MEANINGS OF WORSHIP IN WOODEN ARCHITECTURE IN BRICK

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ABSTRACT

Yin Wu: Meanings of Worship in Wooden Architecture in Brick
(Under the direction of Wei-Cheng Lin)

The brick burial chamber built to imitate the wooden structure that became popular since the late Tang period was usually understood as a mimicry of the aboveground residence. Its more and more elaborate construction toward the Jin period was also often described as representing the maturity of the “wooden architecture in brick.” In this paper, however, I argue that the increasing elaboration of the form, in fact, indicates a changing meaning of the tombs. To this end, this paper investigates the “wooden architecture in brick” built in the 12th-century tombs of the Duan family in Jishan, Shanxi province from two interrelated viewpoints—that of the fabricated world of the tomb owner and that of the realistic world of the burial chamber. I suggest that the complicated style of “wooden architecture in brick” does not mean a more magnificent imitation of the aboveground residence. Rather, when considered with other decorations in the chamber, the burial space was constructed for the deceased with reference to a temple, or a shrine. This suggested reference thus turns the chamber into a space of the deity, where the tomb master was revered, indeed, as a deity.
To my family
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vi

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .......................................................................................... vii

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER 1 .................................................................................................................. 8

CHAPTER 2 ................................................................................................................ 14

CHAPTER 3 ................................................................................................................ 21

CONCLUSION .............................................................................................................. 28

APPENDIX : TABLE A ............................................................................................... 31

ILLUSTRATIONS ....................................................................................................... 34

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................... 43
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE A ................................................................................................................................. 32
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Front chamber of Tomb 1 at Baisha, Henan Prov, China. .................................35
Fig. 2 Tomb of Emperor Taizong of Song Queen Li of Yuande, Henan Prov, China ........35
Fig. 3 North wall of M4, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China .................................36
Fig. 4 Plan of the Duan cemetery, Ma village, Shanxi Prov, China ............................36
Fig. 5 South wall of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China ...............................37
Fig. 6 Xumizuo in M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China .................................37
Fig. 7 North wall of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China ...............................38
Fig. 8 Bracket system of Chongfu temple, Shuozhou, Shanxi Prov, China ....................38
Fig. 9 Brackets and eave of M8, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China .......................39
Fig. 10 South wall of M4, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China ...............................39
Fig. 11 Plan of the temple of god of cattle, Wei village, Linfen, Shanxi Prov, China ....40
Fig. 12 Figurines of tomb owners of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China .........40
Fig. 13 Fodao zhang tuyang ......................................................................................41
Fig. 14 Huanmen in M1, Ma village, Jishan (Photography by author) .........................41
Fig. 15 shrine in the Zhuanjiao hall of Golden Cave Temple in Xinzhou .....................42
Fig. 16 suspended columns in tomb No. 1 of the Dong family in Houma, Shanxi ......42
Fig. 17 sutra cabinets (bizang) in the Bojjiajiao Hall at the Huayan Temple in Datong ...43
INTRODUCTION

At around 2000 BCE, the occurrence of guo, the wooden structure covered the coffin, complicated the structure of Chinese tombs. A casket grave (guo mu) is a kind of tomb with a box-like timber structure buried at the bottom of a vertical shaft.¹ Some complex casket graves have multiple compartments and layers of coffins. However, such a tomb structure is a self-contained unit, which has no access allowing people to walk in. During the second century BCE, a new type of tomb occurred: the chamber grave (shi mu). Constructed horizontally, chamber graves formed a space like the interior of above-ground buildings. The invention of the “chamber grave” that could be entered as if a living space changed the conception of tomb space. The tomb was no longer a “box” with objects buried underground, but created a house-like space for the deceased.² This underground space provides a new way to create and conceive the afterlife space for the dead; and the decorations on walls unrestricted by a tomb’s architectural scale.³

With the invention of chamber graves, there occurred the decoration in tombs that imitate above-ground architecture, such as bracket sets and column, which is usually termed as fang mugou, “imitating wooden structure”, or wooden architecture in brick.⁴ In this paper, I will use

¹ See Wu Hung, The Art of the Yellow Spring: Understanding Chinese Tombs (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010) 20; The term guo mu (casket grave) and shi mu (chamber grave) were created by Huang Xiaofen, see Han mu de kaoguxue yanjiu (An Archaeological Study of the Han Dynasty Tombs) (Changsha: Yuelushushe, 2003).
² Wu, The Art of the Yellow Springs, 24-25.
³ Ibid, 41.
⁴ The “wooden architecture in brick” was put forward by Wei-Cheng Lin. He argues that the term “imitating wooden structure” has in the past been employed to emphasize the result of the imitation, eliding the material contradiction between “wooden”
the term “wooden architecture in brick” indicating the wooden architectural components that
were replaced by brick constructed in tombs. The wooden bracket and column molded in brick
had been seen in tombs as early as the Xinmang (9-23 CE) to the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220
CE). During the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (220-589 CE) gate houses were
produced in brick that imitated wooden structures in tombs. During the Tang dynasty (618-907
CE), many tombs of aristocrats are decorated with murals of wooden architectural components.
Since the late Tang Dynasty, the wooden architecture in brick had become popular in tomb
chambers in which various building components appeared in the tomb with more delicate
workmanship: Bracket sets between columns came into being between column heads bracket,
and more complicated bracket occurred, such as dan ang sipuzuo (one cantilever and four-tier
bracket sets) at the column head in the tomb of Emperor Taizong of Song Queen Li of Yuande.
Also in the tomb of Queen Li, there are rafter and carved eaves and eaves tile.⁵ (Fig. 1) These
architectural details are non-structured decoration in tomb chamber, indicating that the
manifestation of wood-imitation buildings was becoming realistic, delicate and abundant. In
Baisha tomb of the Song Dynasty, for example, there are seven types of bucket arches in
different location of the tomb. In addition, the components of the bucket arch varied, such as
cantilever (ang), protruding timber element on top of bracket set (shua tou) etc. There are other
building components manifested in the tomb, such as coffer with hexagon motif (douliu zaojing),
ceiling (pingqi). The manifestation of wooden architecture in brick became more and more
complicated.

architecture and the “brick” used to stimulate it. 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): 5.

In addition to various components, the grade of shape and structure tended to be advanced. The brackets in many tombs show high-ranking and are oversized. For example, according to the provisions of the system of the Song Dynasty, “the residence of ordinary people should not have multiple sets of brackets, caisson ceiling and colorful decorations.”\(^6\) From which we can know about the rank of bracketing system. The bracket in Baisha tomb of the Song Dynasty is high-ranking, which are brackets with four or five units. High-ranking bracket are frequently seen in the tomb of ordinary people in late Northern Song Dynasty to Jin Dynasty. At the same time, the proportion of bracket set was enlarged. In above-ground buildings, the height of bracket is usually one-third of that of columns,\(^7\) and the proportion of bracket in tombs before the late Song dynasty usually conforms to that of the buildings on the ground. However, in Baisha tomb, the height of bracket set exceeds a half of the height of columns. (Fig. 2) In addition, all the architectural components are painted colorfully. According to the study by Su Bai, except for the small bracket on top of the rear chamber, subject and patterns of painting are similar to the overall colored painting system (wucai bianhuang) recorded in *Yingzao Fashi* (Treatise on Architectural Methods, published in 1103).\(^8\) Overall colored painting is generally used for high-ranking hall (diantang) rather than the residence of ordinary people.\(^9\)

Many tombs from the late Northern Song Dynasty to the Jin Dynasty, approximately eleventh-thirteenth century are decorated with complicated architectural components. In the

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region of southern Shanxi Province,\textsuperscript{10} where architectural motif are emphasized in the tomb. In the case of the Duan family tombs, which is located in Ma Village, Jishan County at Shanxi province: in addition to the brick columns, bracket sets, and eaves commonly seen in tombs of Song and Liao Period. (Fig. 3) There are \textit{xumizuo} (Sumeru pedestal)\textsuperscript{11} of more than ten layers, and a variety of wooden joinery work (xiaomuzuo), such as carved lattice doors; The roof is also manufactured in a luxuriant way: double eaves are built in some tombs which are alternatively decorated with beasts (\textit{Taoshou})\textsuperscript{12} and dragon (\textit{Chiwen})\textsuperscript{13}.

There are differences between wooden architecture in brick in tombs and above-ground buildings. Above-ground buildings in ancient China are timber-frame structures constructed by various wooden components, and “all load was borne by the wooden structure; It is column and beam served as bearing parts rather than the walls”.\textsuperscript{14} Different from above-ground buildings, in tombs it is the brick wall rather than the imitation of “wooden structure” bears the load, since the wooden architecture in brick only has the appearance of timber structures but has little function for load bearing. In terms of the construction, the imitation of the above-ground architectural structure is not only a change from wood to brick: the mode of construction is also different. The structure of wooden architecture in brick has different interior and exterior structures, whereas in the wooden architecture in brick, only a facade was laid, usually an external façade. In actual wooden architecture, the wooden parts were made and then assembled, and the building parts could be as big as a column or as small as a cap block in a bracketing (lu dou). The bricks are

\textsuperscript{10} The southern Shanxi province mainly include the region of Linfen and Yuncheng.

\textsuperscript{11} A decorative pedestal base usually linked to the base of the throne on which the statue of Buddha is placed.

\textsuperscript{12} A kind of figurine which is usually fixed on the roof for protecting the eaves from rain.

\textsuperscript{13} The dragon-like figurine which is usually on the top of roof with the meaning of protecting architecture from fire.

mostly of fixed sizes. In the underground chamber, specific components were carved out or assembled by as many bricks are needed, and bricks of the same tomb are usually in the same scale and measurements. Like life scenes, the wooden architecture in brick serves as a part of tomb chamber decoration. The gradual transfer of which from simple structure in the late Tang Dynasty to sophisticated structure in the Jin Dynasty indicate that wooden architecture in brick is the main subject that the tomb builders intended to express.

In the research on wooden architecture in brick in Song and Jin dynasty, scholars pay more attention to decoration of life scenes and story of filial piety. Some scholars notice the differences of the wooden architecture in brick in some tombs from those on the ground. Wei-Cheng Lin argues that the wooden architecture in brick in tombs represents the *waiyan puzuo*, that is timber-frame structure built on the exterior of a wooden structure, but was turned inward and transformed into the interior of the burial chamber. In a study of tombs in Jingxing, Hebei, he suggests that such transformation, or appropriation, refers to a different order from that of the aboveground building with a reversed perspective from that of the living.\(^{15}\) In her study about the Dong family cemetery in Houma, Shanxi, Jeehee Hong argues that the wooden architecture in brick does not have to have a single model or a copy of a real house, which could be a result of selective choice from different types of buildings.\(^{16}\)

Although some scholars have discussed the difference between architectural motif and the above-ground buildings, few scholars have examined the process of the elaboration of architectural structure since the late Tang dynasty. From late Tang to Jin Dynasty, wooden


architecture in brick in many tombs became more and more elaborate, and some specific architectural components imply that they were not intended to imitate the tomb owner’s residence. Therefore, the intention to build a tomb cannot be generalized as imitating the above-ground residence of the tomb owner. In addition, it had been nearly three hundreds years since wooden architecture in brick became popular since the late Tang, there are few discussions about the process of elaboration which may indicate the change of the concept toward afterlife in tombs.

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate more exactly how the wooden architecture in brick and how exactly the structure was mean to build inside the chamber. The Duan family cemetery in Ma Village, Jishan shows one of the most elaborate architectural components since late Tang, which is the reason for this paper to chose it as a case study. This thesis is not based on the premise that the wooden architecture in brick manifest the residence, but rather concretely investigates the manner of construction as well as the selection of the wooden architecture in brick in tombs. In addition, in Duan family tombs, there are other decorations like the carved figures of tomb owner, servants, filial piety stories as well as stage actors. This thesis will reveal how the meaning of wooden architecture in brick interacts with other decorative motifs.

In the first chapter, I will examine what kinds of wooden architecture in brick were chosen in Duan family tombs. I propose that the wooden architecture in brick refers to high-ranking above-ground buildings. In the second chapter, I will explore the relationship between wooden architecture in brick and other decorative motifs in tombs. I will examine the position of images of stage actors in tomb decoration, and its relation with the image of tomb occupants and the wooden architecture in brick. I propose that demonstrate that the Duan-family tombs were constructed in reference to an ancestral temple. In the third chapter, I will examine the wooden
joinery work in brick in Duan family tombs. I propose that in addition to ancestral temple, the Duan family tombs were constructed in reference to shrine. By referencing the shrine and sutra cabinets in its architectural details, the burial chamber under discussion seems to have turned into the space of an ancestral temple, or a miniature shrine, inside which the deceased couple could be venerated and could receive offerings.
CHAPTER ONE: DUAN FAMILY CEMETERY

The Duan family cemetery is located at the southwest of Jishan County, Shanxi Province. Of a total of fourteen tombs discovered from 1978 to 1979, nine were excavated, i.e. M1-M9 (Fig. 4), all built with a brick chamber. The tombs were aligned along a north-south axis. All tombs face south, built with a sloping path and entrance leading to its chamber. On the northern wall of tomb No. 7, a small brick tablet was discovered, inscribed with a dedicatory text, entitled “A record for the preparation of the tomb construction,” composed by Duan Ji. The tablet is dated to the thirty-first year of Dading reign of the Jin Dynasty, e.g., 1181 CE., indicating that the time of construction of Duan family tombs is no later than 1181. In terms of the arrangement of decorative motifs, M1-M5 and M8 are similar, all featuring extremely complicated and exquisite brick carvings of wooden architecture in brick. In comparison, M6 and M7 are simple, while M9 basically has no decorations. Tomb M1-M5 and M8 are close together, indicating that tomb owners must have belonged to either the same generation or close generations. Their more elaborate decorative style also suggests a period of economic prosperity that provided resources for the construction of these luxurious tombs; however, the lack of epitaphs also indicate the social status of the family as non-officials or learned scholars. The following discussion will focus primarily on the six tombs, M1-M5 and M8.

In the Duan tombs, the wooden architecture in brick is complicated, which occupy a considerable space. This phenomenon raises one question: were there any special reasons that made the patron and builder of the tombs intend to pay more attention to architectural motif? What kind of after-life space do the wooden structure in brick construct?

Since the late Tang Dynasty, tomb construction manifests two kinds of perspectives. One sees the world created from the deceased’s perspective. Seen from such a perspective, the tomb chamber was construed as an imaginary world of the dead in the afterlife. In all cases, the wooden architecture in brick was built in a down-size scale proportionally appropriate for the depicted figures in murals, e.g., tomb owners or servants. The chamber therefore was built as imaginary space of the dead, seemingly independent from ours. The deceased’s body laid on the coffin bed, while its portrait that appears in the mural seems able to enjoy the imaginary world created on the wall.

In contrast to this perceived imaginary world, there is the physical reality of the tomb chamber perceivable from the perspective of the living. This reality refers to the actual size and space constructed by brick molded into wooden architecture. As just noted, the size of the tomb is small,\(^\text{18}\) thus a miniaturization of the aboveground architecture. In any case, what is certain is that the patrons and builders of the tombs would realize that the size of the space was much smaller than that of aboveground buildings and the use of brick to mold the timber-frame structure was intended to create a world different from ours. Although such a miniaturization might have come from the tomb tradition of Song and Jin, some components in tombs indicate that “miniaturization” was probably a way to give specific meanings to the tomb. A careful

\(^{18}\) M1-M5 measures 2.5 meters long, 2.1 meters wide, and 3.5-4 meters high. M8 measures 2.8 meters long, 2.3 meters wide, and 5 meters high. See Yang Fudou, “Shanxi jishan jinmu fajue jianbao,” \textit{Wenwu}, no.1 (1983):47.
investigation of the construction process in which the wooden structure was built in miniature will help illuminate what exactly the tomb patron or builder would have recognized such a space inside the chamber, enabling an in-depth exploration of the meaning of the tomb space.

In the following, I will examine the creation of an imaginary world for the deceased and the actual miniature scale for the living. By doing so, I will demonstrate that the wooden architecture in brick, as well as other decorative motif, was in fact arranged to turn the tomb chamber into a rather different space, namely, a space with ritualization and divinity.

In the six tombs, the lower section of the tomb walls on which the wooden structure in brick stands is carved as a decorative pedestal, called *xumizuo* (Sumeru pedestal), consisting of layers of different decorations in a structure that protrudes on top and bottom while concave in the middle. In tombs M1, 4, 5 and 8, the *xumizuo* have double layers of the concave part. Among them, the most complicated example is that in M5, and there are a total of eighteen layers from top to bottom. (Fig. 5) With the exception of tomb No. 3, above each tomb’s *xumizuo* are railings built around the tomb. In the Song-Jin aboveground architecture, the *xumizuo* was mainly used as the pedestal for Buddha statues, pagodas, or high-ranking architecture. In Duan family cemetery, *xumizuo* is under the carved buildings, very often around railings which indicate the safeguard. Therefore, *xumizuo* in the tombs under discussion should be the base of architecture.

The *xumizuo* in Duan family tombs have several characteristics worthy of further investigation. First, its height is significant in comparison with the size and scale of the tomb chamber. For example, *xumizuo* in M4 is 101 cm high and the column on it is 105 cm high, indicating that the proportions of the *xumizuo* is rather large, which is common in Duan cemetery. The height of the *xumizuo* implies that the building structure carved above it belong to
high-ranking architecture. The height of the base usually relates to the rank of the architecture. In *The Book of Rites*, it is said that “the height (of the base of architecture) is regarded as symbol of nobility: the base of the hall for the emperor is nine feet; for feudal princes is seven feet; for senior officials is five feet; and for knights is three feet…The higher the hall, the nobler the hall is.” 19 A hall actually refers to the base of the architecture. The bases of the main hall in important temples of the Liao and Jin Dynasties are higher than those in the medium hall or the subsidiary halls. 20 The height of the base thus substantiates the importance of building its supports.

Second, the decoration of *xumizuo* is elaborate. The *xumizuo* in Duan family tombs has more than twelve layers. The size, thickness, and patterns of almost every layer is different, thus entailing a more laborious process to mold each of the different components. In the waist part of the *xumizuo*, a variety of decorations such as lions, deer, and flowers were carved and its four corners were carved with guardians in Buddhism (lishi) (Fig. 6). The meticulously constructed base is in accordance with the high rank of architecture above them. In above-ground architecture, the cost of a *xumizuo* as the base of the palatial architecture would have exceeded that for a plain base made of brick and masonry. The *xumizuo* with complicated decoration and considerable height is one of the building feature for the high-ranking architecture.

The bracket sets in the Duan-family tombs feature a variety of magnificent shapes and styles (Fig. 7). All bracket sets are basically four or five-tier brackets (puzuo), following one type of beam structure, residential halls (tingtang). 21 The most striking feature is that a multitude of

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20 Qi pingdeng, *Datong huayan si (shangsi)* (Datong huayan temple (upper temple)) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008), 55.
angled bracket arms (xiegong) that complicates the bracket style and provides a dazzling visual effects. The angled bracket arms were set apart from the bracket arms perpendicular to the wall by some degrees, a style also practiced at the same time for the aboveground wooden buildings, such as the Mituo Hall of Chongfu Temple in Suzhou (Fig. 8), the Sansheng Hall of the Shanhua Temple in Datong, and the Manjusri Hall of the Foguang Temple in Mount Wutai. For instance, the eastern and western walls of M4 have similar bracket sets with the Mituo Hall of Chongfu Temple. The column head bracketing has angled arches, and the supplementary bracketing are the common bracket sets.

However, the style of the angled arches in M4 are slightly different from those of the Mituo Hall, that the brackets protruding in a tilted way were made in the style of the pseudo-levers (jia ang). In the existing architectures of the Jin Dynasty, no such angled arches have remained. The use of such component as the down-pointing cantilever is most illustrative of the decorative functions of the brick brackets. Unlike the aboveground structure in which the cantilever connects the exterior bracket set with the roof struts, the pseudo cantilever inside the tomb is only for decoration, rather than bearing weight of the brick structure of the underground chamber.

In addition, in M1, 5 and 8, a double-eave roof is constructed. In M8, below the eaves are two layers of flying rafters, giving the eaves more sense of depth. (Fig. 9) The double eaves are more magnificent than a single-eave roof. Double eaves in the building imitate the two-layers buildings, which indicate high-ranking architecture and are common in buildings after the Song
The painstaking endeavor to make double-eave solely for decorative purpose in tombs also indicate the pursuit of high-ranking architecture.

The architectural motifs chosen to construct the Duan cemetery are thus intentional in the pursuit of a high-ranking architecture built underground for the dead. In the Jin Dynasty, the style of architecture fabricated would exceed the rank of architecture belong to the tomb occupant when still alive. It would be a violation if an ordinary person built a residence with building components prescribed only for those who had a higher social status. It thus seems to be the case that, rather than a close imitation to his or her residence, the burial chamber was constructed in a much higher building rank, aspiring to an ideal afterlife world. In the imagination of the Duan family members, the architecture constructed for the afterlife is magnificent and much greater than their residence.

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22 Ma Xiao, Zhongguo gudai mu louge (Chinese ancient wooden tower) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 74-94.
CHAPTER TWO: ANCESTRAL TEMPLE SPACE

By taking the wooden architectural motif in the foregoing discussion in tombs as structure, it is necessary to explore other decorations in tombs in order to reveal the integral meanings of the tombs. In Duan family tombs, how each of the four walls functions inside the tomb shows a kind of pattern: the east and west wall were both carved as lattice doors, while the wall paintings that depict scenes that include figures are all on the south and north walls. The decorative motifs on south and north walls are summarized in table A.

Among the six Duan family tombs, all square shaped, there are primarily three types of decorative subjects in the center of the north wall: a double-portrait of the deceased husband and wife appears in three tombs (M2, M4 and M8); a door in two tombs (M3 and M5); and a woman opening a door in one tomb (M1). Yi Qing suggests that during the early- and mid- 11th century to the 12th century, the location of the deceased husband and wife’s portrait shifted from either the east or west wall to the north wall.23 The portraits of tomb occupants appearing in the Jin Dynasty tombs in southern Shanxi are all on the north wall. It can be speculated from this that the north wall in the Duan tombs indicates the important position of the tomb. In addition, although the decorative motif on the north walls in tomb M 1, 3 and 5 is not the depiction of the husband and wife, the carved door (or a woman opening a door) indicates that there is space behind it where deceased might be back in there.

23 Yi Qing, “Song Jin zhongyuan diqu bihua mu ‘muzhuren dui (bing) zuo’ tuuxiang tanxi” [Analysis of the figure of tomb owners sitting oppositely (side by side) in tombs in the area of central plains during the Song and Jin dynasty], Zhongyuan wenwu, no.2 (2011): 76.
In the six tombs, the decoration on the south wall represents stage actors. Three of the tombs, M1, M4 and M5, also include music bands next to the dramatic actors (Fig. 10). Moreover, the actors in all the tombs except for M8 appear in the central bay of the south wall, facing towards the tomb’s main position on the north wall.

A quick research on tombs of the Jin Dynasty in southern Shanxi shows that the layout of the burial chamber in this region is similar to that of Duan-Family tombs just described. Out of approximately fifty-one tombs uncovered in southern Shanxi, twenty-one include brick reliefs of dramatic actors. All these tombs are oriented toward the south, and eighteen have the drama actors carved on the south wall, facing north, while two have the drama actors on the southwest and southeast walls.

While the actors have a relatively fixed location on the south wall, on the north wall, in the Duan-family tombs, there are three main decorative subjects: portraits of the deceased husband and wife sitting across a table from each other; a woman opening a door; and doors and windows. It can be argued that such an arrangement in tombs in the greater southern Shanxi region was quite consistent. Then the question arises as to why actors were included in the last resting place of the deceased couple and too, and is there any significance to their position on the south wall facing the depiction of the tomb occupants on the north? To answer these questions, I propose to look into the dramatic performance in the Song-Jin period.

Chinese drama performances in the Song and Jin Dynasty could be found in the following places: drama stages in cities (washe goulan), restaurants, palaces, temples, private residences, and at funeral ceremonies.24 Accordingly, Chinese drama performances can be divided primarily into two categories: one for entertainment and the other for religious or funerary purposes.

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Performances at temples were dedicated to deities, while performances at funeral ceremonies were dedicated to the deceased. During the Song and Jin Dynasties in smaller towns and villages drama performances were probably not for entertainment, but conducted in the context of sacrifice. Issei Tanaka uses the term “sacrifice drama” to define the “rural drama”: “rural drama is a kind of performing form that combines rural sacrificial ritual, which was regarded as part of the ritual.”

The drama scenes in the tombs may refer to sacrifice in different contexts. Deng Fei argues that subjects depicted in Song-Jin burial chambers such as drama, music, and dance performances, as well as serving food and offering wine and tea should all recall to funerary etiquettes. Drama performances as part of a funeral must have been pervasive as there are texts from the Song Dynasty that record bans and criticisms against such performances. For example, one text says, “It is harmful to society’s morals and ethics that music performed as entertainment at funerals and drama was performed in front of coffins.” But Wilt Idema argues that the carving of stage actors in the Song-Jin period tombs of southern Shanxi refer to the dramas performed at sacrifices to deities. In case of the Duan family tombs, the reason why the drama scenes showed in the tombs might be either the recall of funerary or worshipping the deities. But what exactly the reason of drama scenes showed in Duan family tombs? Why do the drama images in the tombs of the Jin Dynasty in southern Shanxi mostly appear on the south walls?

26 Deng Fei, “Songjin shiqi zhuanqiao hua mu de tuxiang ticai tanxi” (Analysis of subject in tombs in Song-Jin period), Meishu yanjiu, no. 8 (2011): 70-81.
27 Tuo Tuo, Songshi (The History of Song) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 2917.
28 Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West, Chinese Theater 1100-1450: A Source Book (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982).
The performance during a funeral ceremony did not require a specific orientation. In dramatic performance in stages in cities (goulan), there was no specific orientation, so long as the actor faced the audience. The only exception, however, was performances at temples, where had the stage facing the north.

The extant drama stages in temples in Shanxi all have a particular position within the temple and a fixed orientation. The main hall of the temple, as usually seen in other architectural compounds from pre-modern China, generally faces to the south. Stages were mostly built at the south at an open courtyard, facing the main hall at the north, which is demonstrated in the ten existing stages from the Jin and Yuan Dynasties, such as the one at the Niuwang (King of Cattle) Temple at Wei Village, Linfen, Shanxi (Fig. 11).29 The orientation of the stage was of great importance in Shanxi. It was believed that if the stage at a temple faced south, the temple would violate “god’s rules” and it would be necessary to hang a sword and a pseudo-red beard in the middle of the stage so as to drive out evil spirits during the three-day performance by a theatrical troupe.30

The orientation of the stage, facing the main hall, relates to sacrifices to deities. Facing the main hall, the drama, dance, and music performed there was for the gods enshrined in the main hall on the north, called choushen, lit. rewarding gods, or yushen, lit. entertaining gods. It is through the drama that people made sacrifices to deities in the hope of receiving these protection from deities. Drama performances were deemed as an important way to entertain enshrined deities. The spectacular sacrifices in Houtu Temple have been recorded in the inscription titled

Record of Houtu Temple at Shenquan gu, Jingshan, Sanyuan County, Yaozhou in the Jin.


Dynasty: “every time when the two days before the last month of spring is coming, people from
near or far informally gather to sacrifice to the gods with opera or music and dance. People living
in the towns leave the market; people working in the fields abandon farm work. They crowd on
the temple. It is unknown whether it is to reward the deities and burn incense, or for self-
indulgence and just travel around. What brings numerous people here?” 31 The inscription
records that the “music stage”, namely, the drama stage has been built in the temple. “By opera
or music and dance” means to “sacrifice to the gods” via opera or music and dance on the stage.
Moreover, people crowd there for the purpose of “rewarding the gods” and also for “traveling
around”. The ancestral temples are full of people who come to watch the performance, and they
are the real spectators of the opera or music and dance. However, the stage built facing the main
hall indicates that the opera performance in the ancestral temple is primarily performed as a
sacrifice to the gods.

This orientation of the stage to face the main hall suggests that the performance was,
indeed, a dedication to the gods. Returning to the burial chambers of the Jin Dynasty in southern
Shanxi, it seems to be the case that the drama scenes on the south walls reference performances
at temples of above ground. Li Qingquan argues that the painted or carved scenes, such as the
deceased couple sitting across a table from each other, music performances, servants preparing
tea and offering food, all agree with what would have happened inside a temple. 32 Deng Fei has
also noticed the correlation between the carved decoration of mixed drama (zaju) in Song-Jin
tombs and the stage layout in the temples. 33

31 Wang Xinying, Quan Jin shike wen zhi jijiao (The Collection and Collation of Stone Inscription of Jin Dynasty) (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2012), 456.


33 Deng Fei, “Songjin shiqi zhuandiao bihua mu de tuxiang ticai tanxi” (Analysis of subject in tombs in Song-Jin period), Meishu
Could the burial chamber be seen as a “temple” space? The wooden architecture in brick in the Duan-Family tombs often includes components more elaborate than those of a regular residence, for example, complicated xumizuo, exquisite lattice doors, four or five-bracketing-unit brackets, and even a double-eave roof. The combination of these specific components makes it more like a religious structure than a residence for commoners. Together with the position of the drama scenes, the burial chamber may have been commissioned by the Duan family to evoke an ancestral temple.

The *Record of Jishan County* documents several ancestral temples in the Jishan region built between the Song and Yuan Dynasties.34 Many of the recorded temples, as well as many other buildings, however, were ruined by a big earthquake in southern Shanxi in 1303. In the early Jin Dynasty when Duan-Family tombs were built before the earthquake, the number of ancestral temples in the region must have been greater than noted in the *Record of Jishan County*. Due to a lack of documents, it is difficult to confirm whether any stages were ever built in ancestral temples in Jishan county. However, surviving records do mention a stage built in the Qiaoshang Village, Wanrong County, less than forty kilometers to the southwest of Jishan County.35 We may assume that the stages in ancestral temples were were quite readily seen by residents of the region southern Shanxi. In the several surviving ancestral temples in Wanrong County, Gaoping County, Hongdong County, Xiangning County, and Ruicheng, inscriptions have been found recording the terrace (lutai), the same as the stage for performance, in the Song-Jin period. In the

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Erxian Temple of Gaoping County, there exist remains of the terrace. These two ancestral temples are not far from Jishan County.

This does not mean that the Duan-Family tombs were built to imitate local ancestral temples, which, however, would have been the sources for the architectural motif in the tombs. Why did the tombs reference the space and details of an ancestral temple? It may be related to the deification of the tomb owners. In the Duan tombs, the wooden architecture in brick from ancestral temples and the scenes of drama create a space for sacrificing to the deities, for whom the tomb owners stand in.

It is interesting to note that the portraits of the deceased couples in Duan Cemetery appear like images of deities. The deceased couple carved in the round seen in the central bay of the north wall in M4 is most illustrative. (Fig.12) The deceased husband and wife are placed inside a shrine, different from most examples in Song tombs where the couple sit across a table from each other. The husband and wife in M4 appear sitting fromaly and facing the south wall. A male servant and a maid standing submissively with their hands flank the couple. Behind them is a peony screen that frames as if they were deities in the main hall of a temple. Similarly, the deceased couple carved in high relief in M8 appear in front of doors in the central bay of the north wall with food and wine between them. Sitting quietly, the couple appear like deities. The couple’s image facing the south wall is not unlike that of the gods in an ancestral temple facing south toward a drama performance.

The study of the relationship between wooden architecture in brick and other decorations, such as the tomb owner and the stage actors, demonstrate that the Duan-family tombs were constructed in reference to an ancestral temple.
CHAPTER THREE: THE REALISTIC SIZE: CHARACTERISTICS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SHRINES WITH MICRO-COMPONENTS

If the Duan-Family tombs were constructed to evoke an ancestral temple, the general appearance of “wooden architecture in brick” manifests an illusion of real timber. Yet, in reality, the tomb was built in a smaller size. M1-5 are 2.5 meters long and 2.1 meters wide with a height of 3.5 to 4 meters, and M8 is only slightly larger.\(^\text{36}\) Moreover, the details are equally miniature. For example, the xumizuо in M5 has as many as seventeen layers, yet is only 1.3 meters high.\(^\text{37}\)

In addition to the miniature scale, it has been noted that the size and structure of the wooden architecture in brick are also different from those of actual carpentry work of above ground buildings.\(^\text{38}\) Wooden architecture in brick reproduces joinery work (xiaomuzuo). The bracket style highlighted in the Duan-Family tombs, as well as in some Jin tombs in southern Shanxi, recalls a specific category of wooden structure: namely, that of shrines (shenkan) and sutra cabinets (jingchu). Both the shrines and sutra cabinets were designed as miniature timber-frame buildings with meticulously made wooden components which were then placed inside actual buildings. For example, one type of the shrine, Fodao zhang (lit. Buddhist-Taoist shrine), belongs to the highest level of shrines (Fig. 13). The base of the shrine imitates the xumizuо built as the base of a regular temple, above which there are double platforms and railings (Chongtai

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\(^{37}\) Measured by author in the Duan cemetery.

\(^{38}\) See Su Bai, Baisha songmu (The Song dynasty tomb at Baisha) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002).
goulan). The shrine’s main structure imitates a wooden hall with columns, lattice doors, brackets and caisson. The upper structure of the shrine forms a pingzuo base, on which a series of buildings known as tiangong louge (lit. heavenly palaces and tower pavilions) is topped with shanhua jiaoye (lit. mountain flowers and banana leaves) decoration.

In tombs Nos. 1, 2, 5 and 8 of Ma Village, kunmen (a type of door frame usually used in Buddhist buildings) are applied between columns and under the square lintels (Fig. 14). The archaeologist who excavated the tombs believes that the kunmen here were used as like queti (braces between beams and columns) in regular timber-frame architecture. The queti is often used to strengthen the connection between beams and columns, increasing the latter’s capacity to bear weight. However, in the existing Song-Jin examples above ground, two queti are not connected to appear like a kunmen. In the central bay of the south wall in tomb No. 4, the queti were built under the lintel without connecting to each other, reflecting how queti were actually used in regular buildings of the time.

The kunmen discusses here, I suggest, should be regarded as huanmen (foliated doorway), a type of decorative door frame installed between columns and under the lintels. The huanmen originated from an indoor curtain called “foliated doorway and curtain ribbon,” as the door frame was often connected with curtain ribbons (ribbon tied up on the hook by imitating the veiling and the tied-up knot). In Song tombs, it is common to see curtains draped down from beams and tied around the columns, such as the example in tomb No.2 in Baisha. The huanmen appears more frequently in shrines or sutra cabinets. In the Dongjing menghua lu (Record of Dreaming of

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Hua [Xu] in the Eastern Capital), dated to the 12th century, there are mentions of “foliated doorways” and “decorated archways and foliated doorways,” but here used to decorate storefronts or restaurant facade and they have curtains tied up with a rod. In *Yingzao fashi*, “foliated doorway and curtain ribbon” (*huanmen zhangdai*) only appear in the description of shrines and sutra cabinets. 41 Except in the case of the most modest, every shrine and cabinet contains a foliated doorway and its size is also standardized. The same treatise includes several images of such shrines and cabinets with a foliated doorway. The same style of *huanmen* can also be seen in the shrine in the Zhuanjiao hall of the Golden Cave Temple in Xinzhou, dated to the Northern Song Dynasty (Fig. 15). Foliated doorways appear between the columns of all the bays. Another similar foliated doorway can be found in the great hall of the Erxian Temple in Jincheng, which also dates to the Northern Song Dynasty. The style of decorative frame in the Duan-Family tombs is extremely similar to that of the shrine. Moreover, on the foliated doorway in the tombs, there is carved decoration of floral scrolls, which makes more splendid. In addition to the Duan family tombs, other Jin tombs in the same regions of southern Shanxi also use the bracket style of shrines and sutra cabinets.

Taking tomb No. 1 of the Dong Family in Houma, Shanxi, as an example, a floor-type door frame (*luodi menzhao*) is built on the west, east and south walls. In the middle of the door cover, several suspended columns (*xuzhu*) are built, on the head of which blooming lotus flowers are carved (Fig. 16). The images of flowers, plants, and boys are carved on the architrave between suspended coclumns and the component similar to *queti* discussed earlier. The pattern of *shanhua jiaoye* (Mountain flowers and banana leaves) is carved on the door cover, was very

popular in tombs in the Houma region, such as M1 of Jinguang pharmaceutical company and 65H4M102 tomb in Houma. However, there are no such “floor-type door frame” and “suspended columns” in extant architecture from the Song, Liao, and Jin periods. The earliest suspended column is dated to the Yuan Dynasty in the exterior eave structure of the gate-building at the Lower Guangsheng Temple in Hongdong. The example of the gate-building is not a floor-type door frame. There are suspended columns under the brackets, and the whole is very plain, without carving on the heads or decorative clapboards between the suspended columns.

Floor-type door frames and suspended columns are primarily from the carpentry work of the time. The Yingzao fashi mentions suspended columns in the entries on shrines and cabinets in such examples as Fodao zhang (lit. Buddhist-Taoist shrine), yajiao zhang (cabinet), and jiujia xiaozhang (nine-ridge hip canopy). Yet the treatise mentions no regulations with regard to the size. In the introduction to Fodao zhang, a “suspended column with lotus” is also mentioned. The existing Song-Jin suspended columns are only found in sutra cabinets. The brackets of zhuanlun zang (revolving sutra cabinets) at the Longxing Temple in Zhengding, Hebei, have suspended columns, architrave, sub-lintel, and queti. A lotus column head is carved under the suspended column. Exquisite patterns are carved or painted on the architraves, sub-lintels and queti. The entire bracketing structure is very similar to that of Dong Family tomb No. 1. Both Yingzao fashi and existing examples indicate that the Song-Jin structures of the floor-type door

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44 Li Jie, Yingzao fashi, 62-67, 146-151.
frame (luodi menzhao) and suspended column appear more often in shrines and sutra cabinets built in miniature.

Furthermore, the wooden architecture in brick in the Duan Family tombs indicate some concepts that are similar to shrines and sutra cabinets. All three examples—tombs, shrines, and cabinets—feature complicated brackets. In the existing Song-Liao-Jin examples, the style of wooden brackets is extremely elaborate, far exceeding that of a regular building. For example, the sutra cabinets (bizang) in the Bojiajiao Hall at the Huayan Temple in Datong, dated to 1038, were built with seventeen different kinds of brackets (Fig. 17). The most elaborate bracket style found in the sutra cabinets has seven tiers and the least elaborate one has five. The bracket sets are densely arranged and richly decorated; some of the brackets are inclined on the cabinet. However, the exterior eaves of the hall that houses the sutra cabinets have five-tier bracket style without inclined and richly decorated. The bracket units are arranged rather sparsely, far less splendid than the brackets used for the sutra cabinets. In the Duan Family tombs, brackets usually have many tiers and some are inclined. The brackets also arranged very densely, achieving a strongly decorative sense. Tombs, shrines, and sutra cabinets were similar in terms of the rank and style of the brackets.

Wooden architecture in brick in tombs, shrines, nor sutra cabinets need to comply with the structural principle of the carpentry work, since none of the examples actually architecturally functional. They can thus create unique structural components. For example, there is a shrine in the Zhaunjiao hall in Xinzhou, Shanxi, dated most likely to the Jin-Yuan period. Above the wooden Xumizuo, there are five tiny attics. And above the three tiny attics at the rear of the shrine, there is yet another attic. In the surviving Song-Yuan buildings, no such a pattern has been found and thus is particular construction was created for non-structural miniature
architecture. A similar element appears in Dong Family tomb No. 1 in Houma, Shanxi. Above the three-bay building façade carved on the north wall of the tomb is a drama stage built with the gable side facing the front, as if suspended above another building. As mentioned, the existing stages of the Jin-Yuan period are all free-standing north facing buildings located in front of the main hall facing the north. None of them was built upon another building. Similarly, although the middle of the south walls in the six Duan tombs can be interpreted as a stage space, it is also part of the overall architectural program of the south wall, which differs from the existing above-ground stages. In sum, wooden architecture in brick was constructed in ways similar to shrines and sutra cabinets, namely not complete compliance with the norms of the regular timber-frame architecture and in much smaller scale.

It is not too far-fetched to speculate that tomb builders of the time must have seen shrines and sutra cabinets. *Yingzao fashi*, indeed, contains three chapters specifically on shrines and sutra cabinets. In the book, four building methods for shrines and two building methods for cabinets are given in detail. Thus by the time *Yingzao fashi* was published in 1100, both types of architecture in miniature were well known, at least among carpenters. Other literature from the Song and Jin Dynasties also recorded the form and structure of shrines and sutra cabinets. Except for the Revolving Sutra Library at the Longxing Temple in Zhengding, Hebei, discussed alone, most surviving shrines and sutra cabinets from the Song-Jin are located in Shanxi, demonstrating the popularity of miniature architecture in Shanxi during the Song-Jin period. This

46 Su Bai mentioned several literatures about shrine and sutra cabinets, see Su Bai, *Baisha songmu*, 117; The stone tablet *Record on Renovating Zixu Yuanjun Temple* was excavated in Qinyang, Henan in Zhenglong second year, recording “the hall is dilapidated, which does damage to the cabinet.” the cabinet is probably a shrine used for placing statues of gods. See Wang Xinying, *Quanjin shikewen zhi jijiao* (Stone Inscription of the Jin dynasty) (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2012): 97.
may be the reason that the wooden architecture in brick inside underground burials was fashioned in the style of shrines and sutra cabinets.

But why tomb chambers to resemble shrines and sutra cabinets in scale or details? Shrines and cabinets were considered sacred for what they enshrined and contained—images of the deities in the case of the former and Buddhist scriptures for the latter—and their sacredness was both reinforced and evoked by the form of their containers. To begin, both shrine and cabinet were made in miniature as if they were architectural models. The smaller size, however, makes clear that these cabinets were not for men to enter. Their elaborate structure and delicate decorations greatly exceed that of the real architecture, thus giving rise to something that may be called the “architectural utopia.” The design of shrines and sutra cabinets therefore emphasizes the sophistication and virtuosity possible in a timber-frame structure—suitable only for sacred images and objects, namely, Buddhist statues and sutras.

By referencing the shrine and sutra cabinets in their architectural details, the burial chambers under discussion seem to have turned into the space of an ancestral temple or a miniature shrine, inside which the deceased couple could be venerated and receive offerings. To the deceased couple the burial chamber constructed with the “wooden architecture in brick” was their new “residence” in the afterlife, where as to the living, its reduced size evokes the architectural utopia built otherwise only for the sacred. From either of the two perspectives, the dead and that of the living, the burial was constructed, as a ritual realm in which the deceased resided rather than simply underground chamber.
CONCLUSION: SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECTURE

As demonstrated in the foregoing discussion, the tomb burial was no longer a place for the dead, but a place to honor them as gods. By referencing the reduced-scale architecture dedicated to the sacred, the “wooden architecture in brick” in the Duan Family was constructed to deify the deceased. The elite style of the architecture and position of the portrait of the deceased couple, the drama scenes, and the other motifs depicted around the chamber recall the architecture and the layout of ancestral temples. The tombs in reduced scale, however, recalls the miniature size used for shrines and sutra cabinets. As such, the wooden architecture in brick actually constructs a visually compelling yet “non-structural” space, a fictitious and imaginary architectural utopia that deifies the dead.

In some Jin tombs, engraved inscriptions reveal a similar ritual significance. For example, in Tomb 94H5M1 in Niu Village, Houma dated to the Jin Dynasty, an inscription carved above the portrait of the deceased seated on a chair says: *xianghua gongyang* (lit. “make offerings with incense and flowers”). Incense and flowers are commonly used as offerings to Buddha. Inscriptions such as this explicitly indicate that the dead should be treated as deities. The offerings would most likely come from the tomb owners’ offspring, the practice—making offerings to their deceased parents—would be related to filial piety, a subject manifest in other

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decorative motifs in tombs of this time. In the Duan Family tombs, stories of filial piety are among the few figurative subjects depicted in their burial chambers. For instance, above the xumizuo-base of M4 has a series of scenes depicting twenty-four filial exemplars, all molded vividly and exquisitely. It is apparent that each scene was carefully designed accorded to the importance of this subject. Stories of filial piety are also a common subject in Jin-tombs in southern Shanxi. In the tomb No. 31 in Houma, dated to 1212, stories of six dutiful sons were carved on the six lattice doors on the west wall, along with inscriptions that also conveyed the importance of filial piety, not only in this world but also the afterlife world. It is then not surprising that the deceased in tombs of southern Shanxi were regarded as deified ancestors surrounded by the style of architecture that alluded to ancestral shrines.

This process of deifying the tomb owners is also a way of articulating the differences between life and death. When the tomb owners attained godlike status in the afterlife world, they would exist for eternity. Meanwhile, treating the tomb owners as deities also reflects the desire of the living for the continued existence of the deceased. Scholars have noted that some Song-Jin tombs as explicitly ritualistic. As demonstrated, Duan Family tombs should also be understood in the same ritual terms. Duan Family tombs, as well as some Jin tombs in southern Shanxi, express the ritual significance primarily through architectural imagery. It cannot be denied that the wooden architecture in brick in Song-Liao-Jin tombs constructs a space that resembles an above ground residence. Yet, by examining closely the decorative scheme and the position of the deceased’s portraits, I have argued that the burial chamber was not meant to be a replica of a residence, but rather a ritual space that recalls that of an ancestral temple.

During the period of under discussion, the most exquisite wooden architecture was that dedicated to worshipping the gods. There are many records that celebrated the renovation of Buddhist temples and structures. It seems that the more magnificently a religious structure was built for the deities, the more bless the one who built it would receive from them. Coupled with the great emphasis on filial piety, the Duan Family tombs, and many other Jin-tombs in southern Shanxi, were built as if they were an ancestral temple in which offerings could be made to the deceased parents in the burial chambers. The architectural motifs in the Duan cemetery express filial piety and offerings to tomb owner eternally which is just like sacrificing to gods.
**APPENDIX: TABLE A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Left bay</th>
<th>Central bay</th>
<th>Right bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Filial story of “Cai Shun picks mulberry to support parents”</td>
<td>A woman opens the door</td>
<td>Filial story of “Zhao Xiao sacrifices himself to save his younger brother”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Peony and Taihu Lake stone (screens)</td>
<td>The buried husband and wife sit against each other with one maid who holds a mirror standing on the left side of the mistress and one male servant standing on the right side of the master; in the middle, there is a table, on which ancient flagons, bowls and saucers are displayed. There is food in the bowls and high wine bottles under the table.</td>
<td>Peony and Taihu Lake stone (screens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Prism lattice window</td>
<td>Two plank doors</td>
<td>Prism lattice window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Two lattice doors</td>
<td>There are inward opened doors on the two flanks</td>
<td>Two lattice doors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the shrine, the round sitting statues of the buried husband and wife in the middle as well as a male servant and a maid on the left and right sides; there is a peony screen on the back wall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M5</th>
<th>Lion, shoot-bending peony (screens)</th>
<th>Two plank</th>
<th>Lion, shoot-bending peony (screens)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td>Potted pomegranate blossoms</td>
<td>Two plank doors with one being slightly opened; there are the round buried husband and wife statues in front of the plank doors.</td>
<td>Potted pomegranate blossoms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South walls:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left bay</th>
<th>Central bay</th>
<th>Right bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1 Tomb door, on which there is a square board without words.</td>
<td>Six musicians; originally five stage actors (broken)</td>
<td>Children ride the bamboo hobbyhorses, and peony above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Tomb door, on which there is filial story of “Tan Zi searches deer milk to support parents” and “Ding Lan carves the statues of parents for supporting”</td>
<td>Four stage actors; vase arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Vase arrangement (screen)</td>
<td>Above the tomb gate there are five stage actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Tomb door, on which there seems to be window frames</td>
<td>Four stage actors; five musicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Tomb doors, on which there is peony rail and further there is shoot-bending flowers</td>
<td>Four stage actors; five musicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td>Three lattice doors</td>
<td>Above the tomb gate there is phoenix making fun of peony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Front chamber of Tomb 1 at Baisha, Henan (After Subai, *Baisha Songmu*, Color Cat.2)

Fig. 2 Tomb of Emperor Taizong of Song Queen Li of Yuande, Henan (After Sun Xinmin, Fu Yongkui, “Song taizong yuande lihou ling fajue baogao,” *Huaxia kaogu* 3, fig. 11-1)
Fig. 3 North wall of M4, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (After Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Pingyang jinmu zhuandiao, fig. 5)

Fig. 4 Plan of the Duan cemetery, Ma village, Shanxi Prov, China (After Tian Jianwe and Li Youngmin, “Ma cun zhuandiao mu yu duanshi kemingzhuan”, Wenwu shijie 1 (2005), fig. 6)
Fig. 5 South wall of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (After Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjusuo, Pingyang jinmu zhuandiao, fig. 13)

Fig. 6 Xumizuo in M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (Photography by author)
Fig. 7 North wall of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (Photography by Wang Lei)

Fig. 8 Bracket system of Chongfu temple, Shuozhou, Shanxi Prov, China (After Chai Zejun, Shanxi gujianzhu wenhua zonglun, fig. 86)
Fig. 9 Brackets and eave of M8, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (Photography by Wang Lei)

Fig. 10 South wall of M4, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (Photography by author)
Fig. 11 Plan of the temple of guo of cattle, Wei village, Linfen, Shanxi Prov, China (After Cui Zhenyu, Pingyang guxitai, fig. 1-2)

Fig. 12 Figurines of tomb owners of M5, Ma village, Jishan, Shanxi Prov, China (After Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Pingyang jinmu zhuandiao, fig. 85)
Fig. 13 Fodao zhang tuyang (After Liang Sicheng, *Yingzao fashi zhushi*, p470)

Fig. 14 Huanmen in M1, Ma village, Jishan (Photography by author)
Fig. 15 shrine in the Zhuanjiao hall of Golden Cave Temple in Xinzhou (After Chenmingda, *Yingzao fashi cijie*, fig. 48)

Fig. 16 suspended columns in tomb No. 1 of the Dong family in Houma, Shanxi (After Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiu suo. *Pingyang jinmu zhuandiao*, fig. 28)
Fig. 17 sutra cabinets (bizang) in the Bojiajiao Hall at the Huayan Temple in Datong (After Baiyong, “Datong Huayansi Bojiajiaocangdian jianzhu fengge luelun”, Wenwu shijie 3 (2011), p15)
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