THE CONCEPT OF “TOMB” UNDER THE NOMADIC TRADITIONS: REDEFINING THE TOMBS OF KHITAN NOBLES IN THE LIAO EMPIRE (907-1125 CE)

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ABSTRACT

QI LU: The Concept of “Tomb” under the Nomadic Traditions: Redefining the Tombs of Khitan Nobles in the Liao Empire (907-1125 CE)
(Under the direction of Wei-Cheng Lin)

In this thesis, I examine the tombs of Khitan nobles in the Liao Empire (907-1125 CE), established by the Khitan, nomadic people originating from the steppe zone of the Eurasian landmass. I redefine the concept of the “tomb” of the Khitan in Liao Empire within within this larger geographic and cultural context during the Middle Period, approximately the tenth through thirteenth centuries. The Khitan had an early burial history of not burying the deceased in the tombs, but placing them on the trees in the mountain and cremating the remains three years later. However, the Khitan built “Chinese-looking” tombs during the Liao period once they had intimate interactions with the Chinese. I argue that although the Khitan learn from the Chinese to build tombs, they changed the Chinese concept of “tomb” and applied the Chinese forms to gradually concretize a unique Khitan understanding of burial. “Tomb,” for the Khitan, is not supposed to be an enduring posthumous residence but a space that enables the ephemeral ritual practice to happen on the deceased and transform the body.
To my mentor and friend, I couldn’t have done this without you. Thank you for all of your support along the way.
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INTRODUCTION

The Chinese art historian Wu Hung has argued, “No other civilization in the premodern world was more obsessed with constructing underground burial structures than China, where...people devoted an excessive amount of wealth and labor to constructing underground burial structures and furnishing them with exquisite objects.”¹

For the ancient Chinese, the “burial” serves two main purposes: first, to construct a “tomb” as the deceased’s last resting place, most often consisting of a spatial/architectural complex underground and a burial mound above ground; second, to hide the deceased from human eyes (by burying them in the tombs).² Thus, “tomb” is the most significant part of the Chinese burial practice. The house for the living, the home, was called the “inner residence” (neizhai), whereas the tomb was called “outer residence” (waizhai) as its counterpart.³ In this case, “tomb,” in China, is understood as a permanent house for deceased to “enjoy” the posthumous life. The ancient Chinese believe everyone


² This is based on Wu Hung’s interpretation towards a passage which appears in both Lüshi chunqiu (Mr. Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals) and Li ji (Book of Rites). See Wu, The Art of the Yellow Springs, 8. James Legg’s translation of the passage is as follows: “Burying means hiding away; and that hiding (of the corpse) is from a wish that men should not see it. Hence there are the clothes sufficient for embellishing the body; the guan-coffin all around the clothes; the guo-casket all around the guan-coffin; the earth all around the guo-casket; and a mound further raised over that grave with trees planted on it,” Legge, trans., Li Chi: Book of Rites (New York: University Books, 1967), I: 155-6.

³ Quoted from Wei-Cheng Lin: “For an example, see ‘Ze neiwaizhong xing sangfa pian (Chapter on the Method of Deciding How Funeral Rites Should Be Performed Inside and Outside the Tomb),’ in Da Han yuanling mizang jing (Classic of Burial Secrets in the Original Tombs of Great Han), collected in Yongle dadian (Yongle Imperial Encyclopedia), juan 8199/10a.” See Wei-Cheng Lin, “Underground Wooden Architecture in Brick: A Changed Perspective from Life to Death in 10th- through 13th-Century Northern China,” Archives of Asian Art 61(2011): 33.
deserved a tomb as it can prevent the deceased from turning into a ghost and haunting the living, and this is testified by the innumerable tombs that have been discovered across China dating from the Neolithic period (ten millennia ago) to the Qing dynasty (1636-1911 CE). In the China’s Middle Period, approximately the tenth through thirteenth centuries, many Chinese tombs were built entirely in brick with reliefs carved into the brick inside the burial chambers depicting columns, brackets, beams, and portions of roof eaves (Fig. 1, 2), as in typical Chinese aboveground timber-frame buildings (Fig. 3).

The tombs in the Liao period (907-1125 CE) are usually understood under this Chinese concept of “tomb,” as the Liao is considered one of several dynasties from China’s Middle Period. However, the fact that the Liao was actually established by the Khitan people rather than by the Chinese makes such an understanding problematic. The Khitan were nomadic people, originating from Mongolia and Manchuria, the region within the steppe zone of the Eurasian landmass (Map 1). They are the descendants of a branch of the Xianbei, a nomadic people who previously founded a powerful political regime, the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 CE), during China’s Northern and Southern Dynasties (220-589 CE). The Khitan people appeared in Chinese sources as early as the fourth century CE. From 907 to 1125, they expanded their territories in East Asia,

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5 Thus the analysis on the tombs becomes one of the most important avenues through which to explore visual and material cultures in ancient China. A large body of scholarship is devoted to the field of the Chinese funerary art, which has become a fundamental part of Chinese art history.


establishing the Liao, which ruled over Mongolia, portions of the Russian Far East, northern Korea, and northern China.

In this case, it is more appropriate to call the Liao an “empire” in its own right rather than a Chinese “dynasty” and to understand the Khitan tombs from the Liao period without limiting ourselves in the Chinese concept of “tomb.” This thesis will rethink the concept of the “tomb” of the Khitan in the Liao Empire within this larger geographic and cultural context during this Middle Period. I will focus on the tombs of Khitan nobles, since they usually contain more artifacts than those built for the commoners and reveal a stronger consciousness of the Khitanness as a nation, independent and separate from China. Looking to define themselves in the terms of their own culture, the Khitan nobles tombs have a clearer emphasis on their own traditional burials based on their own understanding towards burial and posthumous life.

To think about the Khitan’s concept of “tomb,” we need to first have a better understanding of their own cultures and their attitudes towards these cultures as well. Living a nomadic life, the Khitan traditionally did not settle down in a fixed place permanently. Such nomadism was preserved and even emphasized after the Khitan established the Liao Empire and embedded in the formation of a political system. The system is named “seasonal nabo” (sishinabo). Nabo is a word translated from the Khitan language, and according to Liao History, “the camps that set in different places in four seasons are called ‘nabo’.” The source also specifically illustrates the details of what the Emperors usually do in the “seasonal nabo”:

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8 Tuo Tuo, “Ying wei zhi”(The Records of Military), in Liaoshi (The History of Liao) juan. 32 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 373. “Nabo” is transliterated from the language of the Khitan. In Chinese texts, it is written like: “纳拨”, “纳钵”, “纳宝”, “纳巴” or “刺钵”, which have similar meaning. The Chinese historian, Fu Yuehuan, first discussed the cultural meaning of “Nabo” as the culture of Khitan in his
The “spring nabo,” during which the emperor and his servants stay at Yaziheshuo: They start their journey in January and took six days to arrive at Yaziheshuo…The servants set up the camp on the ice, make holes on the ice to get the fish. After the ice melts, they will let the eagles loose to catch geese…Until the spring ends will they leave. The “summer nabo,” which has no fixed place but usually around the Mount Tu’er: They will worship the ancestors and their mausoleums, enjoy the lotus and avoid the summer heat. In April, the emperor and his servants start the journey…and arrive in June. They live there for one and a half month, discuss the national affairs with officials from both the north and south, and go hunting during the leisure time. Then they leave in July…The “autumn nabo,” at Fuhulin: In July they leave the cool place and head to the mountain to hunt deer…the “winter nabo,” during which they stay at Guangpingdian: Guangpingdian is a place that has rich sands, which can keep them warmer in the winter, thus the servants usually set the camp there for the emperor to discuss the national fairs with officials. They sometimes go hunting or talk about Kongfu, and receive attributions from the Southern Song and other kingdoms.9

“Seasonal nabo” is not only a unique policy that suggests the cultural meaning of the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the Khitan. More importantly for my purpose, such a nomadic lifestyle can also have an effect on burial practices. The tomb of the Emperor Shengzong (972-1031) is located near the area of the summer nabo. The mural paintings in his tomb show the scenes of four seasons on the four walls of the middle chamber, which has never been seen in the Chinese tombs. The content of the landscape and creatures in the murals echo the description of “seasonal nabo.” Since the living did not stay in a fixed place consistently, how would the Khitan deal with the deceased? What would “tomb,” which literally takes a fixed physical place, have meant to the Khitan people?

The Khitan mortuary tradition prior to the establishment of the Liao Empire seems to suggest that the early Khitan did not use tombs. According to “The Biography of


Khitan” (Qidan zhuan) in *the History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)* written in the Tang dynasty (618-907)\(^{10}\):

> When the parents die, people who cried will be perceived as not strong enough. They will place the corpses on the trees in the mountain. After three years, they will collect the remains of the bones and cremate them. Then they will drink to celebrate and say: “in the winter, facing to the sun, when I go to hunt, I will get more pigs and deer.” \(^{11}\)

In another account, the early Khitan burial tradition was said to have stressed that, “when people died, families were not allowed to make tombs for them.”\(^{12}\) Thus, in the early Khitan society, it is not that they did not have the ability to build tombs, but their tradition and belief led them to burying the deceased not in the tombs, but on the trees in the mountains.

Contradictorily to the earlier practice, the Khitan began to build tombs during the Liao period once they interacted with the Chinese more intimately. Hundreds of Khitan tombs from the Liao period have been discovered. As mentioned earlier, China, a settled society, had a long history of building tombs with the intention of creating posthumous residences for the deceased. The first Chinese emperor Qin Shihuang (259-210BCE) of

\(^{10}\) The *History of the Northern Dynasties (beishi)* is one of the official Chinese historical works in the Twenty-Four Histories canon. It contains 100 volumes and covers the period from 386 to 618, the histories of the Northern Wei, the Western Wei, the Wei, Northern Zhou, the Northern Qi, and the Sui Dynasty. Like the *History of the Southern Dynasties*, the book was started by Li Dashi and compiled from texts of the *Book of Wei* and *Book of Zhou*. Following his death, Li Yanshou, son of Li Dashi, continued writing the work on the book from 643 to 659. Unlike most of the rest of the Twenty-Four Histories, this work was not commissioned by the state.


\(^{12}\) Liu, “Qidan Zhuan,” 5350.
the Qin dynasty (221BCE-206BCE) built a grand mausoleum, attesting to the longstanding tradition that had been practiced by then. Does the change from no tombs to building tombs for the deceased mean that the Khitan had the same concept of “tomb” as the Chinese?

This thesis will argue that the Khitan did not directly adopt the burial practice from the Chinese, but rather applied Chinese forms to serve their own burial purposes. During the period when tombs were not used, the Khitan burial practice was more focused on the concern with the body. This thesis will propose that it is because of this early nomadic tradition that the after they began to build tombs, the Khitan continuously paid attention to the bodies of the deceased rather than the furnishings of the burial space, which reflects their concept of “tomb”: it was not supposed to be an enduring architecture but an ephemeral space that enabled rituals to occur that could transform the deceased. The burial practices of the Khitan are complex and diverse and a large number of different elements from different cultures contribute to a multi-layered understanding of the body, with multiple cultural meanings. However, within such an understanding of “tomb,” elements borrowed from other cultures were eventually applied to serve the final goal of burial— wrapping and transforming the body rather than building a posthumous residence for the deceased.

In Chapter 1, I will set up an analytical framework for my research on the Khitan

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13 The Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor (Qin Shi Huang) is located in Lintong District, Xi'an, Shaanxi province of China. This mausoleum was constructed over 38 years, from 246 to 208 BC, and is situated underneath a 76-meter tall tomb mound. The layout of the mausoleum is modeled on the Qin capital Xianyang, divided into inner and outer cities. The circumference of the inner city is 2.5 km and the outer is 6.3 km. The tomb is located in the southwest of the inner city and faces east. The main tomb chamber housing the coffin and burial artifacts is the core of the architectural complex of the mausoleum. The tomb itself has not yet been excavated. Archaeological explorations currently concentrate on various sites of the extensive necropolis surrounding the tomb, including the Terracotta Army to the east of the tomb mound. The Terracotta Army served as a garrison to the mausoleum and has yet to be completely excavated.
tombs. I propose that the fundamental character of the Khitan tombs—“hybridity”—is intensively demonstrated by how the body was dealt with and decorated. I will also explore the different understandings of the body during the Middle Period, which is helpful to comprehend the Khitan burial practices of the Liao dynasty. In Chapter 2, I will analyze how the hybrid assembly of artifacts worked in the context of the Khitan tomb by analyzing the Tomb of the Princess of Chen and her Husband Xiao Shaoju as a case study. Drawing from specific understandings of the body from Buddhist and Daoist practices, the Khitans prepared these artifacts to ensure the posthumous “transformation” of the body, enabling the deceased to get away from hell and to ascend to heaven. In Chapter 3, I will propose that the Khitan tombs in the Liao dynasty were built based on the idea of “wrapping” the body, which answers the question of why the Khitan paid so much attention to the deceased body.
CHAPTER 1: THE TOMBS OF KHITAN NOBLES IN THE LIAO EMPIRE

During the Middle Period, the Liao had several neighbors. The Han people held the Song Dynasty in the south. Three other political regions, the Xizhou Uighur (c. 866-1369), the Western Xia (c.1038-1227), and the Jin Empire (c. 1115-1234) to the Liao’s in north and west rose up from nomadic people during this time (Map 2). All these empires interacted with each other, through wars, trade, and diplomacy. Such interaction led to the combination of different belief systems and traditions from different places, and the Khitan burials display influences from nomadic traditions, Buddhism, and Daoism, all of which are blended with one another.

Liao tombs were first discovered starting in the beginning of the twentieth century. From then until the 1980s, more than one thousand Liao Dynasty tombs have been discovered. These tombs can be divided into two groups: the tombs of the Khitan and those of the Chinese who lived in the Liao territory. According to Chinese scholars, the geographic distributions of Liao dynasty tombs are primarily concentrated in two areas: firstly, around the Liao Upper capital and Central capital approximately today’s Inner Mongolia and Liaoning Province where most Khitan people’s tombs were located; secondly, around the Liao Southern capital and Western capital, near today’s Hebei

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14 Although the Khitan people established Liao Empire, large numbers of the Chinese people are under the control of the Liao. See Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu chubanshe bainjibu, ed., Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu: kaoguxue juan (The Encyclopedia of China: Archaeology) (Beijing: zhongguo dabaikéquanshu chubanshe, 2004), 398.
Province and Shanxi Province where most of the Chinese tombs in the Liao territory are located (Map 3).\(^{15}\)

There are many similarities among the Chinese tombs and the Khitan tombs in the Liao dynasty. They underwent a similar developmental process in terms of the shape and structure of the underground burial.\(^{16}\) The mural paintings that line their walls share some subjects, such as “preparing the teas,” which is a special subject first seen in the Middle Period.\(^{17}\) One tomb, located among other Chinese tombs in Xiabali, Huanhua, Hebei Province, suggests a fusion of Chinese tombs and Khitan burial practices. It housed a deceased couple—a Khitan noble and his Chinese wife—in Xiabali, Xuanhua, Hebei Province, located inside the region of Chinese tombs.\(^{18}\) The general design of the tomb is similar to the other Chinese tombs discovered in Xuanhua. Both the marriage between the Khitan male and the Chinese female and their burial together in the same Chinese-style...

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\(^{15}\) As shown in the Map 2 Liao has five capitals: the Upper capital, the Central capital, the Eastern capital, the Western capital and the Southern capital. Liao Upper capital is located in present-day Lindong, Inner Mongolia. The Liao Central capital is located in the present day Ningcheng, Liaoning Province. The Southern capital is today’s Beijing. The Western capital is today’s Datong in Shanxi province. The first area is around the Great Wall and to its north. The second area is in the south of the Great Wall in today’s Hebei Province, and Shanxi Province (the so-called Yanyun area). See Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao(907-1125) Khitan Elite,” 66. Wang Qiuhua, “Liaodai muzang fenu yu fenqi de chutan” (The Staging and Partitioning of the tombs in the Liao Dynasty), Liaoning daxue xuebao 55, no. 3 (1982): 43-96.

\(^{16}\) Although basically the shape and structure of the Chinese tombs and the Khitan ones developed in the similar process, there are still differences between them. ones Li Qingquan points out currently there is no enough early Chinese tombs discovered that can illustrate what shape and structure the Chinese tombs have in the early period. Merely based on the small numbers of tombs discovered in early period, it seems indicate that the round shape tombs might already become popular among the early-stage Chinese tombs in the Liao Empire. See Li Qingquan, Xuanhua liaomu: Muzang yishu yu liaodai shehui (The Tombs in Xuanhua: Burial Arts and the Society of the Liao Dynasty) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008), 57. I will have more discussions on the tombs structures in Chapter 3.

\(^{17}\) I will have more discussions on the mural paintings in Chapter 3.

\(^{18}\) The Chinese female used a typical Chinese way to treat the body which will be discussed later. See Liu Haiwen, ed., Xuanhua xiebali II qu liao bi hua mu kao gu fa jue bao gao (The Archaeological Excavation Report of the Liao Tombs with Mural paintings in Xiabali II, Xuanhua) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008), 10-25.
tomb suggest that there were more connections than conflicts between the Khitan and Chinese concepts of tombs.

However, such intercommunity does not necessarily imply that the burial practice of the Khitan was entirely subject to the cultural influence of the Chinese. The Khitan tombs have their own features. Several scholars have emphasized the “hybridity” of Khitan tombs, which makes them different from the Chinese ones of the Liao dynasty.  

“Hybridity” here refers to various mortuary elements and materials of different traditions that were found in the same tomb. Based on their research, I will argue that this most distinguishing feature of Khitan’s burial system—“hybridity”—is most intensively reflected in the ways in which the body was dealt with in Khitan tombs.

First, the metal body attire, consisting of one or a combination of body mesh netting (Fig. 4), facemask (Fig. 5) and shoe soles (Fig. 6) or boots (Fig. 7) is a unique way to dress or cover the deceased’s body that is hitherto unseen. The metal body attire has been discovered in more than 50 Khitan tombs from different regions and periods in Liao dynasty. In the deceased couple’s tomb in Xiabali mentioned earlier, the body of the male Khitan was wrapped in such attire with mesh-netting covering the body.

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19 Tsao Hsing-yuan argues that the noble class of the Liao society succeeded in fusing the cultural elements that are inherited from the Tang and Five Dynasties with elements of their own cultural traditions to produce a new set of cultural values, the Liao culture. See Hsing-yuan Tsao, “From Appropriation to Possession: A Study of the Cultural Identity of the Liao through their Pictorial Art” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1996). Francois Louis argues that the precious metal objects of the Khitan show the hybrid nature of Liao culture by expressing a correlation between Chinese cultural achievement and Khitan political achievement. See Francois Louis, “Shaping Symbols of Privilege: Precious Metals and the Early Liao Aristocracy,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 33 (2003): 71-109. Hiromi Kinoshita also explores the hybrid nature of Khitan tombs. She argues that the Khitan constructed their tombs in the manner of hybridity in order to create an auspicious environment for their afterlife. See Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao(907-1125) Khitan Elite.”

20 Mu Yi summarizes the practice of body attires. The mask, mesh netting and shoe soles were not always seen used together and there are different combinations. Additionally, in some cases, the deceased wears boots rather than the shoe soles, for instance, the tombs of Princess of Chen and her husband Xiao Shaoju. See Mu Yi, “Liaomu chutu de jinshu mianju, wangluo ji xiangguan wenti” (Matal facemasks and netting excavated from Liao tombs and other questios), *Beifang wenwu*, no. 1 (1993): 28-34.
Although the Khitan noble male married a Chinese female, his body was dealt with in such a way that was not seen in Chinese tombs. This seems to suggest that the attire was a rather consistent way of dealing with the body in the Khitan burial system, important and not to be casually changed. Scholars have debated the origin of this practice extensively and the assumption is that it may come from various sources, including shamanism, steppe traditions, Buddhism, and Chinese burial practice of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220CE). Among them, Kinoshita’s argument that Khitan body attire is rooted in ancient cultures from the region within the Steppe Route of the Eurasian landmass around Xinjiang, Mongolia and South Siberia is particularly convincing. As the geographical position of the Khitan is within this steppe zone, the intimate relation to the cultures along the steppe route becomes possible. She states that along this Steppe Route the similar body attires can be seen in the other cultures in the earlier periods (Second to the Sixth Century) (Map 4) by citing the examples of the shoe soles (Fig. 9, 10), the facemasks (Fig. 11, 12) and body nettings. Although Khitan

21 See Liu, ed., Xuanhua xiebali II qu liao bi hua mu kao gu fa jue bao gao, 14-22.

22 Mu Yi has summarized the different arguments among the Chinese scholars in “Liao mu chutu de jinshu mianju, wangluo ji xiang guan wenti” (Metal facemasks and netting excavated from Liao tombs and other questions), Beifang wenwu, no. 1 (1993): 28-34.

23 the deceased and using metal pieces to cover the eyes for burial in Chinese Turkestan (today’s Xinjiang province). Such custom appears to have continued in this area up until at least the early Tang (Seventh century). Kinoshita thinks although the facemasks and body nettings were not made by the metals in Xinjiang burials, “the idea of covering the face with silk and metal eye pieces, and wrapping the limbs in cloths is similar, nonetheless, to the Khitan custom of clothing their deceased in metal body attire.” See Sir Aurel, Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Exploration in Central Asia, Kan-Su and Eastern Iran IV vols. (New Dehli: Cosmo Publications, 1981). See Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao (907-1125) Khitan Elite,” 106-43. Kinoshita, “Hybridity and Conquest: Patterns of Liao (AD 907-1125) Khitan Tomb Burial,” Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia 6 (2004): 135-43.
tomb are different based on periods and regions, this body attire appears to have been standardized, which displays certain underlying cultural continuities.  

Some materials on the deceased’s bodies in the Khitan nobles’ tombs also prove Liao’s interactions with other cultures on the Steppe Route. There are burial artifacts placed on the corpse, such as objects made of crystals (Fig. 13) and amber (Fig. 14), as well as gold and silver (Fig. 15) that were frequently found in Khitan tombs yet rarely seen in Chinese ones. As scholars have previously pointed out, these materials are the evidence of trades and diplomatic interactions between the Khitan of the Liao dynasty and people in central Asia.  

In addition to the influence from the Steppe Route of the Eurasian landmass, there are materials and writings found on or around the corpses in Khitan tombs that are unmistakably Buddhist. For instance, in a tomb in present-day Batuyingzi, Xinmin County, Liaoning Province, a gilded bronze sheet inscribed with a mantra in Chinese with the title “Mantra of the Buddha with the Wisdom to Defeat Hell” was found on the chest of the deceased. This tantric mantra was believed to have the power to remove all evil karma, and it was obviously used to protect the deceased here, which definitely illustrates a connection to Buddhism. The gilded crown worn by the deceased has been

24 Although the silver and gold might export from Central Asia, the way of using them on the corpse is unseen hitherto.


discovered in the tomb in Paoshouying, Jianping County, Liaoning Province. Four Sanskrit words from Buddhist sutras are written at the center part of the crown accompanied by a lotus at the bottom part, which has the function of leading the deceased to heaven.  

Some other artifacts found on or around the corpses are specially Daoist. A Daoist figure, whose long robes and pointed beard identify it as a Daoist adept, is found on several gilded crowns of the deceased. One such crown was discovered in the tomb of the Princess of Chen and her husband dated from 1018, and another in a tomb in present-day Xiaolamagou, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia (Fig. 16-20). Additionally, the Daoist symbol *Taiji* can be seen on the crowns of the deceased. Such unmistakably Daoist elements indicate this intimate relation to Daoism.

In addition to the religious elements, scholars have also found objects on the body related to other Chinese cultural elements. A large number of jades used to decorate the bodies have been identified as closely related to the styles popular in the Tang and Song

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28 Princess of Chen is a title of the princess which is conferred by the emperor. This title of the deceased is known from the epitaph discovered in the front chamber of the tomb. See the whole text of the epitaph in Neimenggu zizhiwenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al., *Liao chenguo gongzhu mu* (*Tomb of the Princess of State Chen*) (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1993), 114-6. For more information of the crowns in the tomb of Princess of Chen and her husband, see Sun Meng, “Liaodai daojiao wenhua yu xinyang de kaoguxue kaocha,” *Zhongguo daojiao*, no. 5 (2010): 36; also see Neimenggu zizhiwenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Liao chenguo gongzhu mu*, 65-72. The crown in the tomb located at today’s Xiaolamagou, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia has not been published yet. It is a collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, China.

29 *Taiji* is a Daoist cosmological term for the "Supreme Ultimate" state of undifferentiated absolute and infinite potentiality. The symbol of *Taiji* illustrates the existence of two. It demonstrates the opposite natures of paired elements. All is relative. However, what we describe as opposites, exist on a single scale, one with the other. Therefore, black and white are both colors; up and down are both directions. We recognize slow by comparing it to fast.
Two hanging-scroll paintings were found inside the Yemaotai m7 tomb. Hung inside the closed stone “house” that was contained the corpse, thus the paintings are placed immediately adjacent to the deceased’s body and only the deceased can “see” the paintings. Not only the style of painting, but also its format—the hanging scroll—is directly borrowed from the Chinese. This close relationship with Chinese cultural practices has led to speculation about the Chinese artisans who might have been employed or forced to work for the Khitan nobles.

The highly diversified materials placed on or around the deceased’s body demonstrate that the Khitan tombs was complex and hybrid, but this complexity and hybridity also make it difficult to define what makes a Khitan tomb specifically Khitan. Rather than tracing cultural origins and attributes of the burial materials and elements, I propose that it is more productive to consider the materials of various origins and cultural traditions in their new context, namely the Khitan’s tombs themselves. In his “thing theory,” Bill Brown differentiates objects from things: whereas objects are materials obeying a culturally designed function, things are both the state of matter asserting itself

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32 Based on her study of the jades-workmanship, Jenny F. So states that it is the workmen that led to certain common features of the jade in both the Chinese dynasties and dynasties established by the nomadic people in the tenth century. She argues there is an overemphasizing on dynastic, cultural or regional “separateness”—rather than using the common “five dynasties” “Song” “Liao” and “jin” to defining the arts of this period, tenth century is more appropriate in acknowledgment of the fluid artistic and cultural interacting and traffic among these different groups over the course of the century. See So, “Jades of the Tenth Century,” 13-37.
as matter and also a difficult-to-specify other element in which matter exists as “sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols and totems.” In other words, one “thing” can embrace different meanings and function variously in different contexts. A thing has a combination of material particularity and conceptual vagueness. If one considers the materials in Khitan tombs as “things,” not “objects” with fixed functions, one might be able to locate their new meanings generated by the different roles they played in the specific context of the Khitan tomb.

Seen as such, the initially unrelated elements in the burial might have actually been interrelated in their new roles and in the new context in order to fulfill specific functions of the tomb with particular Khitan burial concepts in mind. These concepts might have governed the ways in which the Khitan people chose certain “things” from certain traditions. Are there major concepts that are present within all of the Khitan nobles’ tombs? Although Khitan tombs are different based on periods and regions, one element is consistent in all of them: effort placed on covering the deceased body with artifacts in ways different from Chinese tombs in ways different from those of Chinese tombs.

There might be certain concepts underpinning such a particular focus on the deceased body, which can be seen in most of the Khitan tombs. In this case, an investigation into how much and in what ways the Khitan understood the “body,” or more specifically the “deceased body,” is warranted. Because the Middle Period witnessed frequent

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35 The contemporary Chinese tombs in the Liao Dynasties pay more attention to the structure and decoration of the space and the placement of the artifacts around the deceased rather than the body of the deceased. This will be discussed more in Chapter 3.
interactions of different traditions, it is necessary to explore the larger context in which the Khitan’s understanding of “body/deceased body” is generated. I will explore the understanding of the body during this period by examining the theories and practices as revealed in physiognomic, medical, and religious writings. Ultimately, I argue that there is a new understanding among Khitan nobles of the relationship between the interior and exterior body during this time.

**Understandings of the Body in the Middle Period**

Medicine in the Song dynasty shows an accurate understanding of the body and an interest in the relationship between the inner and exterior body. The Northern Song imperial medical official Wang Weiyi (ca. 987-1067), who served under Emperor Renzong (r. 1023-63), designed two bronze models of the human body (*tongren*) (Fig. 22) for educational purpose.\(^{36}\) Noted for the 354 acupuncture points (*shuxue*) marked on its surface, this model contained a set of life-size wooden inner organs neatly stuffed inside.\(^{37}\) Noticeably, an acupuncture model, the Bronze Man (*tongren*), is recorded in the *Liao History* as a tributary gift given by the Later Jin (936-47) to the Liao, which suggests that these bronze acupuncture models were regarded as desirable objects not only by the Song dynasty of China, but also the Liao and the other states that surrounded China.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{36}\) Wang Yinglin, *Yuhai (The Sea of Jade)* juan 63, in *Wenyuan ge siku quanshu dianzi ban*, Electronic ed. (Hong Kong: Dizhi wenhua chubanshe, 1999), 27.


\(^{38}\) For the complete text, see Tuo, “Ben ji di si” (The Biography of Emperor the Fourth), in *Liaoshi juan*. 4, 60.
In addition to the field of medicine, the Daoist practice during the Middle Period also demonstrated a special interest in the human body. “Inner Alchemy” (neidan) is a method of meditation practiced by Daoist masters that became popular during this period. “Exterior Alchemy” was popular before the Tang Dynasty (618-907), in which poisonous substances, for example “pine needles and resin, mushrooms, realgar, sulfur, mercury, arsenic, silver, and gold,” were usually cooked in a three-tiered brick oven and involved a chemical reaction that could create elixirs of life. However, this exterior operative alchemy came to an end in the Tang dynasty, because several emperors died from elixir poisoning. As an alternative, Inner Alchemy emerged as a method the Daoist masters used, which requires meditation through self-body imagination. It advocates, “retracing one’s steps along the road of bodily decay” and helps the Daoist masters to attain longevity and become immortals without death. In the Daoist classic text Lord Lao’s Wondrous Scripture of Interior Daily Practice (laojun nei riyong miaojing) in the Song Dynasty, Inner Alchemy is described as follows:

Naturally the fire of your heart will sink down to the water of your kidneys, and ascend to the cavern of your mouth, where sweet saliva will arise of itself. Then the numinous perfected will support you body, and spontaneously you know the path to eternal life...

The practice is illustrated in the Picture of Paying Homage to the Perfected (Yanluozi

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40 Kohn, “Modes of Mutation,” 21.

41 Huang, Picturing the true form, 65.

42 Sanjiaben ed. Daozang (The Daoist Canon) juan. 59 (Beijing:Wenwu chubanshe; Shanhai shuju; Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1988), 116a.
*chaozhen tu*) attributed to the tenth-century Daoist master Yanluozi.⁴³ In the four charts, we can see the internal organs and the relations between each of them (Fig. 23 a-d). These charts demonstrate Daoist understanding of the relationship between the exterior body and the inner organs, as well as how the organs functioned. On the other hand, there is another chart in the same book, which visualizes the “result” of Inner Alchemy: the bad energies inside the body are discharged from it, as several things in the shapes of human beings and strange animals are depicted outside of the body (Fig. 24). The chart shows how the imagination of one’s own body can not only control the inside body, but also discard “bad energies” from interior to exterior. Thus, the inside and outside of the body can possibly interact.

In Buddhism, the physical body is traditionally understood as dirty and useless. The flesh is merely composed of rotting organs and needs to be cremated as soon as possible.⁴⁴ However, a change in the understanding of the physical body occurred in Tang and Song dynasty. The term “Fashen” (dharmakaya), or “dharma body,” literally refers to the body of the Buddha’s teachings. Originally this is an abstract notion that cannot be visualized or materialized, but more immediate somatic connections appear to have dominated the formative stages of this concept as well as religious observances and popular perceptions during the Tang and Song dynasties.⁴⁵ In other words, the dharma body can be materialized as a corporeal body. In this context, the bodies of Buddhist statues, for example, could be understood as the demonstration of the dharma body. The


⁴⁴ Li, *Xuanhua liaomu*, 275.

practices of the Buddhist statues indicate a shift in understanding of the interior and exterior body. For example, a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha was discovered in the Timber Pagoda of the Liao dynasty in present-day Yingxian in Shanxi Province (Fig. 25). The exterior of the wooden body of the Sakyamuni Buddha’s huge statue was plastered and painted with color. Some 160 objects were discovered in a tubular structure inside the hollow body of the Buddha image. Most of these objects are sutra scriptures and other Buddhist writings, including 47 printed sutras, more than 30 manuscripts, and seven illustrations.\(^{46}\) In addition to inserting the documents into the statues, inserting the “inner organs” indicates even more explicitly a changing understanding of the body in Buddhism during the medieval period.\(^{47}\) The earliest extant and best-known examples of such fabric-based additions are deposited inside a cavity in the back of a dated Song (985) wooden statue of Shakyamuni Buddha preserved in Seiryoji, Kyoto (Fig. 26). Both examples suggest that rather than envisioning the body as a singular whole, there is a clearer understanding of the relation between the exterior and interior of the body than before. The inner organs are understood as something powerful that can give power to the exterior physical body as a whole.

Such understanding of the body is related to the unique treatment of the bodies of the dead monks, which is known as the ash icon (\textit{zhenrong xiang}). Such practice gained currency among some Buddhist communities during and after the Tang. Often representing the subject in a surprisingly realistic manner, such statues were either made of clay mixed with cremated ashes (called xiangni or ‘fragrant clay’), or contain cremated ashes.

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\(^{47}\) Huang, \textit{Picturing the true form}, 76.
ashes in their hollow bodies. The earliest surviving example of such a statue belonged to Hongbian (d. 962), the head of the Buddhist community at Dunhuang in the first half of the tenth century (Fig. 27).\(^{48}\)

This practice directly influenced the treatment of the body in Chinese tombs in the Liao dynasty. In a number of Liao-dynasty tombs in Xiabali near Xuanhua in Hebei province, Chinese archaeologists have discovered a type of funerary figure hitherto unseen (Fig. 28). These figures contained the cremated remains of the deceased and were crafted as life-size mannequins with movable joints and faces revealing life-like detail and individuation. Hseuh-man Shen argues that the use of mannequins in Xuanhua tombs implies the wish for the body to be resurrected, which goes against the Buddhist belief that the deceased’s body should not be preserved beyond death.\(^{49}\) But Li Qingquan argues that there is a direct relation between such treatment and the changed understanding of the body among Buddhist practitioners during the medieval period. He traces the development of how the “ash icon” used for the monk’s burials was gradually brought to the secular tombs. This is not the only thing that Chinese secular tombs brought from Buddhist burial practices at this time, as the structures of the tombs in Xuanhua are also influenced by Buddhist designs. The mannequin was interred in a rectangular coffin, the lid of which has four sloping sides. The coffin is called a ‘dharani coffin’ because it bears dharanis (mantra, or magic spells) on all four sides and on the top. The Sanskrit word dharani literally means to “preserve, maintain and uphold” the Buddha’s teachings in one’s heart. On one coffin there is a dedicatory inscription which clearly reveals the

\(^{48}\) Wu, *The Art of the Yellow Springs*, 142.

sutra’s function in a funerary context: “We wish that the merit (of copying the sutra) will be transferred to all dead and living beings, enabling them all to attain the ultimate Buddhahood.”

The polygonal chambers of the tombs in Xuanhua have also been shown to have connections to the Buddhist pagoda, and the structures of the whole tombs imitate the underground palace of a Buddhist pagoda. Thus the entire burial practice of the Chinese people in the Liao Dynasty is subject to that of Buddhism.

Khitan tombs fall within this context of people having a new understanding of the relation between the interior and exterior of the body, in which different traditions led to different practices. The contemporary Chinese tombs in the Liao demonstrate an intimate relationship to Buddhist burial practices. Although scholars have shown that the practices of Chinese people are also influenced by other traditions, we can see in Chinese tombs a systematic and complete practice that is learned from Buddhism—not only the treatment of the body, but also the entire structures of tombs and the inscriptions on coffins. On the other hand, the Khitan tombs are more complex and do not demonstrate one clear, dominant tradition. In fact, there is a special focus on the treatment of the body that is hitherto unseen—the body mesh netting, the metal face mask and the shoe soles, which were rooted in the earlier nomadic traditions along the steppe route. Besides these elements, the body in the Khitan tombs is also covered or decorated by all kinds of materials. A large number of the materials in relation to Buddhism, Daoism, Chinese cultures introduced in the first section of this chapter are on or around the bodies. In

50 I consulted Wu Hung’s translation in The Art of the Yellow Springs, 148.

51 Li, Xuanhua liaomu, 294-317.

52 Wu Hung also argues the relationship to Daoist funeral practice. See Wu, The Art of the Yellow Springs, 144-146.
comparison to the rest of the tomb, the body is tremendously decorated. Although structures of the tomb are developed in ways similar to those of Chinese tombs, the structure and decoration of the chambers within Khitan tombs never developed into as elaborate a form as the Chinese chambers. On the other hand, the decorations on the body within Khitan tombs are much more complex and time-consuming than in Chinese tombs. This study of the basic features of the Khitan nobles’ tombs and the understandings of the body in the medieval period establish a large cultural and historical context for further study on the how the artifacts on or around the body work within the specific context of the Khitan tombs.
As demonstrated in Chapter 1, although there are several fixed elements, the “hybridity” of the artifacts on or around the body makes the intention behind the treatment of the body unclear. The presence of many of “Chinese symbols” seemingly makes it appropriate to classify them as “Chinese-looking” tombs. But why was so much attention paid to the treatment of the body? In this chapter, I will explore how “Chinese-like” artifacts worked together and served the fundamental purpose of Khitan tombs—transforming the body.

The Khitan’s burial tradition prior to the establishment of the Liao Empire has been discussed in the introduction. However, the treatment of the body deserves further analysis. Early on in Khitan history, the dead body was not supposed to be preserved enduringly but ephemerally “place(d) on the trees in the mountains” for “three years.”

“After three years, they will collect the remains of the bones and cremate them.” Such complicated and ephemeral treatment of the body definitely has its ritual meaning. Cremating after three years rather than immediately suggests that a process of “transformation” is expected to happen to the body over three years. Also cremation after three years could imply not only another process of transformation, but also the end of transformation. However, such an intention to “transform the body” is vague in their

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53 Li Yanshou, “Qidan zhuan”, 3128.
54 Ibid.
early history. Nonetheless it became gradually concretized and even emphasized after the establishment of the Liao dynasty, as the Chinese traditions were integrated into the Khitan culture.

Although all Khitan tombs shared some basic similarities, the treatment of bodies within tombs actually varied widely from tomb to tomb, making it difficult to postulate shared concepts underlying these burial practices. Both the natural and man-made damage that has been incurred on these tombs make the analysis even harder. Fortunately, there is one tomb that is relatively well preserved. This is the tomb of the Princess of Chen and her husband Xiao Shaoju, dated 1018, (hereafter, Princess Tomb). It is located near Naiman Banner, Tongliao City, in Inner Mongolia. Its treatment of the body is among the most complex of all Khitan tombs that have been discovered: more than one hundred burial items that were placed either on the deceased couple or around them have been uncovered.\(^55\) In the Princess Tomb, the couple were dressed in silver mesh nettings, wore gilded silver boots and crowns, had golden face masks, and lay on gilded silver pillows with countless decorations made of gold, silver, jade, pearl, amber and agate.\(^{56}\)

The bodies of the deceased couple in the Princess Tomb serve as a useful test case for exploring the broader materials associated with the treatment of bodies in Khitan tombs. Here I will argue that the materials used on the deceased’s bodies are intended to ritually transform the posthumous body and help the body to heaven at the point of death.

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I will illustrate that there are two burial systems working together in the Princess Tomb, which conflated the Buddhist and Daoist belief.

1) Imitating Buddhist Deities

This section will provide evidence that the goal of the first system in this treatment of the dead bodies was to imitate the appearance of Buddhist deities. As introduced in Chapter 1, there is a Daoist figure on the Princess of Chen’s crown (Fig. 16-17). Although it is a Daoist figure, his cross-legged sitting posture on a lotus-petal base and a mandorla behind him recall a depiction of Amitabha Buddha that often appears on Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara’s crown. A similar form of the small figure on the crown can be seen on a Bodhisattva monstrance in the pagoda crypt of Famen from the Tang dynasty (Fig. 29, 30).

Several crowns in other Khitan tombs show obvious attempts to imitate the Buddhist deities. One penannular crown (Fig. 31) found in Zhangjia Yingzi, Jianping County, Liaoning province near the location of the Princess Tomb is almost the same as the contemporary crowns of Bodhisattvas found in Xia Huayan temple in Datong (Fig. 32). Francois Louis listed similar Bodhisattva’s crowns in several other sites of the Liao dynasty, including the Huayan temple in the western capital of Liao mentioned above, the

57 The Daoist figures make the procedure in the Princess Tomb more complex, which will be discussed later. Hseuh-man Shen ed., Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire (907-1125) (Milano: 5 Continents, 2006), 102.

58 Avalokitesvara is an emanation of Amitabha, who is a Buddha of boundless light and infinite qualities. The gilded bronze crown in Paoshouying that has four words in Sanskrit at the center part of the crown mentioned in the chapter 1 (Fig. xx) is shaped similarly to Xiao’s crown, which suggests clear relation to Buddhism.
Zhenjizhi temple of the ancient Supreme Capital of Liao, the Timber Pagoda of Ying county, and the Central Capital’s Fengguo temple in Yi county.  

Besides the crowns, the headrests of the couple suggest an intimate relationship to the halo of Buddhist deities. (Fig. 33, 34) They have the same pattern and material – the gilded phoenix birds and Ruyi clouds, which seem to indicate continuity with the crowns. The size of the headrests is quite large, and thus the images on the headrests are not concealed by the deceaseds’ heads. These two metal objects are more likely the halo of Buddhist deities than headrests.

In addition, the metal masks are intended to help transform the deceased into ‘deities’. One aspect of these masks is that the “face” was made differently. Some have opened eyes, like the two found in the tomb of the princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju (Fig. 5); some have closed eyes, like the two silver masks found at Wenjiatun, Lingyuan city, Liaoning (Fig. 35); and some have only drilled holes to represent the eyes, like one of the gilded masks found in Xiaoliuzhangzi, Inner Mongolia (Fig. 36). The variations suggest first that the function of the masks was not to prevent (visible and invisible) things from escaping from the faces, as some of the masks have holes in them. Second, the fact that masks had either open or closed eyes indicate that the masks reconstructed enduring faces, which could be awake or sleeping. In this case, rather than “masks”, perhaps it would be more appropriate to call them “enduring faces”. Whose faces do these masks represent? An inclination to imitate the faces of Buddhist deities can be seen clearly from one mask in the Capital Museum, Beijing. (Fig. 37) As Du Xiaofan has said,

“this mask looks just like the face of Bodhisattva in Liao dynasty.”  

In addition, one account of Buddhist traditions in the Liao text, *the Records of Khitan Kingdom*, suggests a possible relation between the masks and Buddhism. It says: “The northern women use the yellow things to paint the face, and called it ‘Buddhist makeup’.”

Several objects on the bodies also suggest a connection in Buddhist theology. The two amber bead necklaces on both of the deceased bodies imitate the attire of Bodhisattva (Fig. 38), as similar necklaces can be found in Cangjing Dong, Dunhuang dating to the Tang dynasty (c. 864) (Fig. 39). Another notable item is a lotus pendant set with suspended tools found on the princess’ abdomen (Fig. 40). It is noteworthy that a gilded bronze chain with pendants, shaped like tools similar to those on this jade pendant, was found in the relic depository enshrined in the crypt built under the Famen Pagoda in Shaanxi Province. These tools were believed to be necessities for the everyday life of Buddhist monks (Fig. 41).  

This object again suggests an attempt to transform the body of the deceased into a Buddhist deity.

As discussed in Chapter 1, mannequins were used in Liao tombs that belonged to the Chinese around this time. The mannequin, often inserted with the cremated remains of the deceased, was made to substitute for the physical body, and its seated posture seems to have been manipulated to imitate a seated Buddhist deity. Similarly, the Khitan practice imitates the practice of the Buddhist deity as well. However, the Khitan practice was not about replacing the cremated body, but refashioning it in the underground burial.

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60 Du Xiaofan, “Shitan liaomu chutu de mianju, tongsiwangluo yu zongjiao de guanxi—jian yu mahonglu tongzhi shangque” (Analyzing on the relation between the masks, mesh netting and the religions also as a discussion with Ma Honglu), *Minzu yanjiu*, no. 6 (1987): 24.

61 Ye Longli, *Qidan guozhi (the Records of the Khitan Kingdom)* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 242.

As Hseuh-man Shen states: “the entombed mannequins were understood not as mere representations of the deceased, but as their actual body.”

Like the mannequins, the imitation of the Buddhist deities by the Princess Tomb bodies was not merely decorative, but also demonstrates a spiritual intent that was to be realized in the afterlife. As Francois Louis has argued: “likening the deceased to a bodhisattva surely evoked ideas for the mourners at the funeral of her transcending karmic rebirth and entering paradise.”

Several historical records and archaeological traces suggest Tantric (mijiao) Buddhism was quite popular among the Khitan nobles. Large numbers of mandala statues and dharani were found in crypts of the Beita pagoda in Chaoyang, Liaoning. Dharani, the magic spells in Tantric Buddhism, were also uncovered in several Liao tombs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, one tantric mantra in a Khitan tomb with the title

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63 Again, Shen uses the word “manikin” instead of “mannequin”. Shen, “Body Matters,” 103.


65 Tantric Buddhism also can be called Vajrayana Buddhism or Exoteric Buddhism. In Chinese it is called mijiao (密教). It is a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which evolved over several centuries. Tantric Buddhism followed the same route into northern China as Buddhism itself, arriving via the Silk Road sometime during the first half of the 7th century, during the Tang Dynasty. Esoteric Mantrayana practices arrived from India just as Buddhism was reaching its zenith in China, and received sanction from the emperors of the Tang Dynasty.


“The mantra of Buddha with the wisdom to defeat hell” was obviously used to protect the deceased.  

The possibility of transforming the deceased’s body into a ‘deity’ can be seen in the tantric Buddhist theories. As Paul Williams has said:

The path to enlightenment in Tantric meditation… in the generation stage the meditator visualizes that he or she is already a ‘deity’… Thus in mediation the whole death process is transmuted into the path, and the body of the meditator is in this very life seen to be the pure body of a Buddha.

Thus death is in fact an important opportunity to be enlightened. Therefore, it is quite possible that the believers of Tantric Buddhism attempted to dress the deceased like the ‘deity’ to facilitate the deceased’s enlightenment through meditation.

However, a large number of the items found in the tombs cannot fit into the Buddhist practice. The Daoist figures on the crowns and a large number of the objects placed on the bodies themselves can only be understood in the context of a different belief system, and will be discussed in the next section.

2) Daoist Inner Refinement

Several records show that contemporary Khitan nobles may have practiced Daoism. The Records of the Khitan Kingdom (Qidan Guozhi) report that the princess of Chen’s uncle, the Emperor Shengzong (c. 972-1031): “mastered both the essences of Buddhism and Daoism.” Additionally, Shengzong’s younger brother Yelü Longyu established a

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68 Sun, “Liaodai muzang zhong de fojiao tike zongshu,” 75-81.


70 Ye, Qidan guozhi, 72.
grand Daoist temple in the Eastern capital. Furthermore, the acupuncture model mentioned in Chapter 1 was presented as a tributary gift to the Liao court. This last point indicates that the Khitan nobility may have been well informed on Daoist knowledge of the body. In this context, it is not accidental to see several Daoist elements in the Princess Tomb. This section will argue that one important system in this burial procedure that attempts to transform a deceased body into a purified body was based on Daoist “Inner Refinement” (neilian).

The mesh nettings cover the entire bodies of the deceased couple in the Princess Tomb. I will propose that the mesh netting enables a connection between the exterior and interior of the body (Fig. 4). This can be demonstrated by the comparison to the jade suit (Fig. 42) used to dress the deceased in Han dynasty (202BCE-220CE) China. Scholars have noted the similar structure between the mesh netting and the jade suit. However, they actually display two quite different treatments and understandings of the posthumous body. The jade suit is more likely a transformed jade body rather than a jade suit, since the corporeal corpse is completely sealed and replaced by jade. In contrast to the jade suits, with no jade covering the body, the mesh netting indicates the potential interaction between the interior and exterior of the body. This suggests an awareness of

71 Ye, Qidan guozhi, 153.
72 Huang, Picturing the true form, 76.
73 Mu, “Liao mu chutu de jinshu mianju, wangluo ji xiang guan wenti,” 28-34.
74 Even the genital and the organs on the face are sealed. Thus the corpse is absolutely sealed in side the “jade suit”. Wu, The Art of the Yellow Springs, 132.
the Daoist Inner Refinement, which involves the communication between the inside and outside of the body.\textsuperscript{75}

Most noticeable among the Daoist influences on the bodies in the Princess Tomb are the two Daoist figures that stand out on the headdresses on the bodies, especially the one on the princess’ headdress. Based on the sitting posture, the Daoist figure on the princess’s crown is the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning (\textit{yuanshi tianzun}), one of the highest Daoist deities (Fig. 17).\textsuperscript{76} The standing figure on the husband’s crown features a tortoise and a snake in front of him, both of which were signs of the Daoist Perfect Warrior (\textit{zhenwu}) (Fig. 19).\textsuperscript{77}

The Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning suggests a ritual of the Inner Refinement performed for soul salvation.\textsuperscript{78} Inner Refinement became popular in the twelfth and thirteenth century. It was derived from the principles of Inner Alchemy and is also a rite of internalization. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Inner Alchemy is a way for the Daoist masters to attain longevity and become immortals without death. Both Inner Refinement and Inner Alchemy are the internal rituals launched in the microcosmic body. The only difference between the two is that Inner Alchemy is performed by the Daoist master for the living master himself; on the other hand, Inner Refinement is performed by the Daoist master for the deceased in the funeral ritual. Inner Refinement aims to forge new divinities out of the deceased souls by way of the ritual master’s refinement of his

\textsuperscript{75} Wu, \textit{The Art of the Yellow Springs}, 136.

\textsuperscript{76} See Neimenggu zizhi qu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, \textit{Liao chenguo gongzhu mu}, 65. Also see Sun, “Liaodai daojiao wenhua yu xinyang de kaoguxue kaocha,” 36.

\textsuperscript{77} See Sun, “Liaodai daojiao wenhua yu xinyang de kaoguxue kaocha,” 36.

\textsuperscript{78} Huang, \textit{Picturing the True Form}, 270.
own body. I will point out that Inner Refinement is combined with Inner Alchemy, which allows the deceased to perform Inner Refinement for him/herself.

Both Judith Boltz and Susan Huang outline the performance of Inner Refinement. First, through controlling the movement of energy inside the body, the master uses his inner body as the ritual space to imagine that the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning emerges at the top of his head and rides on the cloud and the dragon, and heads towards the master’s abdomen that is perceived as the water/sea palace. He then opens hell’s door in the kidney, saves the deceased’s soul from hell, and purifies it in the water, a procedure called the “refinement through water” (shuilian). Then the master will imagine the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning leading the deceased’s soul to the heart, perceived as the fire palace, going through the backbone and purifying the soul in the fire, a procedure called the “refinement through fire” (huolian). Finally, in the imaginary framework promoted by the Daoist master, the dragon leads the soul to the master’s throat and arrives at his head, which is considered to be heaven in the Daoist framework of the body.79 Such body imagination demonstrates the intimate relation between the rite of salvation through refinement and the Inner Alchemy mentioned in Chapter 1. The inner ritual is possible to happen to the deceased’s body as a combination of the Inner Refinement and the Inner Alchemy. In other words, the deceased’s body is performing the refinement for herself. Therefore, the Heavenly Worthy on the princess’s crown can serve as the “guide” for the deceased’s Inner Refinement.

Other material elements on the couple’s bodies suggest a belief in Inner Refinement. Two observations support this view. First, the gilded silver boots use the

same materials and motifs as the crowns and headrests, which implies their intimate relation. All the phoenixes on the boots, crowns and the headrest have a common feature—they are in motion, flying upward. (Fig. 7, 16, 18, 33, 34) Their posture suggests a movement from the lower part of the body toward the top part. At the same time, there are usually fireballs accompanying the phoenixes. This upward movement corresponds to the performance of Inner Refinement: to rescue the deceased soul from hell (the lower part of the body), and transport it to heaven (the top part of the body). The fireballs suggest this connection to “refinement through fire”. Another noticeable phenomenon is that there are seventeen objects found on the bodies in the shape of creatures living in the water, such as fish, mandarin ducks, swans, lotuses, water snails, geese etc (Fig. 14, 43). The pair of earrings illustrates an interesting boating scene. “Two people with paddles in their hands row a boat in the shape of a dragon-fish (makara). The boat has a roofed area, providing shelter to the rowers. There are masts at the bows of two of the boats.”

It seems the figures are going across a river. The water implies the connection to “refinement through water”. Taken together, all of these items seem to suggest that the bodies are located in the water. Both the moving-up motion and the elements of fire and water echo the process of Inner Refinement.

In the Yemaotai tomb m7 (dated to the 980s) in present-day Yemaotai, Faku County, Liaoning Province, the deceased is covered by a two-meter-long quilt. It is decorated with a dragon, clouds, fireballs, mountains, water, and sea monsters, and the

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80 Shen, Gilded Splendor, 186.

81 The tomb is dated in the excavation report of No. 7 Yemaotai Tomb. See Liaoning shen bowuguan, “Faku yemaotai liaomu jiüe,” 26-37.
dragons are depicted as flying upwards (Fig. 44). Similarly, the elements of fire, water, and the ascending dragon suggest some connection to the idea of Inner Refinement.

In contrast to the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Being who guides the soul through the body, the role of the other Daoist figure on the husband’s headdress (Fig. 19)—the Perfect Warrior—is there to protect against malevolent spirits. According to Daoist belief, the demon kings caused the energies of the trigrams kan and li (yin-water and yang-fire energy as manifested in the world) to appear as a giant tortoise and snake, but the Perfect Warrior used his spiritual might to subjugate them under his feet. As a result, he became the special protector of all those beset by harmful spirits.⁸² Therefore the Perfect Warrior protects the deceased when performing Inner Refinement from the malevolent spirits.

There is a jade pendant found on the princess’s body that may have corresponded to the Perfect Warrior’s role in protecting the bodies from the attack by malignant spirits. It consists of a disk and chains with a set of five poisonous animals—a snake, a monkey, a scorpion, a toad and a lizard (Fig. 21).⁸³ The five poisonous animals here are related to the Daoist ideas of five poisons (wudu) usually visualized as five creatures.⁸⁴ The most common version of the five creatures includes the centipede, scorpion, snake, lizard (or spider) and toad. Although there is no centipede on the pendant but rather a monkey, it is

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⁸⁴ The wudu motif originally is associated with the Duanwu festival, which falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. It is considered as the most dangerous day of the year when people can be attacked by all kinds of poisonous creatures and deceases. Their imagery of the wudu was often used to ward off the venomous dangers of the creatures and deceases.⁸⁴ Several examples can be seen in the later period. One plated in Wanli periods of Ming dynasty (1573-1620) is printed with the five poisonous and Taoist master Zhang (Zhang tianshi), who is killing the five poisonous animals. The five poisonous were also found embroidered on the bags, carried people on the Duanwu festival. “Combating the poison with poison” (yidugongdu) is the function of these images of five poisonous animals. See Patricia Bjaaland Welch, *Chinese Art: a Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Pub, 2008), 20.
said that the specific menagerie of animals differed slightly across different time and places. The group of five animals on this jade suit is possibly the popular version of the five poisons in Liao culture.

The five poisons had a more abstract meaning of protecting the body from the five poisonous spirits during the rite of Inner Alchemy. *The Secrets Left in the Book of the Three Emperors* (*Sanhuang neiwen yimi*), edited by Daoist priests in the Tang and Song period, includes texts that explain the curses that can help the performance of Inner Alchemy. One such text in the Song Dynasty is titled *The Incantation to the Diseases* in which the five poisonous spirits are described as associated with the five directions, five colors, five elements, and most importantly, the five evil spirits/disease. The incantation reads:

Declare to the evil spirits: the cyan disease—the decayed wood in the east, the red disease—the blazing fire in the south, the white disease—the perforated gold in the west, the black disease—the bottomless river in the north, the yellow decease—the dirty soil in the center. In the four seasons and eight solar terms, because the inner heat is too strong, spirits cannot be nourished in the body. They get out of the body and become evil essences, which lead to the five poisons entering into the body and the body can be either too cold or too hot. I know the name of these evil spirits. Please get out of the body quickly. (You) cannot stay for long! Thus five poisonous spirits need to be expelled from the body to ensure the success of the Inner Alchemy.

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86 Daoist cosmology speaks of Wu Xing: the Five Elements, which are also the Directions. East corresponds to the element wood, the color green, the season spring, the sound of shouting, and the liver among bodily organs.

87 Sanjiaben, ed., *Zhengtong daozang* 18 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; Shanhai: Shanhai shudian; and Tianjin:Guji chubanshe, 1988), 581.
Not only for the living, but also for the deceased it is critical to get rid of the five poisonous spirits. There is also another passage in Taiqing Fifty-eighty Praying Text (Taiqing wushiba yuanwen), written during the Sui-Tang periods (581-907) illustrating how bodies suffered from the five poisons in the afterlife:

The common people...give luxurious burials for the corpses, but they do not realize that the deceased cannot realize the spirit souls (hun) and material souls (po), and thus the bodies will be entwined by the five poisons in the hell.\textsuperscript{88}

In other words, not only in the Inner Alchemy, but also in the salvation ritual for the deceased, Inner Refinement, the deceased body has to be protected from the attack of the five poisonous spirits as well. Therefore the jade piece of five poisonous animals placed on the princess was intended to prevent the five poisonous spirits from going into the five organs of the deceased couples’ bodies according to the process of Inner Alchemy.

Eight amber cicadas on the thighs of the princess imply the success of internal refinement (Fig. 45). The end result of Inner Alchemy is usually illustrated as a naked baby inside a circle that rises up from the alchemy stove. (Fig. 46) However, the successful result is also compared to the shelling of the cicada, following the cicada’s transformation from a suspended cocoon stage to their ultimate emergence as cicadas. Thus the cicada symbolizes the metamorphosis of purification in the process of Inner Alchemy.\textsuperscript{89} A text named Baoyizi sanfeng laoren danjue in the Yuan dynasty (c. 1270-1368), frequently used the phrases “the shelling of golden cicadas” as a metaphor to describe the purified bodies after Inner Alchemy. It says:

\textsuperscript{88} Sanjiaben, ed., Zhengtong daozang 3, 453.

\textsuperscript{89} Shen, Gilded splendor, 166.
After three hundred days, the saint embryo emerges. The embryo is complete with four limbs and five inner organs. … Similar as the shelling of the golden cicada, a new body emerges from the old body. The yang priest emerges as an infant.

Thus the eight amber cicadas on the deceased body in the princess tomb suggest the deceased couple achieved success in their posthumous Inner Alchemy—they were purified and regained their new bodies.

The corpses of the deceased couple are just like the shells of the cicadas, which have no use after the Inner Alchemy. This echoes the phenomenon that the bodies were seriously decayed, leaving behind only a few relics in the form of the skulls and teeth. Furthermore, the mesh nettings play a central role in this context. They were used to preserve the bodies during the process of Inner Refinement. After success, the meshes enable the finally purified new “bodies” to come out from the useless corpses, which is implied by the eight cicadas on the bodies.

The temporal performance of Daoist Inner Refinement on deceased bodies does not obey the tantric Buddhist understanding of the body. On the contrary, it actually is conflated with the Buddhist system. In both Daoism and tantric Buddhism, the lower part of the body is understood as the sea of suffering (kuhai). Thus the upward movement not only suggests the performance of Daoist Inner Alchemy, rescuing the soul from the hell, but also implies a journey to get out of the sea of suffering to salvation.

In both Daoism and Buddhism there are depictions of going across the sea of suffering during the medieval period. Susan Huang said the ocean-crossing guardian as

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90 Jin Yueyan, “Baoyizi sanfeng laoren danjue” (The alchemy secrets of the old man Baoyizi sanfeng), in Zhengtong daozang 4, ed. Sanjiaben (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; Shanhai: Shanhai shudian; and Tianjin:Guji chubanshe, 1988), 973-8.

91 The Buddhist-inspired term refers to the area below the kidneys and near the bladder. And the Daoist-inspired term seems refer to lower part according to Yan Luozi’s two charts placing alchemical symbols in the thorax and abdomen, which suggest the sea of suffering is at the lowest part. See Huang, Picturing the true form, 319.
an approach to salvation represents a new Buddhist image type that became popular in the ninth and tenth centuries.\footnote{Huang, \textit{Picturing the true form}, 322.} One example is a mural painting in Mogao Cave no. 17, Dunhuang, Gansu (Fig. 47). There are also many images depicting the eighteen immortals crossing the sea in Daoist salvation art from the medieval period (Fig. 48). A mural painting in the Yulin Cave no.3 suggests further conflation between Buddhism and Daoism (Fig. 49). It depicts the Bodhisattva crossing the sea with his entourage. Among these entourages, many of them are wearing Daoist suits and appear to be Daoist figures. In this case, it is quite possible that there is a journey of departure from the sea of suffering in the lower part of the body to the top and finally to salvation.

Finally, in the Princess Tomb, the two systems of dealing with bodies combine together to help the deceased couple to be purified and become immortal. Through imitating the bodies of Buddhist deities, it was believed that the deceased could be enlightened. In terms of Daoist Inner Refinement, the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning on the top of the princess’s crown leads the internal ritual that rescues the soul from hell to heaven. At the same time, the Perfect Warrior and the five poisonous animals prevent the evil spirits from going into the bodies. The process of moving upward also indicates the escape from the sea of suffering, which conflates Daoist and Buddhist understanding of the body. The deceased finally escape from the old body and the new bodies go on the journey to heaven.

The case study of the Princess Tomb demonstrates a clear relationship between the Chinese traditions and the Khitan traditions in the Khitan tombs of the Liao dynasty. The “Chinese-like” tombs of the Khitan are not subject to the Chinese understanding of “tombs”. On the contrary, the Chinese elements in the Khitan tombs are subject to and, at
the same time, concretized by the Khitan traditional understanding of the intention of the tomb—transforming the body.

In the last two chapters, I have demonstrated that in Khitan tombs, special attention was paid to the deceased body by placing large numbers of “hybrid” objects on or around it. Then I explored how the “hybrid” objects on the deceased body worked to transform the body in the burial context. In addition to the objects, this chapter will further argue that the special focus on the bodies can also be observed through the relation between the body and burial space. In other words, I will analyze how the corpse could be understood in the subterranean space of the burial. Furthermore, I will explore the relation between body and space of the tomb that suggests how the tomb was conceptualized in accordance with the nomadic tradition, which finally will illuminate the significance of the special focus on the deceased body in the Khitan tradition.

The shapes and layouts of the Khitan tombs developed in a trajectory similar to those of the Chinese ones. Based on their shapes layouts, Liao tombs can be divided into three periods.93 In the early period, before the reign of Emperor Jingzong (r. 969-982), most Khitan noble tombs were structurally quite simple with a single square burial chamber topped by a domed ceiling (Fig. 50); in the middle period, from the reign of

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93 These three stages demonstrated here based on several scholars’ research on staging the tombs in the Liao dynasty. The scholars basically have similar opinion toward the staging, but differences of their opinion still can be seen. For detailed discussion in staging the tombs in the Liao dynasty, see Wang Qiuhua, “Liaodai muzang fenyu fenqi de chutan” (The Staging and Partitioning of the tombs in the Liao Dynasty), Liaoning daxue xuebao 55, no. 3 (1982): 43-96. Li Yiyou: “Lüelun liaodai qidan yu hanren muzang de tezheng he fenqi” (The Staging and Characters of the tombs of Khitan people and Chinese people in Liao dynasty), in Zhongguo kaoguxue di liu ci nianhui lunwen ji (The Collected Papers in the Sixth Meeting of the Association of the Chinese Archaeology) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), 187-96.
Emperor Shengzong (r. 982-1031) to Emperor Xingzong (r. 1031-1055), while the multi-chamber burial became the norm, the main (rear) chamber was round in shape (Fig. 51); in the final period, from the reign of Daozong (r. 1055-1101) until the end of the Liao period in 1125, the shape of Khitan noble tombs developed into polygons, either a hexagon or an octagon (Fig. 52).  

In the early tradition before the establishment of the Liao Empire as discussed in the introduction, the deceased was not placed in a tomb. This early tradition thus seems contradictory to placing the deceased body in well-built and similar-shaped underground space as the Chinese people did, which seems to suggest a process of “Sinification”. However, a closer analysis of the underground space of the Khitan tombs suggests a different relationship between the chambers and the centralized position of body, which leads to a different ritual function of the space in the Khitan tombs of the Liao dynasty—“wrapping” the body. Such a ritual function of the underground space, I shall argue, was in line with the Khitan early funeral practice (without a physical tomb), yet relocating the practice inside fixed tombs for the deceased. 

The rear chamber, in which the corpse is placed, is always the center of the entire tomb and, to some extent, separated from the rest of the tomb. As mentioned above, the earliest noble tombs had only one chamber. Later when the multi-chamber burial became the norm, a locked door was also installed between the main chamber and the rest

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94 There are still round tombs in this stage, but polygonal tombs become much more prominent.

95 In addition, most of the tombs for people of the middle and lower classes in the Liao dynasty have only one chamber throughout the Liao period, and the shapes of the single chambers developed in the same way as the main chamber of the noble tombs. Both of the two indicate the necessity of the main chamber in the noble tombs. See Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu” (Analysis on the Khitan tombs in Liao Dynasty), Kaogu xuebao, no. 4 (2009): 497-546
of the tomb, suggesting the main chamber is a separate space that might have different ritual functions from the rest of the tomb.

Such a separation and difference of the main chamber from the rest of the tomb is also implied by the mural paintings within the tomb. The mural paintings usually appear in the front chamber, on ramps, and in corridors, but rarely in the main chamber itself.\textsuperscript{96} Murals in the front chamber usually depict the servants, while those in the ramp, show carriages and guards.\textsuperscript{97} Noticeably, especially in tombs dating from the mid tenth century to the mid eleventh century, the servants were painted standing and looking directly towards the rear chamber. As we can see in the Princess Tomb, the servants dressed in Khitan outfits are standing, facing towards the rear chambers (Fig. 53), implying that the main chamber is the center on which the rest of the tomb focuses.

The mural paintings in the front chambers, corridors, and ramps usually imply “outside or preparing to go outside.”\textsuperscript{98} As has been suggested, while the main chamber is the center, the murals in corridors and first chambers depict servants preparing or getting ready for a trip, and those in the ramps show carriages waiting for the tomb masters to start the trip. The servants painted in the front chamber of the Princess Tomb appear anxious and their facial expressions seem to suggest that they are “waiting” for the deceased couple, who are in the process of transforming their bodies (Fig. 54, 55).

Considering its separation from the rest of the burial as such, I propose to view the main chamber as a “private” space organized around the idea of wrapping the body. Li

\textsuperscript{96} The mural paintings are more frequently seen after mid tenth century. Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu” (Analysis on the Khitan tombs in Liao Dynasty), \textit{Kaogu xuebao}, no. 4 (2009): 497-546.

\textsuperscript{97} Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu,” 506 and 514.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
Qingquan points out that the rear chamber of the contemporary Chinese tomb is also a private space in contrast to the public nature of the front chamber, as the latter usually features mural paintings depicting banquets and other entertaining scenes, while the rear chamber usually depicts personal daily life inside the house, such as servants preparing teas and sutras for the masters. Thus the Chinese main chamber is meant to imitate the living person’s bedroom (qin). However, the “privacy” afforded by the main chamber of the Khitan tombs suggests a different meaning as it has no mural paintings on the walls. Instead of imitating the living person’s private room, the function of the main chamber is to “wrap” the body.

Although the way the deceased body was wrapped may differ, the main chambers usually could be taken as a “multilayered” structure, comprising, from the outermost layer, the architectural frame, the wooden or stone house-shaped sarcophagus, the coffin, meshed covers, and layers of dresses. Inside the multilayered structure, the deceased’s body was at the very center. One feature of the main chamber most explicitly suggests the concept of wrapping. In the major examples of the Khitan tombs, the interior wall of the chamber is usually installed with slabs of cypress wood. Li Yiyou characterizes it as one of the features of the Khitan tombs that make them different from the Chinese ones. The cypress wood on the walls not only adds another layer to the structure of the main chamber, but also changes the meaning of the space. Cypress wood is typically the material used to make the sarcophagus (guo), which houses the coffin (guan). Covered by

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99 Li says, the front chamber and the rear chamber, which correspond to “public” and “private” spaces, imitate the traditional Chinese house— the living room in the front and the bedroom at the back (qiantang houqin). See Li Qingquan, Xuanhua liaomu, 131-132.

100 See Li Yiyou: “ Lüelun liaodai qidan yu hanren muzang de tezheng he fenqi” 147.

101 In some tombs, the cypress wood is detached from the wall of the chamber.
slabs of the cypress wood that made the enclosing wall, the entire space of the main chamber seems to have been turned into yet another layer of wrapping the body, rather than an imitation of a house or a room for the deceased to perform his/her daily activities.

Such structure of the Khitan tombs of the Liao Empire leads to the further question what is the function of wrapping the body in such a multilayered sarcophagus? I will closely analyze the Yemaotai m7 tomb mentioned in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (Fig. 56), which represents the general paradigm of the Khitan tombs of the Liao Empire, to demonstrate the ritual function of the multiple layers within the rear chamber and also the ephemeral transforming process of the deceased’s body.102

The Yemaotai m7 tomb (dated from the 980s) was excavated in Liaoning province in 1974. The tomb occupant is a Khitan noble woman.103 Her corpse was wrapped within multiple layers— first, she was wrapped by ribbons (Fig. 57) and then wrapped by several cotton wadded robes with a cotton crown, boots, a veil, gloves and lots of jewelry made of different precious materials (Fig. 58); second, the body was covered by a quilt (Fig. 44); third, it was placed in a stone coffin (Fig. 59); fourth, the coffin was preserved in a wooden house-shaped sarcophagus (Fig. 60); and finally the wooden sarcophagus was placed in the main chamber of the tomb (Fig. 61).104

In this case, the wooden house-shaped sarcophagus is the most centric part in the rear chamber, as it has a three-layered structure and the body at the center. I propose that

102 One reason makes this case study possible is that the Yemaotai m7 tomb is much less destructed by human in the later generations than most of the other Khitan tombs, which enables us to explore the original ideas of the tomb-design.


this sarcophagus is a mechanism that makes the “self-transformation” happen. One painting hung inside the sarcophagus is the most significant element in it (Fig. 62).  

This painting looks similar as the Chinese landscape painting during the Middle Period, as characterized by the materials of ink and silk, the composition, and the brushstrokes. On the top, there are several peaks partly dissolved in the clouds. In the middle, a pavilion is shaded by the pine trees over the cliff. In front of the pavilion, two figures are playing chess (Fig. 63). Under the cliff there seems to be a tunnel as suggested by a door on the foot of the mountain. A figure, with two servants, is holding a stick and walking toward the door of the tunnel (Fig. 64).  

A further analysis suggests three characters of the painting that differentiate it from the contemporary Chinese landscape paintings. In fact, it is a ritual-functioned painting. First, as Yang Renkai points out that all the trees in the mountain are pine trees, while the contemporary Chinese painting features diversified trees (Fig. 65). The pine tree was perceived as spiritually powerful plant that was the elixir of life during the Middle Period. It is said in The Records of Songgao Mountain (Songgao shanji) compiled in the tenth century:

The Songgao mountain has a huge pine tree, which can be hundreds of years old. Its spirit can change into blue cow or the spiritual turtle (yuan). If eat its fruit, you’ll become immortal.

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105 There is actually another painting adjacent to this painting, which depicted birds, bamboos and two rabbits. The purpose and meaning of this painting are not clear currently and need further analysis.


107 Yang Renkai, “Yemaotai liaomy chutu guhua de shidai ji qita” (The date and other things about the old paintings excavated in the Yemaotai tomb), Wenwu 12 (1975) : 44.

Thus, the mountain in the painting covered by the pine trees turns to be a deified mountain.

Second, both the pavilion and the door of the tunnel are in red, which not only stands them out from the rest, but also emphasizes the connection between the two. Most importantly, it indicates an impending ascending movement of the figure from the foot of the mountain to the pavilion where the two figures are playing chess. “Playing chess” was a prominent motif in the Chinese tombs since the Han dynasty (Third Century BCE) and was continuously seen in the Liao tombs (Fig. 66), which is considered as a way to contact the deities and become immortalized.\(^{109}\) Thus, the people playing chess were understood as immortals or will-be immortals. In this case, the tunnel serves as a conduit from the world of man to the spiritual world. Both this impending trip to the immortals and the mountain with spiritual trees transfer the subject of the painting from “landscape” into “immortalization.”

Additionally, this painting is hung on the back wall inside the wooden “house,” and the door of this wooden sarcophagus was locked, which suggest the painting can be only seen by no one else but the deceased’s soul. Observing this painting of “immortalization” in such a closed space without disturbance echoes the performance of Inner Alchemy that has mentioned in Chapter 2, in which a private space was required and observing the visualized process of purification was also an important way to guide the performer to purify and immortalize him/her self.\(^{110}\) The image used for Inner Alchemy is called the chart of Inner Realm.

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\(^{110}\) Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, 67.
Landscape, specifically mountain, is the prominent subject in the chart of Inner Realm (Fig. 67). Since landscape served as a standard reference for nature as a whole, the “landscape in miniature” of the body’s interior was comparable to the internal microcosmic display of a cosmic body, as we can see from the charts of the inner realm that were usually illustrated in the shape of mountain. There is always an indication of movement inside the mountain. In this chart, the movement is implied by the flowing water, as a guide of the energy movement inside the body. The painting inside the closed sarcophagus in the Yemaotai tomb shared the similar symbolic meaning with the chart of Inner Realm and the impending journey also emphasizes the movement inside the mountain, both of which suggest the ritual function of the sarcophagus as a mechanism to immortalize the body.

On the other hand, the sarcophagus is also connected to the rest of the rear chamber as well, which is also suggested by the door of sarcophagus and two stairs in front of it (Fig. 58). In this case, an investigation into the relationship between these two spaces is warranted. In fact, the sarcophagus and the rest part of the rear chamber refer to not only two layers of space, but also two layers of time. There are chesses and chessboard and pine nuts outside the sarcophagus (Fig. 68, 69), which corresponds to the painting inside the sarcophagus—the immortals playing chess and the pine trees covering the mountain. However, in the painting, as the figure’s journey to the immortals has not occurred yet, both the chess and pine trees are far away. Contrarily, the physical chess is displayed outside the sarcophagus in the rear chamber, and the real pine nuts are available in the dishes as well, both of which turns to be reachable here. The coherence and difference of the two layers indicate that the sarcophagus and the rest of the rear chamber refer to two
different time durations—transforming and successfully transformed. Nevertheless, staying in the layer of the rear chamber outside the sarcophagus is also temporal as the deceased was immortalized and, thus, supposed to go to heaven.

In this case, the whole tomb is a mechanism for the body transformation. Although this tomb has lasted long, its ritual function is temporal and ephemeral; the body would transcend all the layers of the tomb and finally abandon the tomb. This ephemerality of the concept of “tomb” is fundamentally different from Chinese posthumous “happy home,” but consistent to Khitan early burial rituals.
CONCLUSION

The funeral art of the Khitan has traditionally been viewed as exotic or barbarian and thus has been largely ignored by Chinese art historians or merely treated as the “other.” An exception is the recent work by Tsao Hsingyuan, who proposes the concept of “Khitanization,” a reversal from the usual Sinification, in arguing that the Chinese tombs of the Liao dynasty were actually “Khitanized” by the Khitan traditions. Indeed, “Khitanization” helps us to observe in the case of Khitan burial practice that the Khitans not only appropriated Chinese traditions for their own purposes, but developed unique features of their own, the most important of which are the hybrid cultural origins of burial items and the particular attention paid to the ways in which the deceased were treated, dressed and framed in the space of the underground chamber.

The Khitan tombs of the Liao dynasty are seemingly Chinese at first glance, but, in fact, concretized a uniquely Khitan traditional concept of “tomb.” In Chapter 1, I set up a basic framework for my research on the Khitan tombs. I proposed that the Khitan tombs placed particular focus on the ways with which the deceased’s body was dealt. Although there are consistent elements, the feature of “hybridity” reveals the intense concern with the treatment of the body that differentiates the Khitan tombs from the Chinese ones. My  

111 It is written as “Qidanization” in Tsao’s paper. As Tsao chooses to use “Qidan,” the Chinese pinyin romanisation, to refer to the people who established the Liao. Hsingyuan Tsao, “For Heaven’s Sake: Different Worlds for the Dead in the Liao and Song Dynasties,” in Differences Preserved: Reconstructed Tombs from the Liao and Song Dynasties (Portland; Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2000), 3-21.
analysis of the understandings of the body in different traditions during the medieval period serves as the critical background for further research on how and why the Khitan paid special attention to the treatment of the body in their burial practice and their concept of “tomb”. In Chapter 2, by analyzing the tomb of the Princess of Chen and her Husband Xiao Shaoju as a case study, I explored how “Chinese-like” elements worked together to serve the traditional intention of “tomb”—namely to “transform” the body. In Chapter 3, I proposed that the idea of “wrapping” helps explain the meaning of the space in the Khitan tomb. “Wrapping” concretized the Khitan’s traditional understanding of “tomb”—not making tombs for the deceased and focusing on the treatment of the body, which finally answers the question of why the Khitan paid so much attention to the deceased body.

Interestingly, it is because of the interactions with the Chinese traditions that a unique Khitan burial tradition was gradually concretized and articulated. The process of concretization is like the emergence of the word “nabo”. As mentioned in the introduction, nabo is a concept that developed from the nomadic lifestyle of the Khitan people before the establishment of the Liao Empire. However, it is only after the establishment of the Liao Empire that such a sociocultural practice was emphasized and concretized in the use of the word. This geographic practice was even developed into an official policy of the Liao, thus strengthening national consciousness and the Khitan identity, which might have been prompted by the involvement of the Chinese tradition. Similarly, the concept of “tomb” under the nomadic tradition was developed into a structure in which the deceased’s body was “wrapped” and “transformed.” The Chinese elements involved and the changing understandings of the body during the medieval
period among different traditions served this concept of “tomb” under the nomadic tradition.

This analysis of the Khitan tombs in the Liao dynasty can serve as a pattern for other research on those “Chinese-looking” cultures. As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, the Liao had several contemporaneous neighbors in the north and West: Xizhou Uighur (c. 866-1369), Western Xia (c.1038-1227), and the Jin Empire(c. 1115-1234) all rose up from nomadic people during this medieval period when different cultures interacted with each other among the Eastern and Central Asian Steppe. As nomadic people, the cultural development of these groups carries certain parallels with that of the Liao. This paper may shed light on the research of these regions in a way that treats them as something more than just the “other” to China.

In fact, the issue of cultural hybridity actually occurred in all cultures in all periods not only in the modern world but also the premodern world. Finbarr B. Flood says: “(the) notion of trasculturation acknowledges that cultural formations are always already hybrid and in process.”\footnote{Finbarr B. Flood, \textit{Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu-Muslim Encounter} (Princeton: Princeton University, 2009), 9.} In a global sense, the cultural encounter during the medieval period also happened in other regions, for instance, the Ilkhanids in the thirteenth century, Normans in Sicily (1130-1816 CE), and also between Islamic and Hinduism in the South Asia during the medieval period. The Liao example demonstrates the complexity and multidirectional nature of the transculturation, which provides an important insight into this broader historical issue of “hybridity.”
ILLUSTRATIONS


Map 4 Sites along the Steppe Route where Body Attire has been excavated. (After Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao (907-1125) Khitan Elite,” Map 8)
Fig. 1 Drawing of the Cut-away perspective of Baisha Tomb 1, Henan Prov, China. (After Su Bai, Baisha songmu (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002), P. 23)

Fig. 2 Detailed reliefs depicting columns, brackets, beams in Baishan Tomb 1, Henan Prov, China. (After Su Bai, Baisha songmu, Color Cat. 2)

Fig. 3 Illustration showing a typical Chinese aboveground timber-frame buildings, from Yingzao fash. Song dynasty (960-1279 CE), China. (After Wei-Cheng Lin, “Underground Wooden Architecture in Brick: A Changed Perspective from Life to Death in 10th- through 13th-Century Northern China,” Archives of Asian Art (61) 2011 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002), Fig. 13)
Fig. 4 Burial suit from the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Silver Wire. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 1)

Fig. 5 Golden Mask belonging to the Princess of Chen from the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gold. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 2)

Fig. 6 One of a pair of silvered bronze shoe soles belonging to the male found in a joint burial in Wenjiatun, Lingyuan, Liaoning. Bronze. (After Han Baoxing, “Lingyuan wenjiatun liaomu fajue jianbao,” *Liaohai wenwu xuekan*, no. 1 (1994): Fig. 4.6)

Fig. 7 Pair of Boots belonging to the Princess of Chen from the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gilded Silver. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 4)
Fig. 8 The relic of the body mesh netting discovered in the tomb No. 1 in Xiabali, Xuanhua, Hebei Prov. (After Liu Haiwen, ed., Xuanhua xiebali il qu liao bi hua mu kao gu fa jue bao gao (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008), Cat. 5)

Fig. 9 Gilt bronze shoe soles found in Kogutyo tomb in Ji’an, Jilin. (After Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao (907-1125) Khitan Elite,” Fig. 4.11)

Fig. 10 Cut-out decration on woman’s leather boot in Barrow 2, Pazryk, south Siberia. (After Kinoshita, “Burial Practices of the Liao (907-1125) Khitan Elite,” Fig. 4.10)
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Fig. 12 *Hemp facemask found at Yuli, Xinjiang.* Second-third century. (After, “Burial Practices of the Liao (907-1125) Khitan Elite,” Fig. 4.19)
Fig. 13 Three small cups, on the corpse of the Princess of Chen from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Rock crystal, gilded silver. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 101 a-c)

Fig. 14 Pair of earrings near the ear of the corpse of the Princess of Chen from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Amber, pearl. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 45a-b)

Fig. 15 Sachet with openwork decoration, near the waist of the corpse of the Princess of Chen from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gold alloy. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 23)
Fig. 16 Burial Crown on the head of the corpse of the Princess of Chen from the tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaouju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gilded silver. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 3)

Fig. 17 The drawing of the Daoist figure on the Princess of Chen’s Burial Crown. (After Neimenggu zizhiwenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al., *Liao chenguo gongzhu mu* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1993), Fig. 40-2)

Fig. 18 Burial Crown on the head of the corpse of Xiao Shaouju from the tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaouju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gilded silver. (After Neimenggu zizhiwenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Liao chenguo gongzhu mu*, Color Cat. 16)

Fig. 19 The drawing of the Daoist figure on the Princess of Chen’s Burial Crown. (After Neimenggu zizhiwenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al., *Liao chenguo gongzhu mu* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1993), Fig. 42-2)
Fig. 20 Burial Crown from a tomb in Xiao lamagou. Lingyan, Liaoning in the Liao Dynasty. Gilded silver. (Photo taken by the author in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang, China)

Fig. 21 Pendant set with decorations of the five poisonous animals belonging to the Princess of Chen from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Jade. (After Shen ed., Gilded Splendor, Cat. 44)
Fig. 22 Human model for acupuncture. Ming dynasty, ca. fifteenth century. Bronze. (After Shih-shan Susan Huang, *Picturing the true form: Daoist Visual culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), Fig. 1.51)
Fig. 23 a-d *Sectional Body Charts by Yanluozi*, Tenth century. Woodblock print, Ink on Paper. (After Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, Fig. 1.45 A-D)

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Fig. 25 Cross-section of Sakyamuni Buddha stature at the fourth level of Shijiata Pagoda. (After Hseuh-Man Shen, “Realizing the Buddha’s ‘Dharma’ Body during the Mofa Period: A Study of Liao Buddhist Relic Deposits,” Artibus Asiae 61, no. 2 (2001): Fig. 29)

Fig. 26 Textile models of inner organs deposited in the wooden statue of Sakyamuni Buddha. Northern Song dynasty, before 985. (After Susan, Picturing the True Form, Fig. 1.52)
Fig. 27 Sculpted portrait of Hongbian in Cave 17 of the Mogao Grottoes. Dunhuang, Gansu. Five Dynasties, tenth century. (After Wu Hung, The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), Fig. 138)

Fig. 28 Mannequin from a tomb at Yihenuoer, Balin Right Banner. Wood. Liao Dynasty, Eleventh or early twelfth century. (After Shen ed., Gilded Splendor, Cat. 52)
Fig. 29 Bodhisattva monstrance, Tang dynasty, from the crypt of Famen Pagoda.
817. Gilded. (After Shaanxi shen kaogu fajue baogao et al., ed., Famensi kaogu fajue baogao shang, Fig. 79)

Fig. 30 Detail of the small Amitaba on the Bodhisattva’s crown in the Faman Pagoda.

Fig. 31 Burial Crown from the tomb in Zhangjiayingzi, Jianping County, Liaoning. Liao dynasty. Bronze. (After Feng Yongqian, “Liaoning shen jianping, xinmin de sanzuo liaomu,” Kaogu, no.2 (1960), Fig. 12)
Fig. 32 Crowns of the Bodhisattva Boqie jiaocang Hall, Xiahuayan Pagoda in Datong, Shanxi. Liao Dynasty. Bronze. (After Qi Qinyuan, “Zhongguo beifang diqu liaodai yu beisong pusa xiang zaoxing fenxi,” Yishushi yanjiu, no.12 (2010), Fig. 1-1, 1-3)

Fig. 33 The Headrest belonging to the Princess of Chen belonging to the Princess of Chen from the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gilded Silver. (After Shen ed., Gilded Splendor, Cat. 5)

Fig. 34 The Headrest belonging to the Princess of Chen belonging to Xiao Shaoju from the tomb of princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. Ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Gilded Silver. (After Neimenggu zizhiwu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Liao chenguo gongzhu mu, Color Cat. 9)
Fig. 35 Burial mask from the tomb in lingyuan wenjiatun, Liaoning. Liao Dynasty. Silver. (After Han Baoxing, “Lingyuan wenjiatun liaomu fajue jianbao,” p. 24)

Fig. 36 Burial mask, Liao Dynasty, From the tomb Xiaoliuzhangzi, Zhaowudameng, Ningchen County, Bronze. [After Neimenggu zizhiqu wenwu gongzu dui, “zhaowudamengning cheng xiaoliuzhangzi liao mu fajue jianbao,” Wenwu, no. 9 (1961)]

Fig. 37 Burial mask, Liao dynasty, Gilded Bronze. (After Photograph taken in the Capital Museum, Beijing)
Fig. 38 Two amber bead necklaces from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Amber. (After Shen ed., Gilded Splendor, Cat. 37 a-b)

Fig. 39 Necklaces of the Bodhisattva, Tang(864), Cangjing dong, Dunhuang. [After Qi, “Zhongguo beifang diqu liaodai yu beisong pusa xiang zaoxing fenxi,” Yishushi yanjiu, no. 12 (2010), Fig. 7-..]

Fig. 40 Pendant on the Corpse of the Princess of Chen from the Tomb of Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Jade (After Neimenggu zizhiqu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Liao chenguo gongzhu mu, Color Cat. 9)

Fig. 41 Pendant from the Famen Pagoda., Tang Dynasty. Fufeng county, Shaanxi. Gilded bronze. (After Zheng Xusheng, “Liujin tong diejue shishi,” Jinri minghang, no. 11 (2009), P. 84)
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Fig. 45 Cicadas on the Deceased couple’s bodies from the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Amber. (After Shen ed., *Gilded Splendor*, Cat. 34 a-d)

Fig. 46 Naked body symbolizing the “end result” of inner alchemy from illustrations of the Return of the Liquefied Gold to the Cinnabar Field, detail. Song Dynasty. Woodblock print, ink on paper. (After Huang, *Picturing the True Form*, Fig. 1.43)
Fig. 47 Vaisravana Crossing the Ocean from Mogao Cave no.17. Tang dynasty, ninth century. Dunhuang, Gansu. Hanging scroll, Ink, color and gold on silk. (After Huang, Picturing in True Form, Fig. 6.34)

Fig. 48 Eight immortal on clouds. Jin dynasty (1115-1234). Ceramic pillow made by the Zhang Family. (After Huang, Picturing the True Form, Fig. 6.33)
Fig. 49 Manjusri and His Enrourage Crossing the Ocean from the north side of the Western wall, Yulin Cave no.3. Western Xia dynasty (1038-1227). Jiuquan, Gansu Prov.. Wall painting. (After Huang, Picturing the True Form, Fig. 6. 35)

Fig. 50 The First period of the Khitan tombs. (After Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu,” Kaogu xuebao, no. 4 (2009), Fig. 1)
Fig. 51 The Second period of the Khitan tombs. (After Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu,” Kaogu xuebao, no. 4 (2009), Fig. 5-3)

Fig. 52 The third period of the Khitan tombs. (After Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu,” Kaogu xuebao, no. 4 (2009), Fig. 9-4.)
Fig. 53 Drawing of the mural paintings on the East and West walls of the front chamber and the ramp in the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiaoshaoju. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. (After Liu Wei, “Liaodai qidan muzang yanjiu,” Kaogu xuebao, no. 4 (2009), Fig. 6-1,2)

Fig. 54 The mural painting on the east wall of the front chamber within the tomb of the Princess of Chen and Xiao Shaoju. detail. ca. 1018. Qinglongshan Town, Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia. Wall painting. (After Shen ed., Gilded Splendor, Fig. 48)

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Fig. 62 A Landscape painting hung inside the wooden sarcophagus in the Yemaotai m7 tomb, Liaoning Prov. Ink and color on Silk. (After the Liaoning Provincial museum)

Fig. 63 Detail of the landscape painting in the Yemaotai m7 tomb: Two figures playing Chess in front of the pavilion. (After the Liaoning Provincial museum)

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Fig. 65 Fan Kuan, Landscape with Secluded Chess Players, late 10th c. Song dynasty. Ink on silk
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Fig. 68 The chesses and chessboard in the main chamber outside the Sarcophagus. Yemaotai m7 tomb (After Wang Qiuhe, Jingshi yemaotai, p. 6)

Fig. 69 Pine nuts within the pinecones in the plate in front of the Wooden Sarcophagus. Yemaotai m7 tomb. (After Liaoning shen bowuguan, Fig. 5)
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