large numbers of life-size guards of honor appear on either wall of the passage. The tomb occupants are depicted frontally and occupy the center of the main wall. The east and west walls are decorated either with an ox-cart or a horse procession. The pairing of the images of ox-driven cart and horse has appeared in the 3$^{rd}$ century and played an increasingly important role in the tomb decorations from the 4$^{th}$ to 6$^{th}$ centuries in China (both south and north). Many scholars contented these images were a symbol of

the occupants' social status, mainly because the pairing of ox-cart and horse has become an important component in the daily processions of aristocrats in the Wei and Jin period (3rd - 4th century CE).[67] These images usually have gendered implications, in which the ox cart was usually painted near the images of the female deceased, and the horse was usually painted near the male occupant.[68] But in Xu Xianxiu's tomb, this relationship is reversed: the ox-driven cart was placed at the east wall near Xu's image, and the horse was placed at the west wall near the female occupant. The reason behind this phenomenon is still unknown. Furthermore, the most distinctive features in the Yecheng period tombs are the life-sized attendant figures, their diverse faces, and their direct gaze looking out of the pictorial space. Compared to the small painted figures in the Pingcheng period, where the figures are arranged in frames and have identical faces, these figures create a sense of virtual space through their scale and gaze.

Therefore, the tomb murals from the Pingcheng to the Yecheng periods have changed the focus from self-sufficient narratives of the deceased's eternal afterlife to stressing the hypothetic viewers' encounter with the life-size figures. In addition, since the tomb portraits appeared in the Pingcheng period, they had predominantly occupied the main wall of the single-chambered tombs, which is a significant focal point in the tombs. This raises the question of how this transformation happened. In the next chapter, I will trace the evolution of the tomb decoration by placing the tombs within the Northern dynasties' ritual and visual context.

## Chapter 3

## Situating Tomb Portraits in the Visual Culture of the Northern Dynasties

[67] For the discussion on the images of ox-cart and riderless horse, see Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao*, 190-191.
[68] See Zheng, ibid, 190-191; Wu Hung, *The Yellow Spring*, 208; and Kate A. Lingley, "Silk Road Dress in a Chinese Tomb: Xu Xianxiu and Sixth-century Cosmopolitanism," *The Silk Road*, vol. 12, 2014, 6.

In this chapter, I will examine why the frontal portraits were so persistently shown in these tombs and how the tomb portraiture was designed as the center of the mortuary space. As discussed in the introduction, the Northern dynasties' visual culture may have been drastically transformed because of the ethnic mingling and the popularity of religious and secular art production. It is crucial to consider in what ritual and visual contexts the images and icons became significant in the funerary space of the Xianbei-ruled states.

### 3.1 The Ritual Contexts in the Northern Wei

In this section, I will examine the ritual traditions of the Xianbei ruling class and investigate what role the images played in their traditions.

While limited records in the historical sources do not provide enough evidence to reconstruct Xianbei funerary rituals, there are some clues indicating that the Xianbei people emphasized the presence of images in their funeral ritual practice. The specific funeral rituals of Turks recorded in *Bei Shi* may provide clues for what kinds of images of the deceased were made and how they functioned in the funerary context. It records that when a man died, the Turks would create a graveyard on the ground and construct a house; the house would be painted with the dead's appearance and the states where he fought in battles.[69] Similar to Xianbei, Turks are a tribe originally from the Mongolian steppes. Both of them are recorded as branches of the Huns in historical sources.[70] While their exact origins are still uncertain, they share similar nomadic cultural customs as other Inner Asian tribes. Both of them have the belief in Tängri (heaven) and speak Altaic languages. Probably because of their similar

[69] "表为茔，立屋，中图画死者形仪，及其生时所战阵状," Li Yanshou 李延寿, *Beishi* 北史, Juan 99, "Tujue zhuan" 突厥傳, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2000), 2183.

[70] "和帝永元中，大将军窦宪遣右校尉耿夔击破匈奴，北单于逃走，鲜卑因此转徙据其地。匈奴余种留者尚有十余万落，皆自号鲜卑，鲜卑由此渐盛." Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, Juan 90, "Wuhuan Xianbei Zhuan" 乌桓鲜卑传, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 2986; "突厥者，其先居西海之右，盖匈奴之别种也。姓阿史那氏," *Bei Shi*, Juan 99, 2181.

languages, some scholars even regard the Xianbei people as Turks.[71] Considering their similar background, it is possible that the Xianbei people originally had a similar custom of funerary portrait making as the Turks.

Moreover, the royal family of the Northern Wei performed distinctive divination rituals related to images. Several entries in *Wei Shu* and *Bei Shi* record that when a concubine of the emperor was elected queen, she should make a golden statue herself. If she successfully created the sculpture, she could become the queen; If failed, she could not be made one.[72] According to the events recorded in historical sources, this ritual was carefully observed and conducted. Sometimes even though the lady was proclaimed to be the queen, failing to make the image would lead to the election's annulment. For example, Empress Xuanmu 宣穆皇后 was initially a concubine of Emperor Daowu, Tuoba Gui. She gave birth to Princess Huayin and the future emperor, Tuoba Si (拓跋嗣 Emperor Mingyuan 明元帝 r. 409－423 CE). She was in charge of the internal affairs of the royal family and received the emperor's blessing. When she was elected the queen, Empress Xuanmu failed to make the golden image. Consequently, the election was canceled. After her son became the emperor, she was ordered to take her life in accordance with the Northern Wei regulation and was conferred the posthumous title, Empress Xuanwu.[73] These rituals vividly demonstrate that the Tuoba-Xianbeis attached a lot of importance to icon-making.

Besides, historical records indicate that the rulers of the Northern Wei were very enthusiastic about deity worship. As recorded in *Wei Shu*, they not only continued the Han tradition of ancestral worship in the imperial ancestral temple but also offered

[71] For the discussion of their languages, see Juha Janhunen, T*he Mongolic Languages*, Routledge Language Family Series; 5. (London: Routledge, 2003), 393.
[72] Wei Shou 魏收, *Wei Shu* 魏書, Juan 13, "Huanghou Liezhuan Diyi" 皇后列傳第一 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 321 and 325; *Bei Shi*, Juan 13, "Liezhuan Diyi Houfei Shang" 列傳第一 后妃上, 322.
[73] "道武宣穆皇后刘氏，刘眷女也。登国初，纳为夫人，生华阴公主，后生明元。后专理内事，宠待有加，以铸金人不成，故不登后位." *Wei Shu*, Juan 13, "Huanghou Liezhuan Diyi" 皇后列傳第一, 325.

sacrifices to many other gods. In 412 CE, when Emperor Mingyuan established the imperial ancestral temple on Baideng mountain, "mountain gods" were also elected aside the temples and would have been worshiped when there was a drought and the book recorded that "it was usually effective."[74] Emperor Mingyuan established another ancestral temple in the palace, constructed 28 temples dedicated to gods of heaven, sun, moon, and other lesser deities, and frequently offered sacrifices to them.[75] After two years, the emperor ordered more ancestral temples to be constructed in the west of Baideng mountain and installed "heavenly gods" on either side of the temples. He continued to offer sacrifices to the ancestors and gods frequently.[76] In 472 CE, officers reported to Emperor Xiaowen that 1075 temples had been built for the gods, and 75500 livestock were sacrificed each year.[77] Many of these records about deity worship were documented in *Wei Shu*, and thus lead to a question: were there icons of these deities erected in or around the temples? While the records did not mention if any images of these gods were made, considering the Tuoba-Xianbeis' specific attention paid to icons in the abovementioned divination ritual, it is possible icons of these gods may have been placed in the gods' temples or aside the ancestral temples.

Historical records indicate that before Emperor Xiaowen's vigorous Sinicization reform in the late 5th century, the Northern Wei rulers conducted both their native nomadic and Han rituals of Heaven worship together. As mentioned above, they worshipped the Tängri like other tribes in Inner Asia did. In this ritual, they would

[74] "明年，立太祖庙于白登山。岁一祭，具太牢，帝亲之，亦无常月。兼祀皇天上帝，以山神配，旱则祷之，多有效." *Wei Shu*, Juan 181, "Lizhisi Zhiyi Dishi" 礼志四之一 第十, 2736.
[75] "又立太祖别庙于宫中，岁四祭，用牛马羊各一。又加置天日月之神及诸小神二十八所于宫内，岁二祭，各用羊一." Ibid, 2736.
[76] "后二年，于白登西，太祖旧游之处，立昭成、献明、太祖庙，常以九月、十月之交，帝亲祭，牲用马、牛、羊，及亲行貙刘之礼。别置天神等二十三于庙左右，其神大者以马，小者以羊." Ibid., 2737.
[77] "高祖延興二年，有司奏天地五郊、社稷已下及諸神，合一千七十五所，歲用牲七萬五千五百" Ibid, 2740.

face west, which was considered the sacred directions of gods, to offer sacrifices to heaven on a square altar located in the west suburbs, and a female shaman would beat a drum to conduct the ceremony.[78] This ritual is different from the Han tradition of worshiping heaven, in which the ceremony was conducted on a round altar in the south suburbs, and the worshippers would face north. When Tuoba Gui proclaimed himself as "Huangdi," the Chinese emperors' title, and established his state Wei with Pingcheng as the capital, he seemed to alternate between the nomadic and Chinese traditions of Heaven worship. In other words, he conducted Heaven worship rituals in both traditions.[79] In 492 CE, two years before Emperor Xiaowen moved his capital to Luoyang and decisively performed only the Han rituals. Envoys from Jiankang described the emperor as still making sacrifices to Tängri at Pingcheng, and expressed their surprise at the emperor wearing Xianbei clothes and riding a horse around the altar, which were all unfamiliar customs to the envoys.[80]

As a result, the above-mentioned evidence indicates that at least before the capital was moved to Luoyang in the late 5th century, the Northern Wei still performed very different rituals than the previous Han regimes. While they also performed the Han rituals, their interests in icon worship and shamanism dominated the state's ritual practices in the Pingcheng period.

### 3.2 Visual Landscape

With this specific preference for icons and worship practices in Xianbei rituals, many imperial and secular-funded art projects started in the Northern dynasties, especially ones related to Buddhism. These practices transformed the visual landscape

[78] Ibid, 2736.
[79] In 398 CE, Tuoba Gui made sacrifice to Tängri at his enthronement; then following the advice of Chinese secretaries, he offered sacrifice to the Chinese god — Tian — in traditional Chinese manner; in 405 CE, he worshiped Tängri once again. Ibid, 2734-2736.
[80] Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯, *Nanqi Shu* 南齊書, Juan 57, "Weilu Zhuan" 魏虜傳, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996), 991.

of north China between the 5th and 6th centuries. According to the records in the "Shilao Zhi" 釋老志 chapter in *Wei Shu*, the critical records of the official Buddhist and Taoist activities of the Northern Wei, the first three rulers of the Northern Wei based in Pingcheng, including Emperor Taiwu (太武帝 r. 424－452 CE) who conducted the proscription of Buddhism in 444 CE, were all supporters of Buddhism. They ordered construction of many Buddhist edifices in Pingcheng, including temples, pagodas, and monasteries.[81]

In the middle of the 5th century, artistic production was largely stimulated by artisans' arrival from different geographic locales. During the first half of the 5th century, the Northern Wei have conquered many important cultural centers in north China, and systemically forced local people to move to Pingcheng.[82] Among the many people who relocated from the newly conquered lands were the artisans originally engaged in local art production. In 439 CE, Emperor Taiwu took the Northern Liang (397 – 439 CE), which controlled the vital Buddhist and economic center, i.e., Dunhuang where many Buddhist cave-temples known as the Mogao caves were built. Many monks, nuns, and especially artisans who initially engaged in construction of Buddhist temples in Dunhuang were forcefully resettled in Pingcheng and its surrounding area, stimulating the spread of Buddhism and production of Buddhist art.[83] After conquering the Former Qin (350 – 394 CE), two thousand households of artisans from Qin's capital, Chang'an, were transported to Pingcheng in 446 CE.[84] Among them were the artisans who had previously worked on the construction of

[81] For the study of earliest Buddhist-art constructions of the Northern Wei, see Su Bai 宿白, "Pingcheng Shili De Jiju He 'Yungang Moshi' De Xingcheng Yu Fazhan" 平城實力的集聚和「雲岡模式」的形成與發展, in *Zhongguo Shiku Si Yanjiu* 中國石窟寺研究 (Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She, 1996), 122.
[82] For a complete study of the forceful immigration and the pillage, see Su Bai, "Pingcheng Shili De Jiju," 114-144.
[83] "凉州平，徙其国人于京邑，沙门佛事皆俱东，像教弥增矣。" *Wei Shu*, Juan 114, "Shilao Zhi" 釋老志，3032.
[84] "三月……徙長安城工巧二千家於京師." *Wei shu*, "shizu Ji Xia" 世祖紀下, 100.

Bingling Temple caves and Maiji Shan caves sponsored by the Former Qin rulers. In 469 CE, the Northern Wei conquered Qingzhou and Xuzhou (fig. 1.1), a cultural center initially controlled by the southern regime, the Liu-Song, and relocated local Buddhist masters, Han scholars and artists like Zhang Sengda 張僧達 and Jiang Shaoyou 蔣少遊 to the capital.[85]

A series of large-scale construction projects of Buddhist art sponsored by the royal household, aristocrats, and local communities ensued in following decades. They reached their peak in the late 5th and early 6th century. Despite Emperor Taiwu's fierce proscription of Buddhism (444 – 451 CE), constructing projects soon resumed after his death, due to the patronage of his grandson, Emperor Wencheng 文成帝. He sponsored a Buddhist monk Tanyao 曇曜 to build caves with huge icons in Yungang near Pingcheng in the 460s CE. The royal elites and aristocrats also continued to support the construction of Mogao caves, Bingling Temple caves, Maiji Shan caves in Gansu province among others. Soon after the capital was moved to Luoyang, construction of the Longmen caves near Luoyang was also sponsored by the royal household in the 500s CE. Many aristocrats and local communities followed the example and built more. Imperial elites and aristocrats were enthusiastically engaged in supporting Buddhist temples. According to *Memories of Loyang* (Luoyang Qielan Ji 洛陽伽藍記), a book written by Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 after visiting Luoyang in 547 CE, there were 1367 temples and monasteries in Luoyang, and most of them had been sponsored by aristocrats.[86] In these temples, many Buddhist images were preserved. On Buddha's birthday, ten thousand Buddha icons were moved out of

[85] Su Bai, "Pingcheng Shili De Jiju," 134.
[86] For the study of the Buddhist temples recorded in *Memories of Loyang*, see Hinako Ishimatsu 石松 日奈子, *Beiwei Fojiao Zaoxiang Shi Yanjiu* 北魏佛教造像史研究 (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2012), 128.

Yongning temple—the temple constructed by Empress Dowager Hu 胡太后 in 516 CE, and carried in a procession around the streets.[87] Moreover, many stone "image steles" dated from the 5th to 6th century can be found. These are usually rectangular stone slabs exhibiting iconic and devotional images. Due to fewer resources necessary compared to cave-temples, they were usually sponsored by common people and local sponsor groups called Yi associations.

### 3.3 The Fluidity of Icons

#### 3.3.1 Making Buddha as Political Persona

Among the newly royal-supported Buddhist activities, Buddha icons soon became the primary concern. This tendency had already existed when the Northern Wei was founded. Fa Guo 法果, the Buddhist monk that Tuoba Gui appointed as the leader of Buddhist activities, claimed that "the emperor is wise and loves Buddhism. He is the contemporary Buddha, and we Buddhists should worship him." He further explained his claim: "The one who can spread Buddhism is the leader of people. (When I worship him) I am not worshiping the son of heaven (the emperor); I am worshiping Buddha."[88] With this propaganda, many imperial projects where Buddha icons were made with the emperor's appearance ensued during the reign of Emperor Wencheng (r. 452－465 CE). In 452 CE, Emperor Wencheng ordered an icon of Buddha to be made with his appearance.[89] In 454 CE, he commissioned five golden Buddha statues to represent the first five Northern Wei rulers starting from Emperor Taiwu and ending with him.

While these icons do not survive, Tanyao Five caves in Yungang provide us with

[87] Ibid, 129.
[88] "法果每言，太祖明叡好道，即是當今如來，沙門宜應盡禮，遂常致拜。謂人曰：'能鴻道者人主也，我非拜天子，乃是禮佛耳.'" *Wei Shu*, "Shilao Zhi," 3031.
[89] "詔有司為石像，令如帝身。既成，顏上足下，各有黑石，冥同帝體上下黑子。" Ibid, 3036.

a glimpse of Emperor Wencheng's ambition to make Buddha his personal icon. Just 16 miles west of Pingcheng, Tanyao Five caves (Caves 16-20) constructed in 460 – 465 CE are the earliest caves in the Yungang cave complex, and were sponsored by Emperor Wencheng. Different from Mogao caves, where the caves' decoration combines mural paintings, clay statues, and architectural forms, they are simply hollowed out spaces with rooms to enclose the colossal statues of Buddha. Take Cave 20 (fig. 3.1) as an example. The Buddha statue in the cave is 13.7 meters high. He sits in a cross-legged position in a full-frontal view. He has a rounded square face with apparent facial features, including a high nose and long ears. His monastic robe fully covers his left and partially covers his right shoulder, which is a "western-style" robe. He was originally flanked by two attendant Buddhas, but only one of them survived into the present day. A large mandora decorated with flames and small Buddhas is carved in reliefs on the wall behind the colossal Buddha statue.

What should be noted here is the intention behind the cave construction. The cave was originally covered with a front wall, which has collapsed, and the icons occupied about two-thirds of its space, which can be seen in the floor plan of the five caves (fig. 3.2). It is clear that the icons in Yungang caves were of major concern to the royal patrons.[90] In fact, they are more like "memorial portraits" of the imperial family members rather than religious icons. Considering the above-mentioned five golden Buddhas created to commemorate the five emperors commissioned by Emperor Wencheng, it is quite likely that Emperor Wencheng would have had similar intentions in making these five large icons. Some scholars even contended that Tanyao Five Buddhas were constructed after the image of Northern Wei rulers.[91]

[90] This concern has been pointed out by Wu hung. See Wu Hung, "Art and Visual Culture," in *The Six Dynasties, 220-589*, 678.
[91] Omura Seigai 大村西崖, *Zhina Meishu Shi* 支那美術史 彫塑篇 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1972), 188; cited in Su Bai, "Pingcheng Shili De Jiju," 126.

However, it is unlikely that Tanyao Five Buddhas were carved based on real peoples' appearances since Buddha icons usually strictly follow specific rules. If one compares the five Buddhas' faces, one will find they all have a similar wedged-shape high nose, arching eyebrows, half-opened eyes, and long ears (fig. 3.3-4). Thus, they do not bear individual characteristics of any real person. However, what matters here is that these described events indicate a strong sense of desire to make connection between the image of rulers and that of the Buddha, thereby giving the Buddha icon a touch of social and political hue. Evidently, the idea that an existing ruler may be personified as a religious icon and be venerated in specific space was cultivated in this period.

### 3.3.2 Variegated Compositions of the Frontal Icon

During and, especially, after the construction of the Tanyao Five caves, the popularity of Buddhist icons led to a wide circulation of the frontal and iconic pose in the late 5th and 6$^{th}$ centuries. Thus, a fluidity of composition of frontal icons in mortuary and religious space can be seen in this period. A composition where the Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or two Buddhas sit frontally under a roof and are flanked by attendants on either side dominated the depictions in many Buddhist niches, paintings, or steles in this period. Many carved, sculpted, or painted examples can be seen in cave-temples (fig. 3.5-7) and popular image steles (fig. 3.8-9). They share similar features with the tomb portraits such as the frontal position of the icon with attendants on two sides or showing the façade of an architectural structure decorated with curtains.

Specifically, the tomb portraits in Yunboli tomb bear many similar features to the Buddhist icons in the niches of Yungang caves and the mural paintings in Mogao caves. As illustrated by the example in Yungang cave 5 (fig. 3.5), the Buddha icon carved in niches is separated from the attendants by architectural frames. Similarly,

the tomb portraits in Yunboli tomb (fig. 3.11) are also enclosed in architectural structures, separated from the servants standing on the sides. In the case of Yungang cave 10 (fig. 3.6), the frontal Buddha is enshrined in an architectural-form niche and is surrounded by disciples; the disciples are distributed in rows like the servants near the tomb occupant in Yunboli tomb. In these cases, the iconic function of the portraits or the icons is obvious since the figures surrounding them are either engaged in serving or worshiping them. In this compositional scheme, the portraits or icons are isolated as single entities in the center of the space, and the design of these images is strongly hierarchical and symmetrical. In addition, similar ways in depicting the dense draperies of the robes worn by the male tomb occupant and the white robe of the Buddha painted in Mogao cave 254 (fig. 3.7) also indicate the mutual borrowings between painted portraits and Buddhist icons. What should be further noted is that both Yungang caves and Yunboli tomb are located in Datong and dated to the second half of the 5th century. Therefore, the ways of making iconic images are present in both mortuary and religious spaces in north China during this time period, especially around the capital Pingcheng.

Noteworthily, the mortuary portraits and Buddhist images were also combined and appropriated in other religious images — Taoist and Buddho-Taoist steles — circulated in the late 5th and 6th century. In the former, Laozi replaced Buddha as the main icon; in the latter, Laozi's icon was carved on one side, and the Buddha icon on another.[92] Thus, the connections between the icons of Laozi and Buddha in these steles are clear. Strikingly, Laozi (fig. 3.12-3.14a) is also represented as an officer or sage holding the fly whisk in one hand and sometimes resting the other hand on a small table in a convention resembling the tomb portraits from the Pingcheng period.

[92] See Wu Hung, “Art and Visual Culture,” 683.

Take the stele dated to 517 CE found in Xi'an as an example. One side of the stele is carved with Laozi's icon sitting under a roof and flanked by two attendants (fig. 3.14a); another side is carved with the Buddha icon in the same composition (fig. 3.14b). The features of the Laozi's icon (fig. 3.14c), like his raised right hand, his left hand resting on his crossed legs, and his uncovered bare right foot, all indicate the connections between his image and the Buddha icon carved on the opposite side of the stele. However, Laozi's face (fig. 3.14d) is also similar to the frontal tomb portraits produced between the 2nd and the 5th centuries. Comparing it to the well-preserved portrait of Dong Shou (fig. 3.15), one will find that they both have elongated faces, continuous lines linking arching eyebrows and noses, and a beard. Furthermore, both Laozi's and Dong Shou's right hands hold a fly whisk. The way in which their hands are posed is also similar: they lift their right hands to the chest and rest their left hands near the legs. These poses are also common in other tomb portraits from the Pingcheng period, as demonstrated in the second chapter. By indicating the connections between them, I do not mean that Laozi's icon is more similar to the frontal image of either Buddha or the tomb's occupants. In fact, it reinforces the fluidity of the iconic frontal images during the 5th and 6th centuries between religious and mortuary spaces.

It is also noteworthy that these steles were usually both mortuary and religious objects sponsored by local community members on behalf of their deceased relatives. Thus, they are not personal objects, but public monuments placed in temple yards, crossroads, or in open ground.[93] They further contributed to widespread circulation of the iconic compositions in this period. Therefore, within this specific milieu filled with iconic images in the Northern dynasties, it is not hard to understand why the

[93] See Wu, ibid.

frontal tomb portraits so persistently appeared in the mortuary space. It should be noted that, by pointing out this similarity, I do not mean that the iconic portraits in the mortuary space would be truly worshiped as the icon in the public religious space. This is because, except for the cases of the family tombs in the Eastern Han and the late Song dynasty (in the 12th century), in which the tombs could be reopened and the rituals of ancestral worship could be conducted in the tombs,[94] most early and medieval tombs were not intended to be opened once they were closed. Nevertheless, because the imperial figures and the aristocrats in the Northern dynasties were both the constructors of the tombs and the supporters of Buddhist arts, it is possible that similar conceptions of icon-making would be applied in the design of the religious and mortuary space.

### 3.4 Transformation of Space

While the limited number of mural paintings in tombs surviving from the Luoyang period hinders this study, the religious spaces of this period provide clues about how the tomb portrait became the tomb's absolute center and how the mode of representing life-sized figures facing the physical space found its way into the Northern Qi tombs. Similar to the tomb murals of the Pingcheng period, the paintings and sculptures attached to the wall of the cave-temples in the second half of the 5th century were divided into layers. Besides, the caves were embedded with multiple iconic centers. It was not until the early 6th century that a single focal point was formed in the religious space and large groups of life-size figures were placed against a complete wall in Buddhist spaces. And subsequently, the single visual center and life-size figures became dominant features in the Northern Qi tombs. In the following section, I will explore these changes.

[94] For the discussion of the cases of family tombs and the practice of ancestral worship in the tombs, see Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 30-31; and Jeehee Hong, "Changing Roles of the Tomb Portrait," 231-237.

Walls split into tiers to contain figures and various visual centers of icons in the Buddhist space can be seen in Yungang caves and Mogao caves dated to the second half of the 5th century. Take Yungang cave 5 and Mogao cave 254 as examples. Yungang cave 5 is an oval-shaped cave carved with a domed ceiling and an entrance and a window opening on the south wall (fig. 3.16). It was constructed with the largest Buddha on the north wall and two smaller attendant Buddhas placed on the east and west walls (fig. 3.17). Similar to Cave 20, these three colossal icons occupy two-thirds of the cave space. Distinctively, apart from the large icons, there are many small niches with single or double icons of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas filling the surface of the walls (fig. 3.18). Similar to the tomb murals of the Pingcheng period, the small icons are distributed neatly in layers. Thus, several large and small iconic centers are found in the cave. Many other caves in Yungang constructed during this period, like caves 9, 10, and 12, are filled with large and small Buddhist icons, despite the differences in the structure of the caves.

The visual program of Mogao cave 254 (fig. 3.19-21) is quite different from Yungang cave 5 because the organization of paintings and sculptures follows the architectural forms, yet similar multiple visual centers and rows of figures still dominate this cave. The cave is constructed in the shape of a Chinese wooden house with a ceiling imitating a timber frame structure, the entrance and a window opening on the east wall and a supporting pillar in the center. The paintings and sculptures are distributed symmetrically and orderly according to the structure of the "house". They form many small individual visual centers of icons, attracting and interacting with the viewers. The central pillar is constructed with niches on its four faces. The south and north walls are each constructed with five niches in the upper part (fig. 3.21). Each of the niches is enshrined with an icon of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Apart from the

niches, the four walls are further divided into different parts representing preaching paintings and the thousands Buddhas. Thus, each icon enshrined in the niches and painted in the preaching compositions forms their own visual center. The central pillar further divides the religious space into several smaller parts. To view or worship the icons, the viewers must have moved from one point to another to reach an ideal viewing position. This visual program can also be seen in other Mogao caves dated to this period, such as caves 251 and 257, which are both central-pillar caves and have multiple iconic centers. It is clear that this space was not designed to focus on a single focal point but contain various independent visual centers.

Therefore, the divisional features dominating the tomb murals in the Pingcheng period also exist in these caves. However, different from the tomb murals from the Pingcheng period, which are dominated by self-contained narratives, the walls of these caves are divided into different areas to contain diverse iconic centers to inspire the viewers' interactions.

A shift in the layout of Buddhist buildings in the Northern dynasties may have contributed to the formation of the single visual center of these caves. According to Fu Xinian's study, a major transformation of the focal point in Buddhist monasteries in China occurred during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, from the pagoda (the earliest form of Buddhist architecture introduced to China) to the Buddha Hall (the dominant Buddhist architectural form in China).[95] This period is critical for this shift because the nobilities' "donation of their houses and turning them into monasteries" 舍宅為寺 became popular in this period.[96] Therefore, Chinese residential structures framed the spatial layout of Buddhist architecture. Most importantly, in the Buddha

[95] Fu Xinian 傅熹年, "Zhongguo Zaoqi Fojiao Jianzhu Buju Yanbian Ji Diannei Xiangshe de Buzhi" 中国早期佛教建筑布局演变及殿内像设的布置, in *Fu Xinian Jianzhu Shi Lunwen Xuan* 傅熹年建筑史论文选, Tianjin: Baihua Wenyi Chuban She, 2009, 90.
[96] Ibid.

hall, a Buddhist shrine or simply a raised platform decorated with a Buddha icon was constructed at the rear part and was designed to face the hall's entrance. This structure thus formed an absolute visual center in the hall. As Fu noted, in the wooden pagoda, the earliest localized form of pagoda in China, a square pillar was usually placed in the center and few images could be placed on the four sides of the pillar due to the limited surface.[97] As indicated by the structure of Mogao cave 254, this layout would divide the space and form several visual focal points. In contrast, in the Buddha hall, more Buddhist images can be placed at the hall's rear part and the space in the front could accommodate a much larger audience. Furthermore, the hall constructed with a Buddhist shrine at the rear part was transformed from the imperial hall or aristocratic mansion installed with a seat prepared for the honorable figure, the emperor or the host, at the rear part.[98] Considering this background, I suggest that the icon or portrait enshrined in the main wall of a cave or tomb became the absolute center prepared for the honorable figures in the space.

Noteworthily, while these monasteries ceased to exist, in the first half of the 6th century, not only did Buddha-hall-type caves start to appear in Longmen, but also life-size groups of sculptures were introduced in the caves. Examples can be seen in the central Binyang cave (fig. 3.22). Started in 505 CE and taking 24 years of construction, the central Binyang cave is one of the first three caves sponsored by the imperial family after the capital was moved to Luoyang. The cave is almost rectangular measuring 11. 4 meters in width and 9. 85 meters in depth. It has a domed ceiling, and an entrance opening on the east wall. Unlike the enormous icons in Yungang caves, the sculptures in this cave are much smaller in size. However, their number is much greater. The cave contains eleven sculptures, each of them about five

[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid, 92-93.

to eight meters high, with the largest Buddha icon measuring 8.42 meters. The main, west wall is decorated with five sculptures: a Buddha sitting cross-legged in the center, two attendant Bodhisattvas on either side, and two disciples standing in the back. Based on the previous observations, this can be seen as the visual center of a "Buddha hall." The north and south walls are symmetrically decorated with three sculptures each: a standing Buddha in the center and two attendant Bodhisattvas on either side. What is noteworthy here is that other images carved on the walls of this cave, in contrast to the large round sculptures, are carved in low relief (3.23-24) and thus recede into the wall. The type of small hollowed niches enshrined with icons that were featured in the abovementioned caves is not found in the central Binyang cave, which means the wall was no longer divided to form various visual centers. Moreover, unlike the large icons in Yungang caves, the sculptures here tend to be close to life-size. Thus, the visual experience created in this cave is different from the caves mentioned above. When the viewers enter the cave, they face a group of sculptures surrounding and gazing at them, which is very similar to the experience that the painted figures in Xu's tomb provide. Similar to the groups of life-size figures in Xu's tomb, these sculptures convey a strong sense of a physical encounter between the viewers and the deities. It can thus be said that the image-makers' interest in creating a kind of virtual space through expected interaction between the life-size figures and hypothetical viewers existed in both religious and funerary spaces.

While the link between the paintings and sculptures might be unexpected for a modern audience since the contemporary categories of art are usually defined by artistic mediums, it was not the case in China during the 5$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$ centuries. In this period, local Buddhist art production was still at its early stage and paintings, reliefs, and sculptures tended to be combined in one religious space. Yudong Wang's study

about relief and its relationship with other mediums in this period provides us with some clues for understanding the connections between different mediums. Wang noted that relief, as a medium between painting and sculpture, partly confined by the wall and partly independent, is critical to understanding the design of the artworks in the 5th and 6th centuries.[99] Specifically, since a relief is always confined by the wall, placing the figures against a uniform background is the nature of relief and this nature is shared by most of Buddhist artworks in this period even though the artworks are not relief. In addition, like the painted figures, the sculpted ones were originally colored, blurring the boundaries of paintings and sculptures. Examples can be seen in a stone stele found in Sichuan (fig. 3.23) and Mogao Cave 257 in Dunhuang (fig. 3.24). In the former case, incised figures and round sculptures were carved from the same stone and thus shared the same background. In the latter, rather than being carved out of the wall, a Buddha sculpture made of clay was placed in front of the wall, and clothes and jewelry were painted on the surface of the sculpture.[100] This combined artistic treatment of the works indicates a fluidity in understanding of different mediums in this period. In the case of the central Binyang cave, the semi-isolated sculptural and low-relief figures carved against the same background (3.23) and the limited traces of color on them (3.24) indicate that they should not be understood as two separate entities, i.e., sculpture and relief, but as parts of a synthetic artistic project on a wall, similar to the murals in Xu's tomb.

### 3.5 The Combination of Group Figures and Central Icon

There is another outstanding quality of the painted figures in Xu Xianxiu's tomb that seems to have emerged in the early 6th century: the groups of overlapping figures which recede in continuous space. By having the figures in the front block parts of the

[99] Yudong Wang, "The Relief Problem: Some Notes from an Art Historian" *Ars Orientalis* 48 (2018): 166–179.
[100] For the discussion on the two works, see Wang, ibid, 166-170.

figures standing behind, the painter created a convincing impression of receding space. In contemporary examples, such groups are usually represented with one or two prominent figures flanked by a group of attendants. Examples of this composition are abundant in the early 6th century. In Longmen and Gongxian caves, it is used to represent the donors on the wall (fig. 2.27-29). On stone sarcophagi, groups of figures appear in such overlapping manners as the representations of the tomb's occupants or in filial piety scenes (fig. 3.30). In mural paintings, they are used to represent funerary portraits (fig. 3.31). For the sake of the discussion, I shall call these images "compositions of donors or noblemen." In the following section, I attempt to compare it with Xu's tomb murals to reconstruct the formation of the mural design in the Yecheng period.

Two issues concerning the abovementioned images should be noted. First, judging by their similar compositions, some prototypes might have been disseminated and circulated in this period. The figures are usually dressed in long and loose robes with wide sleeves. The figures are shown in three-quarter view and walk towards the same direction. The main figures reach out their hands to let the attendants on both sides hold them. Similarities of these images with the renowned figure painting, *The Nymph of the Luo River* (fig. 3.32), attributed to Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之, the famous Chinese painter active in the 4th century in Jiankang, the capital of the Eastern Jin, have attracted the attention of many art historians. As Jiankang was the capital of the successive southern states, the prevalence of this pictorial model in northern China in the early 6th century is suggestive of the artistic interactions between the southern and the northern states in this period. When the Northern Wei gained control of the southern cities, Qingzhou and Xuzhou, and Emperor Xiaowen conducted Sinicization reforms in the late 5th century, the Northern Wei ruling class had the chance to come

in close contact with the visual culture of the south. In this background, it is not surprising that this pictorial model would have been transmitted to and favored in north China. Admittedly, the “transmission” from the south is only one of the hypotheses about the origins of these compositions. But the mode’s abundant emergence in the north and south is strong evidence of its popularity in 6th-century China.

Second, it is more important to emphasize the similarities and differences between the “compositions of donors or noblemen” and the murals in the Northern Qi tombs. They share the following features: the figures overlap in the pictorial plane and they turn their heads in different directions to create dynamism. These features are more evident in the images of the Emperor and Empress worshiping the Buddha in the central Bingyang cave (fig. 3.27). In each image, even though the figures are generally headed in the same direction, some of them face the opposite direction from the procession, creating dynamic movements. As discussed in the first chapter, this multiplicity in orientation can also be seen in Xu's tomb's murals. Some differences between them are further noteworthy. The mural paintings in the Northern Qi tombs share a symmetrical and centralized composition, life-size figures, and a strong sense of interaction with the hypothetical viewers. The “composition of donors or noblemen” is dominated by a single-direction oriented composition on the horizontal plane resembling the handscroll, and small figures moving in three-quarter view. No life-size figures interacting with the viewers in the physical space can be found in these images.

A subtle yet significant feature visible in the central Bingyang cave may indicate a combination of the life-size sculptures in a religious space with the pictorial composition of large groups of overlapping figures. The famous reliefs of Emperor

and Empress Worshiping Buddha (fig. 3.27) were originally located on either side of the east wall in the central Bingyang cave. Therefore, they coexisted with the group of the in-the-round sculptures in the same cave. By pointing out their juxtaposition in the cave, I do not mean that the central Binyang cave is a prototype on which the designs of mural paintings in the Northern Qi tombs rely. Instead, it should be noted that both of these visual designs were prevalent in the early 6th century, and their juxtaposition in the cave is an evidence of their popularity. Thus, it is not surprising that the combination of the two modes would continue to exist in the mortuary spaces in the following decades. The pictorial program of the mortuary mural paintings can be seen as a consequence of such combination.

I will use two examples to conclude the current study. One is a preaching scene accompanying an inscription, dated to 524 CE and commemorating construction of a pagoda (fig. 3.33); the other is mural paintings in Princess Ruru's tomb (fig. 3.34-3.35). The former represents a symmetrical, centralized, and hierarchical composition, in which Buddha sits in frontal view in the center with other figures surrounding him on both sides. A combination of the two modes discussed above is visible in this image. Like the above-mentioned "compositions of donors or noblemen," the figures on the two sides are not arranged in neat rows to prevent overlapping; instead, figures standing in the front block the bodies of the figures standing behind them. They do not face to the same direction, however; rather, most of them face to the physical space or the central Buddha. Most importantly, this symmetrical image resembles the main wall in Xu's tomb (fig. 1.10). In the tomb painting, the tomb occupants sit on a platform and are flanked by two standing servants distanced from other figures, and the figures standing in the back face different directions. Similarly, in this image, the Bodhisattvas standing on either side of the Buddha are slightly distanced from other

figures. The disciples depicted in the back also face different directions. Thus, both the main wall of Xu's tomb and this image depict a static and symmetrical group of figures facing towards the physical space.

Large groups of frontal figures can also be seen in the earliest known example of the tomb built after the capital relocated at Yecheng —Princess Ruru's tomb. Because its mural decoration shows some differences from the Yecheng model, Bonnie Cheng has regarded this as an early experiment of the design characteristic of the Northern Qi tombs.[101] The east and west walls are not decorated with ox-cart or horse but adorned by standing female and male attendants on each wall. Princess Ruru is depicted on the north wall, not sitting on a platform, but standing with female attendants. Despite the princess's nomadic ethnic identity, the figures in these paintings are all dressed in Han-Chinese robes with wide sleeves, which resembles the large group of figures dressed in long robes in the "compositions of donors or noblemen." But unlike in these popular compositions, figures in the burial chamber in Princess Ruru's tomb are not depicted in profile, nor do they move forward in one direction. They are life-size, shown in frontal view, staring into the physical space like the sculptures in the central Binyang cave.

These examples demonstrate that the pictorial program in the Northern Qi tombs were full of combinations and innovations. It was within these fluid cultural boundaries of the Northern dynasties that the visual culture in north China was transformed, and a new form of funerary space was shaped in this specific milieu. With the preference for icons in the Northern Wei ritual context and the diverse practices in image-making brought by Buddhist and Han traditional art, a new funerary space with centralized tomb portraits became characteristic of the late-6th-

[101] Bonnie Cheng, "Fashioning a Political Body: The Tomb of a Rouran Princess." *Archives of Asian Art* 57 (2007), 46.

century tombs in north China.

## Conclusion

In the first chapter, I chose Xu Xianxiu's tomb as an example to illustrate the tomb portraits and the conditions of the late-6$^{th}$ century tombs in north China. By hypothetically reconstructing the contemporary viewers' visual experience of the tomb, I examined how the figures painted on the passage walls were designed to interact with the imaginary viewers and lead them to enter the burial chamber. I also explored how the imposing groups of life-size figures in the burial chamber emphasize the existence of the central, symmetrical, and hierarchical group in front of the viewers. Thus, the imagined viewers were led to focus on the images of the tomb occupants painted in the center and invited to engage in the service and veneration of the deceased. By analyzing the faces in the tomb portraits, painted figures, and figurines in Xu Xianxiu's tomb and other Northern Qi tombs, I further demonstrated that even though individualized faces were achievable in paintings and sculptures of this period, their distinct appearance was meant to be functional. Thus, the portrait was not an individualized representation of the Xu couple but was something drawn from a repertoire of generic faces, which were adjusted to serve as formal portraits to the audience. This observation raised questions about why the tomb portraits were important if they did not truly replicate the deceased's appearance and how they became the focal point in tombs.

In the second chapter, I systematically examined the tombs and tomb portraits of the Northern dynasties from the Shengle to the Yecheng period, reconstructing the transformation process that the tomb portraits and mural designs underwent at that time. In the Shengle period, the Xianbei aristocrats constructed unpainted tombs. The tombs decorated with murals and tomb portraits appeared in the Pingcheng period.

Even though both types of representation of the deceased, i.e., iconic and aniconic, existed already in the Eastern Han, tomb portraits became a significant component of the tombs' decoration in the Pingcheng period and were developed in different mediums. By exploring the origins of tomb portraiture, I examined their iconic function in the tomb. Then, by analyzing Poduoluo's tomb, I found small attendant figures with the same faces were distributed one next to another within the pictorial frames. These figures were depicted in a non-engaging manner with the physical space but exist in the narrative world illustrating the deceased's ideal afterlife. The remaining murals in Wang Wen's tomb suggest that the life-size figures in murals appeared in the Luoyang period. In the Yecheng period, the so-called "Yecheng model" emerged in the decoration of the Northern Qi tombs and large groups of life-size figures centering the tomb portraits appeared. By studying these periods' tombs, I found that the mural paintings underwent a significant change in spatial focus from the Pingcheng to the Yecheng period. The role of attendant figures shifted from engaging in narrative scenes to emphasizing their engagement with the physical space.

In the third chapter, an analysis of the visual culture of the Northern dynasties allowed me to explain how these changes came about. By uncovering the ritual contexts of the early Northern Wei, I demonstrated that the Northern Wei ruling class had particular interests in image-making in their ritual contexts, and that icon worship was common in this period. While further exploring the diverse visual culture of this period, I found that, with the specific concerns of icon worship in the early Northern Wei, a strong intention to commemorate and venerate individuals like icons ensued in the second half of the 5th century. Stimulated by vigorous production of religious art, active borrowings between religious and mortuary icons occurred.

Then, by studying the Northern dynasties religious space, I explained how the single visual center and the sense of the painted figures' presence were created in the Northern Qi tombs. I found that the feature of dividing the figures into rows seen in the tomb murals of the Pingcheng period had existed in cave-temples created in the second half of the 5th century. But while this feature was dominant in the Pingcheng-period tomb murals, the multiple visual centers dominated the cave-temples in this period. In the early 6th century, the space in and around Buddhist architecture was transformed. The Buddha hall, constructed with a Buddhist shrine as the single center at the rear part, became a dominant type of structure for Buddhist architectural space in this period. Within this context, groups of life-size sculptures with a single iconic center appeared in Longmen caves. They surrounded viewers, creating a strong sense of encounter between worshipers and the deities in the physical space. Finally, their centralized and symmetrical compositions and life-size figures were combined with the "compositions of donors and noblemen." As a result, the images of figures composed to give a convincing impression of continuous, receding space, and tomb portraits as a single visual point appeared in the religious and mortuary images. It was in this context that a new type of space centered on the tomb portraits became the dominant feature in the late 6th century tombs in north China.

# APPENDIX

## Northern and Southern Dynasties

| Northern dynasties | | | Southern Dynasties | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of the dynasty** | **Dates** | **Capital** | **Name of the dynasty** | **Dates** | **Capital** |
| Northern Wei | 386-534 | Shengle (386-398) | | | |
| | | Pingcheng (398-494) | Liu-Song | 420-479 | Jiankang |
| | | Luoyang (494-534) | Southern Qi | 479-502 | Jiankang |
| Eastern Wei | 534-550 | Yecheng | Liang | 502-557 | Jiankang |
| Western Wei | 535-557 | Chang'an | | | |
| Northern Qi | 550-577 | Yecheng | Chen | 557-589 | Jiankang |
| Northern Zhou | 557-581 | Chang'an | | | |

## FIGURES

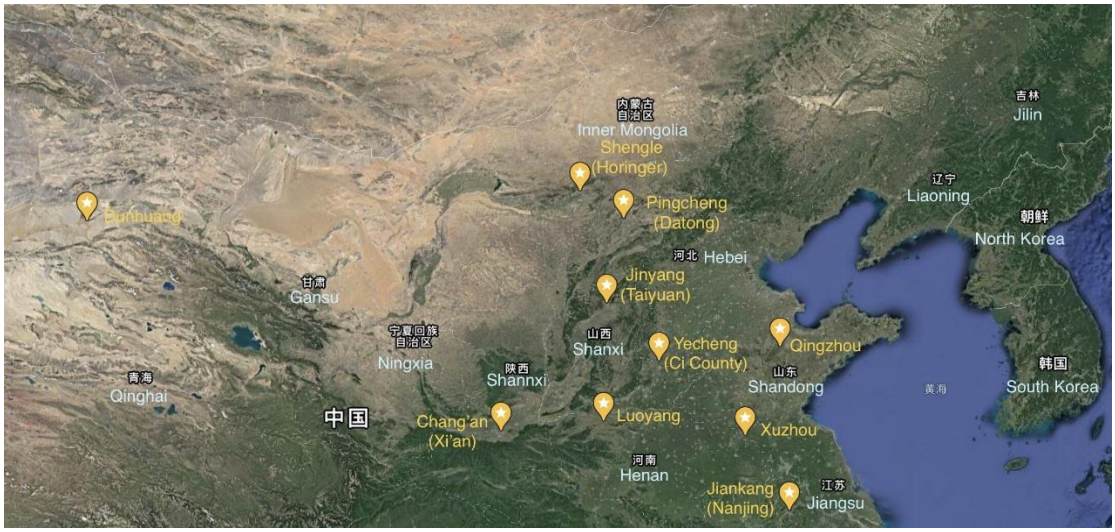


Fig. 1.1 Map of North China and Korean Peninsula, with significant sites of the period, marked by the author from Google map.


Fig. 1.2 Plan of Xu Xianxiu's tomb, Taiyuan, Shanxi province, 571 CE. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," *Wenwu* 2003. 10, fig. 3)


Fig. 1.3 Passageway of Xu Xianxiu's tomb, photo taken from the south end. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu*, Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She 2005, Pl. 1)


Fig. 1.4 The middle part of the procession scene, painted on the west wall of the Passageway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Beijing: Kexue Chuanban She, 2011, Pl. 74)


Fig. 1.5 The rear part of the procession scene, painted on the west wall of the Passageway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 76)


Fig. 1.6 Guard figures painted on the east side of the entryway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 8)


Fig. 1.7 Murals in the burial chamber, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 5)

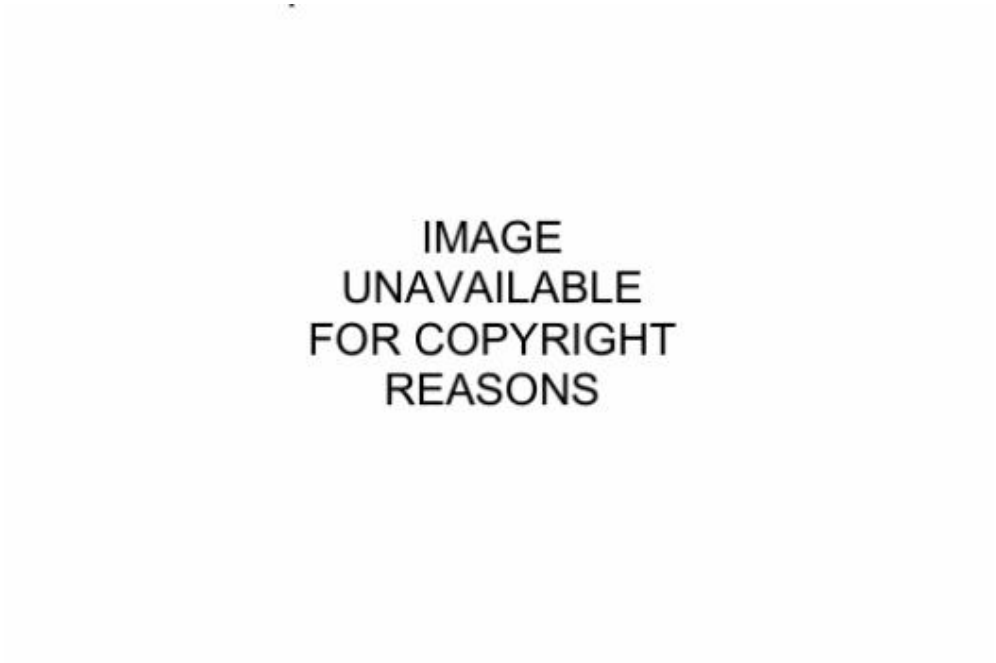


Fig. 1.8 West wall of the burial chamber, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 84)

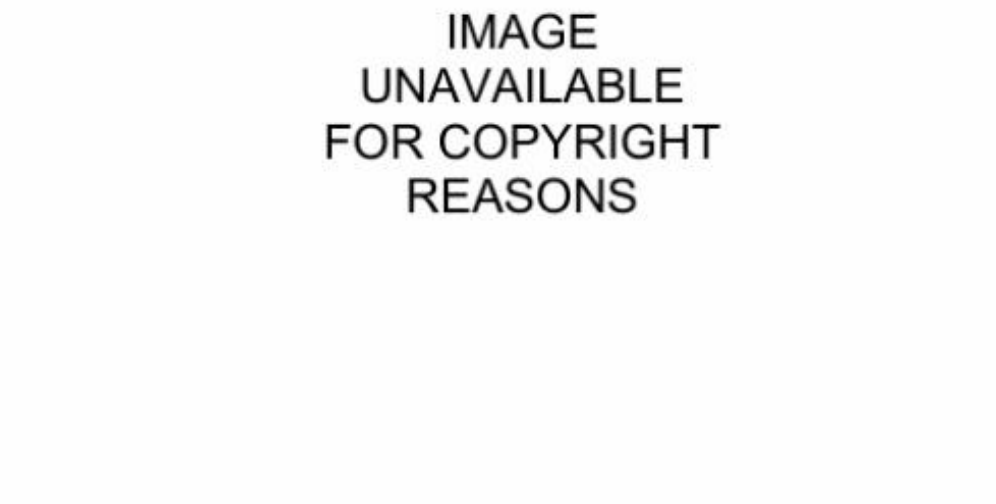


Fig. 1.9 East wall of the burial chamber, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 86)


Fig. 1.10 North wall of the burial chamber, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 80)


Fig. 1.11 Riderless Horse surrounded by figures depicted in frontal views, west wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 85)


Fig. 1.12 Tomb portraits of Xu Xianxiu and his wife, north wall of the burial chamber, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 82)

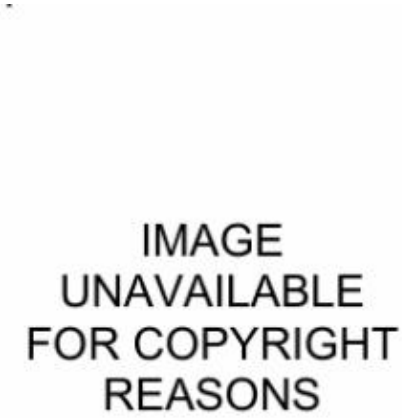


Fig. 1.13 Plan of Mawangdui Tomb 1 at Changsha, Hunan. Western Han, early 2nd century BCE. An empty seat framed with a screen at the back and placed with vessels and figurines of musicians in front was found in the north casket. (After *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs*, London: Reaktion Books, 2011, fig. 59)


Fig. 1.14 A spirit seat in Tomb 133 at Foyemiaowan near Dunhuang, Gansu. Western Jin, 3rd century. (After *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 2011, fig. 63)


Fig. 1.15a Face of Xu Xianxiu, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 16)
Fig. 1.15b A musician standing on the east side of the north wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 80)
Fig. 15c A groom on the west wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl 32)
Fig. 15d A honor guard on the west wall of the passage, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. ((After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 76)

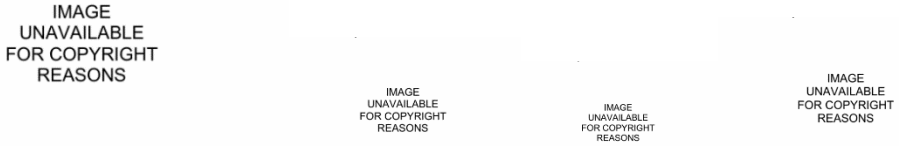


Fig. 16a Face of Xu Xianxiu's wife, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 17)
Fig. 16b A musician standing on the west side of the north wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 15)
Fig. 16c-d Attendants following the ox-cart, east wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 22)


Fig. 1.17 Faces of the honor guards painted on the west wall of the Passageway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 74)


Fig. 1.18 Faces of the attendants and musicians painted on the west side of the north wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 21)



Fig. 1.19 Honor guards painted on the west wall of the passageway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 2),
Fig. 1.20 Honor guards painted on the east wall of the passageway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 4)




Fig. 1.21 Face of the woman holding the canopy behind the horse, west wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 31)
Fig. 1.22 Face of a woman painted on the west wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 31)
Fig. 1.23 Face of a man painted on the entryway, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 6)




Fig. 1.24 Face of a foreign figure standing behind the ox, east wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 28)
Fig. 1.25 Face of a foreign figure standing behind the ox, east wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 22)
Fig. 1.26 Face of a foreign figure standing at the south end, east wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 22)




Fig. 1.27a Face of the figurine of a horse rider with braided hair, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 38)
Fig. 1.27b Figurine of a horse rider with braided hair, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 38)
Fig. 1.27c Back view of the figurine of a horse rider with braided hair, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu,* Pl. 39)




Fig. 1.28a-c Faces of guardian figurines, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 45, 47, 49)



Fig. 1.29a Front view of a guardian figurine, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 45)
Fig. 1.29b Back view of a guardian figurine, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 46)



Fig. 1.30a A warrior figurine guarding the tomb, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 37)
Fig. 1.30b Face of the warrior figurine guarding the tomb, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After "Taiyuan Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 37)




Fig. 1.31 Tomb portrait of Xu Xianxiu, north wall, Xu Xianxiu's tomb. (After *Beiqi Xu Xianxiu Mu*, Pl. 16)
Fig. 1.32 Tomb portrait of Gao Run, north wall, Gao Run's tomb, Ci county, Hebei province, 576 CE. (After *Hebei Gudai Muzang Bihua*, Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She, 2000, Pl. 50)
Fig. 1.33 Tomb portrait of the man with a given name called Daogui, north wall, Daogui's tomb, Jinan, Shandong Province, 571 CE. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 4, Pl. 68)



Fig. 2.1 Plan of a vertical-pit tomb found in the Xianbei cemetery of Chenwugou, Ulanqab, Inner Mongolia, dated to the late 4th century. (After "Huade Xian Chenwugou Xianbei Mudi Fajue Jianbao," *Caoyuan Wenwu* 2014, fig. 15)
Fig. 2.2 A Northern Wei tomb found in Meidai village, near Horinger, Inner Monglia dated to the end of 4th century. (After "Shengle, Pingcheng Yidai De Tuoba Xianbei--Beiwei Yiji: Xianbei Yiji Zhi Er," *Wenwu* 1977, fig. 4)


Fig. 2.3 East wall, Poduoluo's tomb, Datong, Shanxi province, 435 CE. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 21)

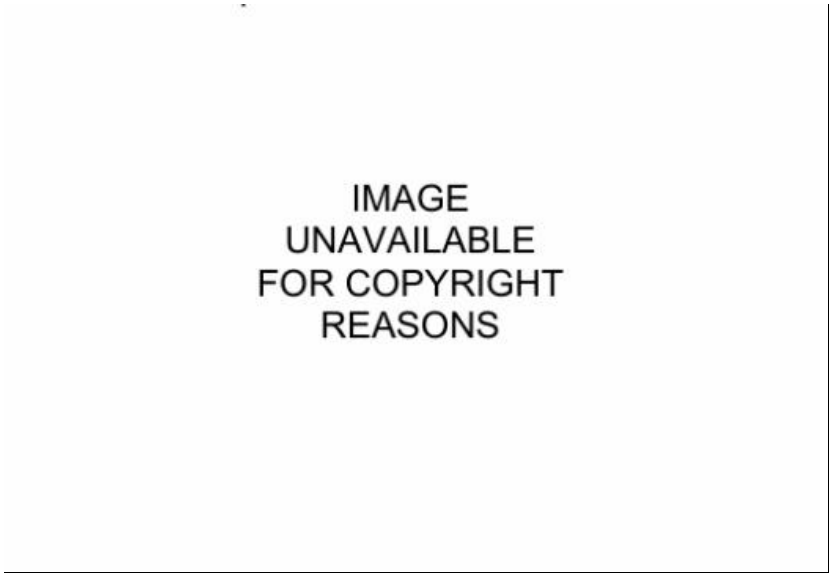


Fig. 2.4 North wall, Liang Bahu's tomb, Datong, Shanxi province, 461 CE. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 27)

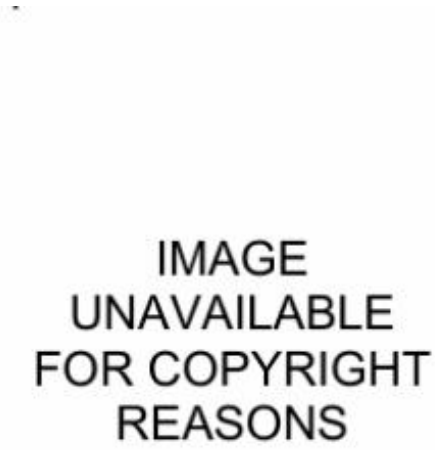


Fig. 2.5 A tomb found on the Yunboli road with tomb portrait on the east wall, Datong, Shanxi province, dated to the middle and late 5th century. (After "Shanxi Datong Yunboli Lu Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao" *Wenwu,* 2011. 12, fig. 8)


Fig. 2.6 Portraits of the tomb occupants on the main wall, Xiexing's stone sarcophagus, Datong, Shanxi province, 458 CE. (After "Cultural Encounters: Ethnic Complexity and Material Expression in Fifth-Century Pingcheng, China." PhD diss., New York University, 2018, fig. 3. 28)


Fig. 2.7 North wall, a stone sarcophagus found at Zhijiabao, Datong, Shanxi province, dated to the middle of the 5th century. (After "Datong Zhijiabao Beiwei Mu Shiguo Bihua," Wenwu 2001. 07, fig. 10)



Fig. 2.8 Drawing of Xie Xing's sarcophagus. (After "Beiwei Shitang Guanchuang Yu Fushu Bihua Wenzi: Yi Xin Faxian Xiexing Shitiang Weili Tantao Zangsu Wenhua de Bianqian" in *Liangge Shijie de Paihuai: Zhonggu Shiqi Sangzang Guannian Fengsu Yu Liyi Zhidu Xueshu Yantaohui Lunwen Ji*, ed. Zhongguo kao gu yan jiu zhong Xin, Beijing: Ke xue chu ban she, 2016, p. 235)

Fig. 2.9 Drawing of a stone sarcophagus found in Zhijiabao. (After "Datong Zhijiabao Beiwei Mu Shitang Bihua," *Wenwu*, 2001.07, fig. 2)


Fig. 2.10 Portraits of the tomb occupants, lacquer remains of the coffin, Poduoluo's tomb, Datong, Shanxi province. (After "Shanxi Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao," *Wenwu* 2006. 10, fig. 19)


Fig. 2.11 Drawing of the front plate of the coffin found in Guyuan, Ningxia region, ca. 486-494 CE. (After "Beiwei Shiqi De Caihui Muguan Ynajiu," MA thesis, Nanjing University, 2018, fig. 28)


Fig. 2.12 Tomb portrait in Anping tomb, south wall, side chamber, Henan Province, 174 CE. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 1, Pl. 11)


Fig. 2.13 Tomb portrait painted on the main wall of the stone sarcophagus found in Bajiao village, Beijing, ca. 3rd century. (After "Beijing Shi Shijingshan Qu Bajiao Cun Weijin Mu," *Wenwu* 2001. 04, Pl. 1)


Fig. 2.14 Tomb portrait of Dong Shou, Anak Tomb No.3, North Korea, 357 CE. (After "Cultural Encounters," fig. 3.20)

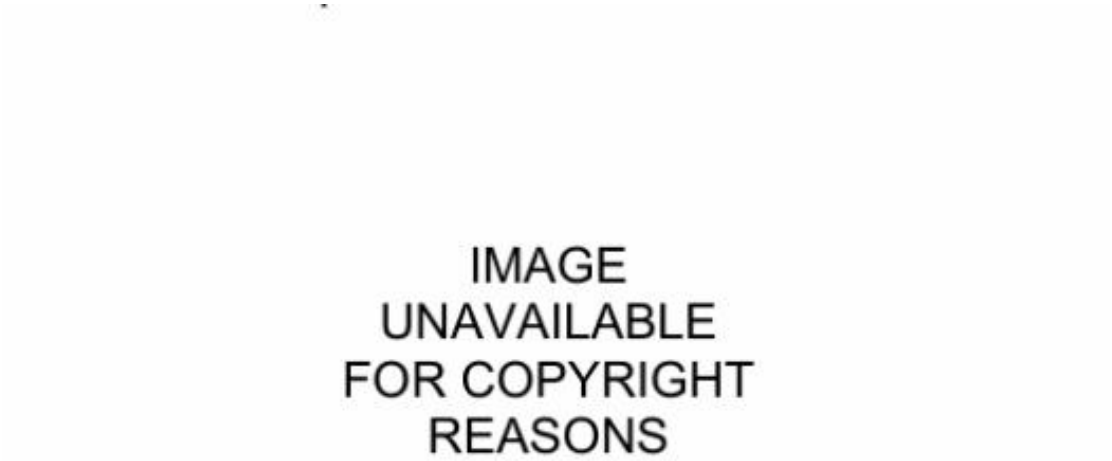


Fig. 2.15 Portrait of the tomb occupant, Tokhungri tomb, North Korea, 408 CE. (After *The Art of the Yellow Springs,* 2011, fig. 68)

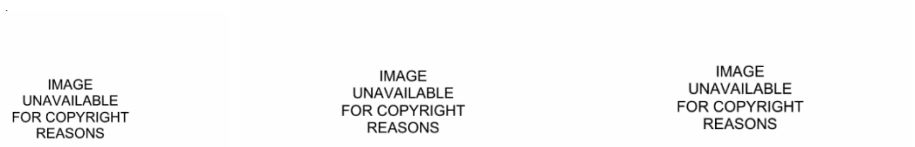


Fig. 2.16 Face of the tomb occupant, murals, Anping tomb.
Fig. 2.17 Face of Dong Shou, murals, Anak tomb.
Fig. 2.18 Face of the tomb occupant, lacquer remains, Poduoluo's tomb.


Fig. 2.19 Queen Mother of the West, Stamped brick from a tomb at Chengdu, Sichuan, Eastern Han, 2nd century CE. (After *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, fig. 51)

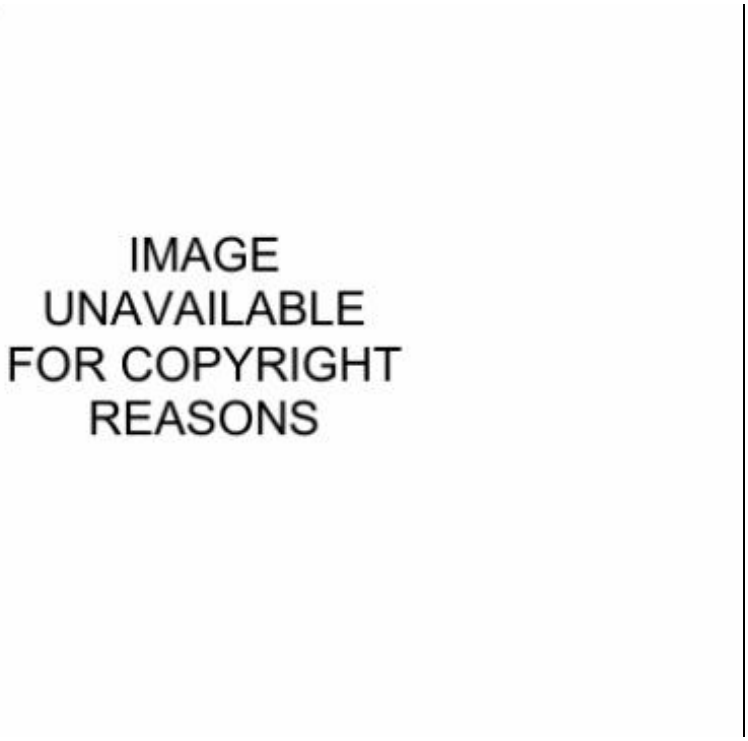


Fig. 2.20 Plan of Poduoluo's tomb. (After "Shanxi Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao," *Wenwu*, 2006. 10, fig 3)


Fig. 2.21 Procession scene painted on the north wall, Poduoluo's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 25)


Fig. 2.22 Outdoor banquet scene painted on the south wall, Poduoluo's tomb. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 22)


Fig. 2.23 Guarding warriors painted on each side of the west wall, Poduoluo's tomb. (After "Shanxi Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 45)


Fig. 2.24 Guarding warriors painted on the north wall of the entryway, Poduoluo's tomb. (After "Shanxi Datong Shaling Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 47)


Fig. 2.25 Female servants painted on the upper layer of the east wall, Poduoluo's tomb.


Fig. 2.26 Guests enjoying banquet with the tomb occupant, south wall, Poduoluo's tomb.


Fig. 2.27 Guests enjoying banquet with the tomb occupant, east wall, Yunboli tomb.


Fig. 2.28 Drawing of the mural painting on the east wall, Wang Wen's tomb, Luoyang, Henan province, 532 CE. (After *Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao Bi Hua Mu Yan Jiu*, Beijing: Beijing Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 2016, fig. 66)


Fig. 2.29 Copy of the mural painting of the north wall, A tomb found at a power station, Taiyuan, Shanxi province, Northern Qi (550-577 CE). (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 2, Pl. 91)


Fig. 2.30 Portraits of the tomb occupants, north wall, Shuiquanliang tomb, Shuozhou, Shanxi province, Northern Qi (550-577 CE). (After Shanxi Museum, see http://www.shanximuseum.com/tui/detail/7002.html)


Fig. 3.1 Cave 20, Yungang caves, Datong, Shanxi Province, 460–465 CE. (After *The Six Dynasties, 220-589,* The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, fig. 29.8)


Fig. 3.2 Floor plan of Tanyao Five caves,Yungang caves, 460–465 CE. (After "Pingcheng Shili De Jiju He 'Yungang Moshi' De Xingcheng Yu Fazhan," in *Zhongguo Shiku Si Yanjiu*, Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She, 1996, fig. 1)



Fig. 3.3 Face of Buddha, north wall, Cave 20, Yungang caves, 460–465 CE. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 2, Beijing: Wenwu Chunban She 1994, Pl. 184)
Fig. 3.4 Face of Buddha, north wall, Cave 18, Yungang caves, 460–465 CE. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 2, Pl. 161)



Fig. 3.5 Niche with Buddha icon, west wall, Cave 5, Yungang caves, dated to the second half of the 5th century. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 1, Pl. 35)
Fig. 3.6 Niche with Buddha icon, south wall, Main chamber, Cave 10, Yungang caves, dated to the second half of the 5th century. (After "Cultural Encounters," fig. 3.25)




Fig. 3.7 Buddha icon, west wall, Cave 254, Mogao caves, Dunhuang, Gansu Province dated to the second half of the 5th century. (After *Zhongguo Dunhuang Bihua Quanji* vol. 1, Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Meishu Chuban She, 2006, fig. 137)
Fig. 3.8 Stone Stele, Shannxi province, 503 CE, Xi'an Museum. (After "Beiwei Zhi Suidai Guanzhong Diqu Zaoxiang Bei De Yangshi Yu Niandai Kaozheng," Phd diss., Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, 2011, fig. 2.4)
Fig. 3.9 Stone Stele, Shannxi province, 500 CE, Museum of Changwu county. (After "Beiwei Zhi Suidai Guanzhong Diqu Zaoxiang Bei De Yangshi Yu Niandai Kaozheng," fig. 2.14)

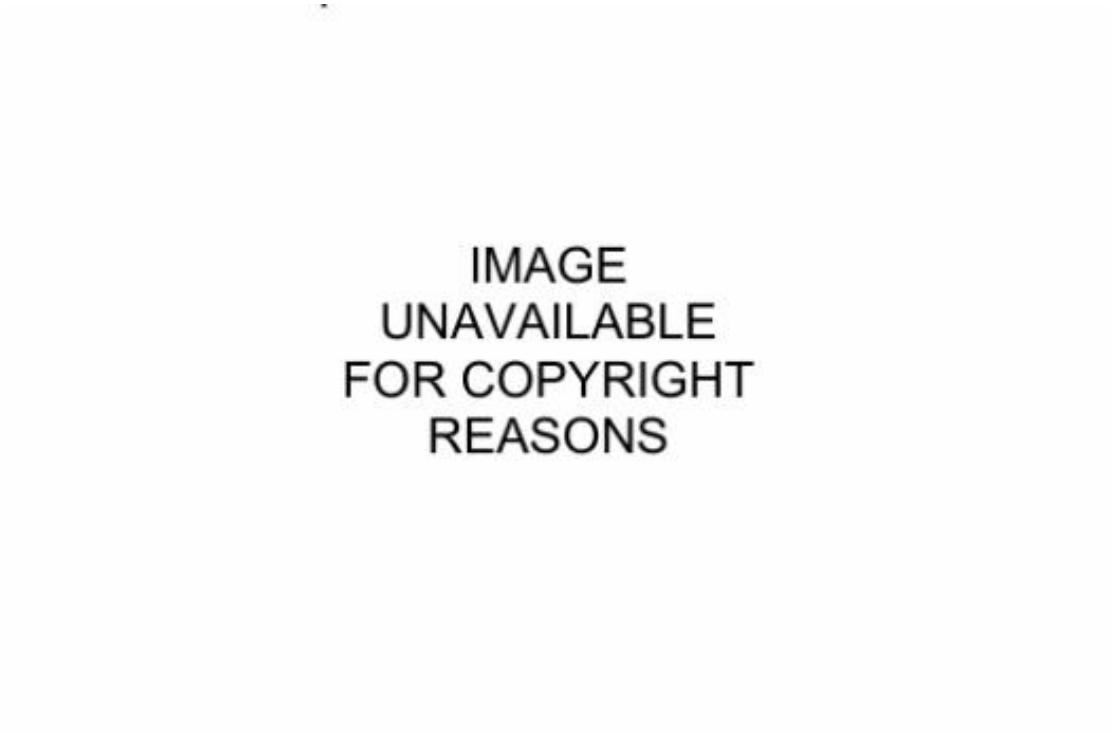


Fig. 3.11 Tomb portraits, east wall, Yunboli tomb. (After "Shanxi Datong Yunboli Lu Beiwei Bihua Mu Fajue Jianbao," fig. 9)



Fig. 3.12 Laozi icon, Buddho-Taoist stele, Shannxi, Xi'an Beilin Museum, 504-515 CE. (After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, Changsha: Shi Hunan Meishu Chuban She, 2012, fig. 2A38-2)
Fig. 3.13 Laozi icon, Taoist stele, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 564 CE. (After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, fig. 2C07)




Fig. 3.14a Face carved with Laozi icon, Buddho-Taoist stele sponsored by 60 people of Yi Associations, Shannxi province, Xi'an Beilin Museum, 517 CE.
(After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, Fig. 2A18-1)
Fig. 3.14b Face carved with Buddha icon, Buddho-Taoist stele sponsored by 60 people of Yi Associations. (After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, Fig. 2A18-3)
Fig. 3.14c Laozi icon, Buddho-Taoist stele sponsored by 60 people of Yi Associations. (After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, Fig. 2A18-2)



Fig. 3.14d Face of Laozi, Buddho-Taoist stele sponsored by 60 people of Yi Associations. (After *Zhongguo Daojiao Meishu Shi*, Fig. 2A18-4)
Fig. 3.15 Tomb Portrait of Dong Shou, Anak Tomb No.3. (After Fan Zhang, "Cultural Encounters," fig. 3.20)



Fig. 3.16 Drawing of the south wall, Cave 5, Yungang caves. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 2, Texts, fig. 16)
Fig. 3.17 Drawing of the east and west wall, Cave 5, Yungang caves. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 2, Texts, fig. 16)


Fig. 3.18 The north Colossal Buddha and the west wall, Cave 5, Yungang caves. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Yungang Shiku* vol. 1, Pl. 28)




Fig. 3.19 Plan and elevation of cave 254, Mogao caves, Dunhuang, Gansu province, dated to the second half of the 5th century. (After "Art and Practice in a Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple." *Ars Orientalis* 20 ,1990, fig. 1)
Fig. 3.20 Cave 254, Mogao caves, Dunhuang. (After *Zhongguo Dunhuang Bihua Quanji* vol. 1, fig. 107)
Fig. 3.21 South wall, Cave 254, Mogao caves, Dunhuang. (After Digital Dunhuang, see https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0254)




Fig. 3.22 Central Binyang cave, Longmen caves, Luoyang, Henan province, dated to the first half of the 6th century. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Longmen Shiku* vol. 2, Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She, 1992, Pl. 9)
Fig. 3.23 A Bodhisattva sculpture with low-relief figures carved behind, west wall, Central Binyang cave, Longmen caves, Luoyang. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Longmen Shiku* vol. 2, Pl. 14)
Fig. 3.24 A low-relief depicting flying Apsaras, ceiling, Central Binyang cave, Longmen caves, Luoyang. Red pigments at the background still remain. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Longmen Shiku* vol. 2, Pl. 24)



Fig. 3.25 Buddhist stele (front side), 523 CE. Stone carving, approx. 36.2 × 30 cm. Sichuan Provincial Museum, Chengdu. (After Yudong Wang, "The Relief Problem: Some Notes from an Art Historian" *Ars Orientalis* 48 (2018), fig. 2.)
Fig. 3.26 Mogao Cave 275, dated to the first half of 5th century. Mural painting and clay modeling. Dunhuang, Gansu Province. (After Yudong Wang, "The Relief Problem, " fig. 3.)


Fig. 3.27 Emperor (left) and Empress (right) worshiping Buddha, relief, originally carved on each side of the east wall of Central Bingyang cave, dated to the first half of the 6th century, respectively preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (left) and Nelson Atkins Museum (right). (After "Longmen Shiku He Gongxian Shiku De Hanfu Guizu Gongyangren Xiang: 'Zhucong Gongyangren Tuxiang' De Chengli" in *Shiku Si Yanjiu*, Beijing: Wenwu Chuban She, 2010, fig. 1)


Fig. 3.28 Emperor worshiping Buddha, relief, south wall, Cave 1, Gongxian caves, Henan province, dated to the first half of the 6th century. ( After *Zhongguo Shiku Diaosu Quanji* vol. 6, Chongqing: Chongqing Chuban She, 2001, Pl. 9)



Fig. 3.29 Offering Procession of the Donors, relief, south wall, Huangfu cave, Longmen caves. (After *Zhongguo Shiku: Longmen Shiku* vol. 2, Pl. 192)
Fig. 3.30 Figures in the scenes of filial piety, a rubbing of a stone sarcophagus, Nelson Atkins Museum. (After "Longmen Shiku He Gongxian Shiku De Hanfu Guizu Gongyangren Xiang: 'Zhucong Gongyangren Tuxiang' De Chengli," fig. 22)

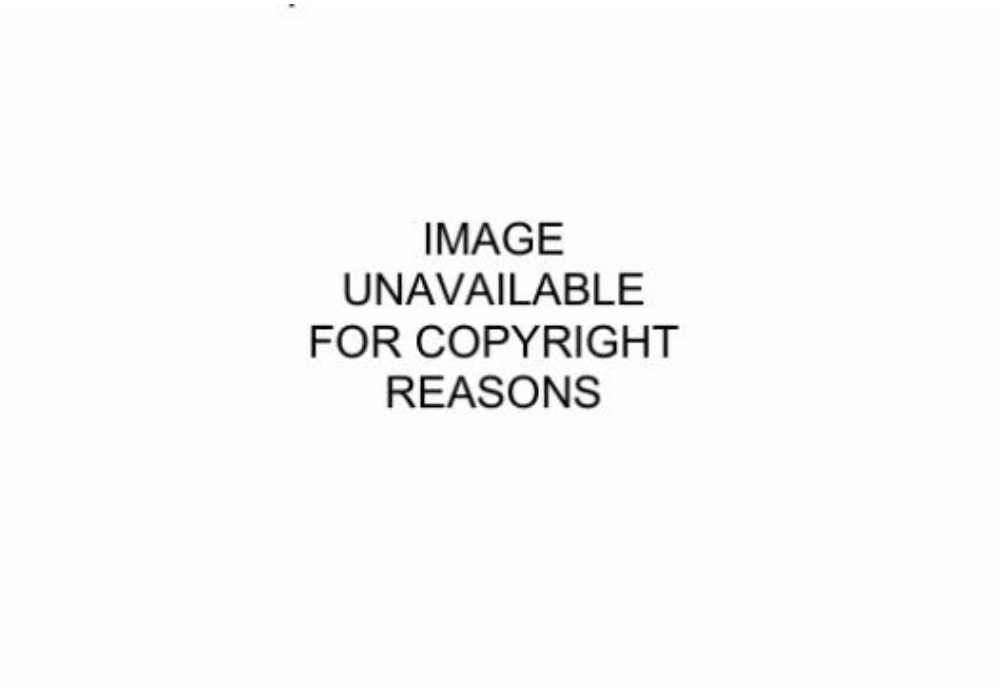


Fig. 3.31 Portraits of tomb occupants, west wall, Cuifen's tomb, Shandong province, 551 CE. (After *Zhongguo Chutu Bihua Quanji* vol. 4, Pl. 42)

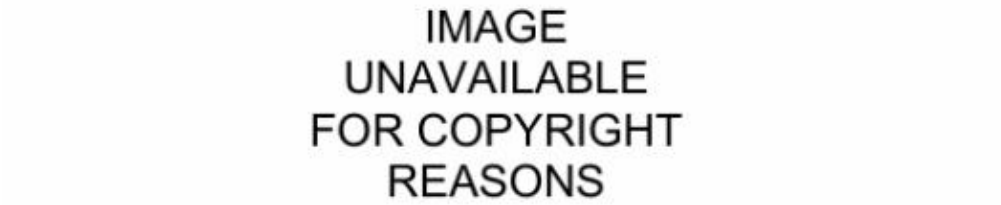


Fig. 3.32 Section of *The Nymph of the Luo River*, attributed to Gu Kaizhi, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Song-dynasty copy, 27.1 × 572.8 cm, Palace Museum, Beijing. (After "Longmen Shiku He Gongxian Shiku De Hanfu Guizu Gongyangren Xiang: 'Zhucong Gongyangren Tuxiang' De Chengli," fig. 21)


Fig. 3.33 Preaching image taken from an inscription commemorating the constructions of a pagoda, Henan province, Henan Museum, 524 CE. (After *Beiwei Fojiao Zaoxiang Shi Yanjiu*, Pl. 127)


Fig. 3.34 Drawing of the chamber murals (west, north, and east walls), Princess Ruru's tomb, Ci County, Hebei province, 550 CE. (After "Fashioning a Political Body: The Tomb of Rouran Princess." *Archives of Asian Art* 57 (2007), fig. 3)


Fig. 3.35 Murals on the north wall, Princess Ruru's tomb. (After "Fashioning a Political Body," fig. 7)

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