From Virtuous Paragons to Efficacious Images: Paintings of Filial Sons in Song Tombs

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Abstract

Stories of filial paragons constituted an important theme in Chinese funerary art, reflecting social mores and cultural values that penetrated every segment of Chinese society. Previous research has tended to treat this pictorial material as a medium for stereotypical ideas of moral conduct, without addressing the wider implications such imagery might have had in funerary culture. This paper examines the representation of filial sons from the Song period in their original mortuary contexts, linking them to other pictorial and architectural ornaments within the tomb space. In present-day Henan and Shanxi, a remarkable group of Song tombs contain images of filial sons that are consistently found in the same position on the wall. The fact that such scenes always appear on the upper part of wall in tombs, suggests these images served a specific purpose inside the tomb space. This paper presents a close examination of these virtuous paragons, which attempts to provide a fuller understanding of the Chinese belief of life after death.

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In traditional China, the visual representation of stories served as a medium for creating, expressing, disseminating, and affirming cultural values. Starting around the second century BCE, Chinese pictorial art frequently portrayed human figures with some relation to moralizing texts, whether written down or orally transmitted. (Murray, 2007) Depictions of famous filial children from Chinese history are part of this tradition. These scenes appear to be a series of narrative and didactic themes, which show the range of filial piety in specific instances. Filial piety, conveyed by the word *xiao*, is one of the most basic social and moral concepts of Chinese culture, and refers to the extreme respect that Chinese children should have for their parents. It involves many different aspects, including taking care of parents, burying them properly, bringing honour to the family and having a male heir to carry on the family name.

This pictorial theme was devised in the Han period (206 BCE–220), and as archaeology shows images of such virtuous tales once adorned Eastern Han funerary shrines, tombs and grave goods. Filial sons are found in Shandong, Henan, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia and North Korea – for example, a lacquered basket covered with around ninety figures of filial and virtuous paragons from Chinese history was found in a tomb at Lelang, North Korea. Another example is a Han painted tomb at Helinge'er, Inner Mongolia. On the west and north walls of the middle chamber appear images of Shun, a filial son whose respect

was so great that even the beasts were moved, Zengzi, who was extremely respectful toward his mother, and other virtuous men and women. At first, most of these figures look very much alike, for they are painted in profile and appear in similar clothes, but looking closer, the identities of these historical figures can be distinguished by their inscriptions.

The pictures of filial sons can be interpreted in two ways. First, the representations were viewed as an expression of a family's filial devotion, as well as a convenient means of manipulating public opinion. Funerary services provided a filial son with the best chance to make himself known. Once recognized as a filial son or daughter, a person was automatically considered a reliable member of his or her family and community, as well as a loyal subject of the state. Such a reputation could lead to concrete gains: a person of outstanding filial conduct might be rewarded by local authorities or the central government. Consequently, the tendency gradually grew into a fanatical exhibition of filial piety in the funerals of the 2nd century. Second, the filial scenes were also thought of as role models for descendants to emulate. A eulogy carved for the scene of Zengzi in the well-known Wuliang Shrine confirms this function, saying "[Zengzi] is the model for later generations, and [this model enables them] to follow the principle". Thus, Wu Liang's descendants were expected to follow the model set by the filial Zengzi. Later generations should display the utmost sorrow and reverence toward the deceased. The scenes may indicate the dead's practical wishes, which were often that their descendants should serve the deceased devotedly and never forget their ancestors. (Wu, 1989)

This theme continued to be used in burials during the Northern Dynasties (386–581). Images of filial sons became a major pictorial theme on sarcophagi, painted coffins and stone chambers. Examples are found in Henan, Shanxi, and Gansu. Although these suggest continuities with Han funerary art, the composition and execution shifted. For instance, Ning Mao's stone chamber dated 527 and excavated at Luoyang, has filial sons as a main theme. It is a small funerary shrine. There are nine pictures of filial sons carved on the exterior sides of the chamber, and the scenes are accompanied by inscriptions that explain what is happening. Scenes of filial piety found a new mode of presentation in this period. Images of filial paragons are delineated in landscape settings. Each scene occupies its own area and is set in the immediate foreground. Figures are enclosed by trees and rocks. Similar settings are afforded by the stamped-tile decorations of Southern Dynasties burial chambers, which show the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove". In both cases, trees rise behind figures in three-quarter view; figures are all the same size and are seated at the same level. This composition

seems to have been a conventional design in the 5th century. The changes of iconographic forms indicate that the meanings of the later filial scenes differed from their Eastern Han predecessors, and such changes may have coincided with changes in social practices and in beliefs of the period. Recently, scholars have attempted to shed light on the roles that filial piety scenes had in Northern Wei tombs. Eugene Wang (1999) and Zou Qingquan (2006) point out that filial piety scenes at this time had both didactic and cultural functions, and may have begun to be associated with attaining immortality.

Illustrations of filial paragons rarely appear in tombs of the Tang dynasty (618–906), but they are once again seen in the decorated tombs or on sarcophagi of the Northern Song (960–1127), Jin (1115–1234), and Yuan (1271–1368) periods (Table 1). When these illustrations adorn coffins or tomb walls, the numbers of filial sons carved or painted usually range from four to twenty-four, and the combination of the sets varies. Such pictures are often engraved on the back end and two long sides of the coffins. The sarcophagus of Le Chongjing dated 1117 and found at Luoning in Henan, for instance, has 22 carved images of filial sons. On the front, a scene depicts the tomb occupant enjoying a musical performance with female attendants serving tea. On the rear, two scenes of filial sons are preserved in the top register. The other twenty pictures appear on the left and right sides. Scenes are accompanied by inscriptions which name the filial paragons. Each picture centres on the filial sons and features one to two figures. Unlike paintings or carvings in earlier tombs, these scenes take place inside buildings.

Filial scenes are also painted on tomb walls, for instance, as seen in a group of Song tombs in the provinces of Henan and Shanxi. In these different tombs, filial sons are consistently found in the same place, the upper part of the tomb wall. Such specificity suggests that the scenes may have served a particular purpose. In the Gubozui tomb at Xingyang, the upper parts of the tomb walls are painted with sixteen pictures of filial sons (Fig. 1), and similarly each picture is accompanied by an inscription indicating the names of the filial stories. But, even when they are without an inscription, the content of these pictures can be identified, since scenes in different tombs are alike in terms of iconography and technique. They all feature a representative episode, and anyone familiar with the narratives would recognize the content.

Two tombs at Xingyang in Henan serve as illustrations. In the tale of Shun, the male figure and an elephant both appear to be in almost the same the positions (Fig. 2). Shun is portrayed in the same pose in each of the tombs, holding a long stick. To his right an elephant. In front of him a black pig and flying overhead, three birds. Both scenes present the story of Shun's devoted filial re-

spect, which inspired the heavens to call for assistance, the elephant to plough the fields and birds to sow seeds. In addition, some figures are painted wearing the same clothes and with the same postures, but face different directions, as in the scenes describing the tale of Zengzi. In both tombs, Zengzi is shown bowing to his mother, with a bundle of firewood between them. The two figures are composed identical in positions but face the other way, as do their inscriptions: from right to left in the Gubozui, and from left to right in the Sicun tomb. It is possible that there was originally a painting manual or a sketch for painting a series of filial sons, which painters may have consulted when making preparatory drawings for the tombs.

During the Song and Jin periods, it became conventional for 24 pictures of filial sons to be presented in burials, and in later periods, this grouping of figures, or collection of stories, was known as the *Ershisixiao* (Twenty-four Filial Exemplars, or Twenty-four Paragons of Filial Piety).However, several figures in Song tombs cannot be found in the *Ershisixiao* compiled by Guo Jujing (*fl.* 1295–1321) during the Yuan period. The combinations of sets of filial piety scenes in different tombs do not coincide, the filial sons included in the different groups often vary. A survey of the names of filial children represented in Northern Sung and Jin tombs lists more than 30 (see Table 2). So while, it is evident that the notion of a numerical set drawn from the *Ershisixiao* was established practice, it is very likely that the set of twenty-four filial exemplars had not yet been standardized. (Dong, 2009)

Curiously, it seems that for several centuries this pictorial theme disappeared from burials. Only from the 11th century onwards, did images of filial paragons start to reappear in the funerary context, a phenomenon which raises the question: why? A renewed emphasis on Confucian values during the Northern Song period might, in part, account for this revival. Previous research has paid much attention to this development. However, in this study, I will discuss the implications of images of filial paragons in funerary culture. In fact, many other pictorial subjects associated with Han funerary art, such as half-open doors and scenes of feasting and entertainment can be seen in Song burials, which may indicate a revival of Han visualizations during the Song. When Jessica Rawson (2001) discussed the reuse of the ancient forms and designs in China, she suggested that any discussion of the past must be concerned with both: the ways in which we unconsciously use the past in the present, often continuously, developing it slowly; and with the ways in which that past can be consciously interpreted and reinterpreted in the present. Two approaches useful for understanding different revivals in Chinese art and culture.

Fig. 1
Filial sons painted on the upper register of the Gubozui tomb found at Xingyang in Henan. (Northern Song period) after Zhengzhou 2005, pl.31.

Fig. 2
Scenes of Shun in the Sicun tomb and the Gubozui tomb at Xingyang, Henan. (Northern Song period) after Zhengzhou 2005, pls. 22, 29.

Of particular interest here, is whether the revival of an old pictorial theme was accompanied by past attitudes and ideas. To illustrate the functions and meanings of the theme in Song burials, rather than simply describing filial piety scenes, I shall put my observations within a coherent pictorial context, namely, the vertical and horizontal sections in which the filial scenes are placed. Textual sources provide further information about the associations of images of filial sons in this period. The tomb at Heishangou is a model example of a group of tombs in Henan province. It has a single, domed chamber. All the interior walls and the ceiling are elaborately painted. Its pictorial programme can be divided in three sections: the wall, the upper part, and the ceiling (Fig. 3). Indoor settings and the activities of tomb occupants, such as enjoying food and musical performances, appear on the walls. Images of celestial maids are seen on the ceiling. The upper parts are decorated with painted interlocking bracket sets, and between each set of brackets, filial piety scenes are framed in similar locations. From the left to the right, eight scenes follow, Zeng Shen, the wife of Wang Wuzi, Dong Yong, Ding Lan, Wang Xiang, Meng Zong, Guo Ju and Wang Pou.

The eight figures are well-known, historical filial paragons. Some of their narratives are recorded in texts about filial piety like the *Xiaozi zhuan* (Biographies of Filial Sons) by Liu Xiang. Brief summaries follow to assist the reading of the scenes.

1. The story of Zeng Shen (or Zengzi, as above) from the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BCE), who was extremely filial toward his mother. Once while Zeng was gathering firewood in the mountains, a guest arrived at the house where he lived with his mother. His mother, who had nothing to entertain him with, longed for Zeng's return, and in a nervous fit bit her finger, drawing blood. Miraculously, Zeng felt a pain in his heart as a sign of his mother's need. He shouldered the firewood and returned home.
2. The story of the wife of Wang Wuzi from the Tang period. She was extremely filial toward her elderly mother-in-law, who was sick and needed to eat human flesh as a cure. In devotion, the wife of Wang Wuzi cut a piece of flesh from her thigh to give her mother-in-law.
3. The story of Dong Yong from the Han period. Dong Yong was poor. When Dong's father died, he had no money for the funeral, so sold himself into servitude. On the way to work for his rich master, he met a girl who begged to be his wife and to work as a weaver in his place. After she repaid his debt, she bid a final goodbye to Dong and flew to Heaven.
4. The story of Ding Lan from the Han period. Ding's parents died when he was young, before he was able to serve and support them. In their honour,

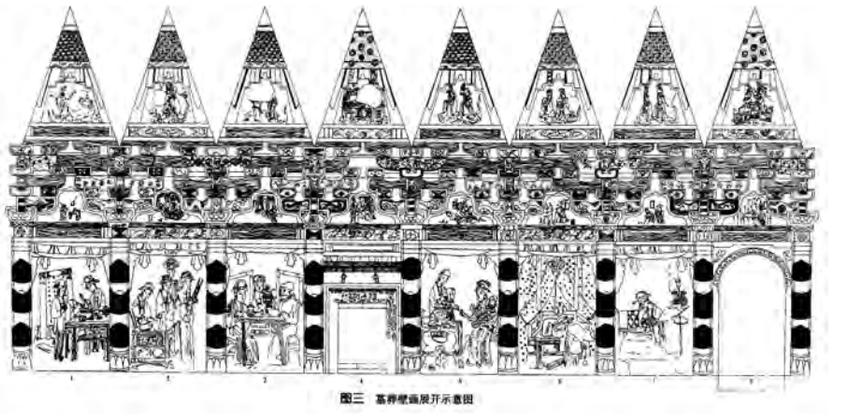

Fig. 3
Drawing of interior designs from the Heishangou tomb at Dengfeng. (1097) after *Wenwu*, 2001:10, p. 62, fig. 3.

Fig. 4
Picture of Dong Yong on the northwest upper wall in the Heishangou tomb at Dengfeng. (1097) after Zhengzhou 2005, pl.127.

he carved effigies in wood and served them as though they were alive. After a time, his wife's devotion to them faltered and one day she pricked their fingers with a needle in mockery. When the wooden statues saw Ding, their eyes were filled with tears. Having questioned his wife, Ding threw her out and divorced her.

5. The story of Wang Xiang from the Jin dynasty (265–420), who lost his mother early. His stepmother was unloving and unceasingly spoke ill of him before his father. She often liked to eat fresh fish, but one harsh winter the river was frozen. Wang Xiang loosened his clothes and lay on the ice to melt it with his body heat. Suddenly the ice opened rapidly and two carp leapt out. He took them home to serve to his stepmother.
6. The story of Meng Zong, who lived during the Three Kingdoms period (220–280). He had lost his father as a child. Once when his elderly mother was sick, she craved fresh bamboo shoots, even though it was winter. In desperation, Meng went to a bamboo grove, clasped a bamboo stem without fresh shoots and broke into tears. Inspired by his filial devotion, heaven and earth forced the ground to open and sprout a bed of new shoots. Meng took them home and made a soup for his mother.
7. The story of Guo Ju from the Han period. His family was very poor, and he had a three-year-old son. His mother shared most of her food with the child. In order to provide enough food for his mother, Guo decided the only solution was to bury his son. He dug a hole and near three feet deep struck a cauldron full of gold.
8. The story of Wang Pou of the Three Kingdoms period, who served his mother with filial piety. Wang's mother was afraid of thunder. When she died she was buried in a hilly wood. Whenever a storm approached, Wang would hurry to her grave to kneel and pray that it would pass, comforting her through the disturbing thunder.

Like other Song and Jin portraits of filial sons, these eight scenes in the Heishangou tomb include one or two figures. They are presented in the form of pictorial narratives, and each has an inscription. For instance, the Dong Yong scene appears on the northwest wall (Fig. 4) and portrays him standing in front of a doorway with a celestial maid flying away – the important episode when his terrestrial wife, the weaving maid, leaves him and flies to Heaven having repaid his debt. Below this image, there is a banqueting scene of the deceased couple. Above the scene, painted on the ceiling, two figures stand above the clouds. As the top of the painting is badly damaged, we cannot see the two individuals' faces, but judging by their clothes and gestures, archaeologists suggest that they are likely to be the deceased couple visiting an immortal land. The visual evidence provides us with a progression through the vertical sections, and the filial scene is positioned midway between the banquet and a heavenly world.

Dong Yong's story is particularly important. Dong Yong sold himself into servitude to pay for his father's funeral. The celestial maid begged to become his wife, and having worked to pay his debt rose into the sky. This tale has a miraculous side, which seems to emphasize that Dong Yong's filial piety moved the gods so deeply that they decided to offer help. As the above example shows, filial piety stories often aimed to convey a crucial message about the efficacy of filial piety. Keith Knapp (2005) examines a number of filial piety stories recorded in the texts of the Six Dynasties (220–589). Roughly fifty per cent of these stories contain a marvellous happening. They depict the rewards a child's filial piety earned, miraculous boons or auspicious omens. Knapp divides stories of miracles into four categories. The first is one where typically an individual undertakes a filial act without the means of finishing, at which point the spiritual world miraculously comes to their assistance concluding the deed. Here, filial piety enables a son or daughter to complete the impossible. The second category is one where heaven rewards the filial child with something that is life-enhancing, such as wealth, a spouse or longevity. In the third category, the spirit world saves the filial exemplar from such imminent dangers as natural catastrophes, wild animals and bandits. The fourth category of filial miracles includes those that cause the appearance of auspicious portents. These auspicious omens usually appear when a filial son performs mourning rites in an exemplary manner. An anecdote from the *Xiaozi zhuan* illustrates such marvellous happenings:

> *Yu Gou in his youth already had filial behaviour. When he was the Governor of Rinan, a pair of geese always roosted on top of his government office. Every time he went out to inspect a county, they would fly in pursuit of his cart. Since he died while in office, the geese followed his corpse as it was being returned to Yuyao. They stayed in front of his tomb, and only after three years did they leave.*
> (Liu, 1936, 14.6b)

This text is remarkable not just in the sense that Yu's extraordinary filial devotion is secondary, but also because of its description of the ways in which his outstanding virtue caused a fantastic phenomenon. Miracles in these accounts are so important that in some cases the primary focus of the narrative is not the

subject's filial piety, but rather the supernatural rewards that the conduct occasioned. Accounts of filial sons, therefore, always include a formulaic statement about the character of the child, saying that "by nature, a person's filial piety was so great that he could communicate with gods or spirits". This statement seems to call attention to the power of filial piety. Through looking at written texts such as the *Xiaozi zhuan* and the later *Ershisixiao* by Guo Jujing, we find that this formulaic statement was often an integral part of these tales.

Chinese popular thought held that the virtues of filial piety were not merely the product of a social contract, but were of a more cosmic character. The orders of Heaven and Earth were always seen as being closely tied to human society or human acts. Heaven is a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophies, and religions. It refers to the physical heavens or the sky, which is mentioned in relationship to its complementary aspect of the earth. From the Zhou period onwards, people bestowed Heaven with anthropomorphic attributes. It was thought to be affected by human affairs and to respond to human society. (Chang, 2000) As noted by David Jordan, "inevitable and eternal behavioural codes were articulated by Chinese sages but inherent in the nature of things and relevant to all people in all times and places". (1986, p. 87) Essential to this idea is the view that the universe was a unified and integrated whole. All parts were linked, and if one part was affected, for example, by changes in human affairs, then other correlated features would respond to the change.

In this context, human, natural phenomena and even supernatural beings were all responsive to filial acts. It was believed that when the virtue of filial piety was used within the human realm, it would move Heaven and Earth, which would then send auspicious omens. As early as the fifth century, people had stated such a view in a text entitled *Ganying* (response), saying, "when filiality and brotherliness reach a certain height, people [are able to] communicate with the heavenly spirits". (Wei, 1974, 86.1881)

This view is set out in the preface to the *Xiaoyi zhuan* (Biographies of Filial and Righteousness Men) in the *Songshi* (History of the Song dynasty) stating:

> *The virtues of filiality and brotherliness move [Heaven and Earth]. Auspicious omens such as sweet spring water, sweet dew, lingzhi grass, and strange plants, [recorded and] continually appeared in historical texts.*
> (Tuo, 1977, 465.13386)

Apparently, people interpreted these portents as auspicious responses from Heaven. This is how people in the Song period thought about the concept of

filial piety and explained its potential power. Fu Hongchu has examined the filial piety stories which were widely circulated during the Song and Yuan periods. It his belief, that the narratives not only propagated the idea of filial piety, but also helped fashion the conceptual power of filial acts by describing the principal of causality or miraculous reward and punishment in those stories (1999). At that time people regarded filial acts as a principle that enabled them to communicate with the heavenly spirits and to attain divine assistance. In the 12th century, Wu Zimu commented upon a few exemplary instances of filial respect, saying: "The fact that [those parents were all cured] proves that filial piety is the source of all other moral behaviours, and it will surely be aided by deities on heaven and earth". (Wu, 1983, 17.280)

Through a closer reading of filial conduct and filial paragons, one can better understand the function of the image of Dong Yong located between the worldly and heavenly scenes in the Heishangou tomb. By depicting filial sons like Dong Yong in this boundary position, people may have expected that filial conduct would ensure the deceased obtain good will from the spirits. Here, I would like to explore Chinese views of images or representations, which shed light on the understanding of illustrations of filial paragons. In China, a popularly held view was that if an image's features were correct, then the image was imbued with the power of the subject it represented. In other words, a visual representation was thought to be capable of stirring the viewer to the same degree as reality, thus pictures were often directly identified with their subject. This was also the case with images in tombs. Portraits of tomb occupants were thought to be actually inhabited by the dead, and pictorial scenes representing rituals would have been seen as a medium by which essential offerings became available to the dead. Depictions of filial sons were also expected to "enchant" and to ensure for tomb occupants a good outcome. (Deng, 2010)

This efficacy may explain why images of filial sons were employed in Song burials. Let us return to the pictorial programme in the Heishangou tomb. On the vertical section of the north wall, on the lower part, there is a false door constructed in brick. Above this, a scene of Ding Lan is portrayed between two bracket sets. The scene illustrates a young couple standing in front of an offering shrine in which a female figure is seated behind an offering table. The couple appears to be making offerings to the figure (Fig. 5). As in the Dong Yong picture, this also represents the emblematic episode in the narrative, that is, Ding Lan serving his late parents' wooden statues as though they were still alive. Above it, the ceiling depicts an imposing building surrounded by clouds, which presumably stands for a celestial palace. Like Dong Yong's image, the

scene of Ding Lan also appears at the boundary between worldly and immortal realms. Consequently, we can argue that with the help of Ding Lan, the hope was that the tomb occupants might reach the celestial palace. Other filial scenes presented at similar positions may have had the same function. By intentionally placing images of filial paragons in the middle of a progression from earthly world to heavenly world, tomb makers may have expected that their representations would assist the tomb occupants to reach the world of the divine.

In this context, the filial piety scenes in Song tombs appear to reveal a departure from the depictions of filial paragons presented in Han burials. The Song pictures not only depicted virtuous paragons and conveyed particular moral messages to their descendants, but also functioned as efficacious images, helping the dead to find their way to paradise or lands of immortals in the life after death. Though some imagery in Song decorated tombs, indicates a return to the past, including filial piety scenes, half-open doors and banquets, they appear to employ a different approach in terms of function and association. Instead of the wholesale use of subject matter from Han tombs, the decoration in Song tombs appears to have been made selectively, demonstrating a conscious revival of past motifs. The change illustrates a significant feature of the reuse of the past: ancient designs may have been reproduced, but it is difficult to bring back the ancient practices and associations linked with them. As Jessica Rawson has pointed out, "the earlier interactions of peoples with their artefacts are very unlikely to be revived at the same time as the artefacts themselves are copied and adopted; as time passes societies change irrevocably". (2001, p. 398) Instead, the re-creation of an earlier system of design may allow new forms and modes of design to come into being that are capable of engaging in new, contemporary models of social interaction. In the case of Song tombs, earlier pictorial subject matter may have offered the funerary specialists of the time new opportunities.

Several factors may have brought about the revival of old pictorial motifs. Excavations of earlier tombs or discoveries of Han sarcophagi might have affected the selections of tomb designs in the period. Although insight into possible interpretations of this phenomenon is provided by looking at the development of antiquarianism and archaism during the Song, there was more at work than simply the discovery of a past form. Attempts to revive ancient forms and motifs appear in collections of calligraphy, painting, and notably, in bronzes and the study of bronze inscriptions. Future research may show that the practices in which ancient forms and motifs were deployed in a variety of contexts resulted from novelties in Song visual art, and that this trend may

Fig. 5
Picture of Ding Lan on the north upper wall in the Heishangou tomb. (1097) after Zhengzhou 2005, pl.128.

Fig. 6
North, northeast, and east sections of the ceiling in the Pingmo tomb. (Northern Song period) after Zhengzhou 2005, pls. 63, 64, 65.

have been one of the reasons why people chose to reuse earlier decorative elements in their burials.

In a 12th century tomb found at Qinxian in Shanxi, 24 groups of filial sons appear in the upper register of the tomb's interior, in the form of free-standing sculptures. According to the report, they were probably made in moulds, attached to bricks with nails, then baked in a kiln and finally coated with colours. The sculptures are enclosed above and below by elaborate bracket sets. A similar division between scenes of daily life and other worlds is presented on the lower walls and the domed ceiling, with filial piety scenes linking the two spheres, an arrangement which reinforces the view that images of filial paragons enabled the tomb occupants to get to immortal lands.

An intriguing parallel is found in another tomb at Houma in Shanxi. Images of the Eight Immortals, including Lü Dongbin and Han Zhongli, are depicted on the domed ceiling. Above them appear clouds and cranes, while the lower walls are decorated with scenes from the daily activities of the tomb occupants. The Eight Immortals are a legendary group of deities and popular element in Chinese culture. Some of them seem to be verifiable historical figures, with dates falling around the time of the Tang period. Each Immortal's power can be transferred to a tool of power that can give life or destroy evil. Their positions are similar to those of filial sons in burials. Perhaps, it is even easier for us to consider them as the central figures who will lead the deceased on to the rewards of immortal palaces in a life after death. Since both were associated with immortal realms and assisting the dead, filial sons and the Eight Immortals may have belonged to the same category of subject matter.

Specific pictorial themes vary according to time, place and artisan, but despite such differences, their overall pictorial arrangement appears to be consistent. Most subject matter in tombs was arranged according to certain rules. A sort of matrix is revealed by comparing different tombs in Henan and Shanxi. It seems artisans selected what to carve or paint from a pool of conventional subjects. The whole pictorial programme in tombs may have been put together out of a set of standard topics, for instance domestic scenes, filial scenes and images of immortals. In other words, the rules about the positioning of certain subjects appears relatively fixed, however, on occasion other pictorial subjects were introduced. Thus, when filial piety scenes were replaced by images of the Eight Immortals, or when cranes and clouds substituted celestial beings, the aim was that the pictorial programme would achieve very similar effects and combine to provide a benign afterlife for the tomb occupant.

A Song tomb excavated at Xinmi in Henan further reveals the manner in which filial sons would assist the deceased in the afterlife. Four scenes of filial sons decorate the ceiling. They alternate with three pictures of immortals and occupy the same location. In this tomb, the horizontal ceiling section is divided in two sequences. The east section, from right to left, depicts scenes showing Wang Xiang and Bao Shan, and next to them, in the northeast section, a scene in which celestial figures lead the deceased couple over a bridge (Fig. 6). As in the Heishangou tomb, the north section shows a grand palace surrounded by clouds. Here, the effect of such representations is very likely to have had the same power as their subjects and played a crucial role. People believed that filial piety scenes would help the dead communicate with heavenly spirits who would lead them across the bridge to the celestial palace.

The other side of the ceiling allows a similar interpretation (Fig. 7). Apart from the damaged scene on the southwest section, Min Ziqian, who was filial to his stepmother, is depicted on the west section. A scene flanked by an inscription "the Sizhou Buddha releasing the deceased couple from purgatory" appears on the northwest section. Ideas about the seven stages of judgment through which the dead pass on their way to rebirth circulated in popular culture from the late Tang through the Song. The Sizhou Buddha was seen as a way to release the deceased from hell, by helping the dead gain merit, obliterate sin or assisting their rebirth in heaven. (Teiser, 1988) Next to him, on the north section, is the palace. Viewed from left to right, the pictures show another path for the deceased in the afterlife, and Min Ziqian's efficacy in the process.

A similar horizontal design found on the sarcophagus of Zhang Jun once again recalls a similar opinion about the role of filial sons in burials. 24 filial scenes are engraved on the rear and two long sides of the sarcophagus. These figures are placed behind images of celestial maids holding banners who appear to face or move towards the front of the sarcophagus, where a female figure standing at a half-open door is carved. Above this door, hover three celestial beings and the deceased couple surrounded by auspicious clouds. Thus, the pictorial programme shows that the deceased have reached an immortal land and that the filial scenes may have assisted them. The above examples suggest that there was a common hope that the dead would find their way to paradise, or the land of the immortals, in a life after death, and that the subjects of filial sons, celestial beings and half-opened doors were all associated with the wish. This wish may have influenced the concept of the afterlife and is also shown in many aspects of burial practices of that time. (Deng, 2009)

The idea that filial piety afforded filial sons a connection with heavenly spirits and realms, was a concept associated with various religions and beliefs. In Daoism, great filial acts were thought of as a means by which a person was able to attain immortality or pass to an immortal realm after

their death. Earlier Daoist texts state that people in pursuit of immortality must have the virtue of filial piety. For instance, the Eastern Jin work, Baopuzi (Master Who Embraces Simplicity) by Ge Hong (284–364), states:

> *If a person desires to be an earth immortal, he needs to perform hundreds of good deeds. If he desires to be a celestial immortal, he needs to practice thousands of good deeds, among which filial piety and loyalty are the most important.*
> (Ge, 1971, 3.11a)

Daoist scriptures, which clearly exhort filial respect towards parents, appeared in the late Northern Song period, such as *Taishang ganying pian* (Tractate of the Most Exalted on Actions and Consequences), *Yinzhi wen* (Scripture of Wenchang Emperor's Hidden Merits), and *Wenchang xiaojing* (Wenchang Emperor's Classic of Filial Piety). The *Taishang ganying pian* is a relatively short scripture of about 1,200 characters that presents itself a tract from the Most Exalted, usually understood to be the Daoist deity, Laozi. His message is that good and bad fortunes do not come into a person's life without reason, but rather, follow as natural consequences of what the person does, just as a shadow follows a form. It teaches the ways in which the merit earned from good deeds are rewarded by longevity, wealth and successful descendants, while the retribution for evil deeds ensures the wicked are destined to suffer. These scriptures connect great filial piety as a practice for achieving for immortality. For instance, the *Wenchang xiaojing* says:

> *If a person is really filial (…) he would be given numerous blessings when he is alive; he would go to the realm of immortals after his death; everything would be as he wishes; his offspring would flourish and be prosperous, and generations [of his family] would last forever.*
> (Anon, 1971, 14b)

Thus, Daoists regarded filial piety as a direct way of achieving immortality, either during one's lifetime or in one's life hereafter. For instance, one section of the *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Taoist Books in a Cabinet) describes how the filial were thought to become immortals and ascend to a celestial world:

> *When an extremely filial and loyal person dies, he will receive an appointment to be an agent beneath the Earth. After 140 years he will receive teachings from lower immortals, and then he is eligible for promotion to earthbound immortal.*
> (Zhang, 2003, 86.1934)

Fig. 7
West, northwest, and north sections of the ceiling in the Pingmo tomb. (Northern Song period) after Zhengzhou 2005, pls. 61, 62, 63.

Buddhism also stressed the importance of filial acts, using the words: "That which now saturates Heaven and Earth, unites man and deity (…) is none other than filial piety". (Daoshi, 1921, 39.505a) Filial piety started to be adopted and advocated by Chinese Buddhism during the Tang dynasty. Some scholars argue that this relationship resulted in the development of filial subjects in the later periods. (Lei, 1999) Buddhists emphasized their own ideas about piety and showed numerous sutras in canons, such as *Foshuo xiaozi jing* (The Buddha's Teaching on the Sutra of Filial Sons) and *Fumu enzhong jing* (Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents), where the latter states that if people are able to display great filial piety, they will be reborn into a happy existence in one of the Buddhist heavens or *nirvana*. (Wang, 1980, 5.672–5.700) The most famous examples of Buddhist filial conduct are Shanzi (syāma in Pāli) and Mulian (Maudgalyāyana in Pāli). Such models of filial piety in Buddhist literature are no different from those advocated by Confucians, and it comes as no surprise to discover that by the Song period they had been accepted into popular Chinese literature as had the twenty-four examples. (Ch'en, 1968) The classic Tang Buddhist encyclopaedia, *Fayuan zhulin* (Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharma) by Daoshi, contains a number of examples in which filial sons gained merit or reached Buddhist paradises in the afterlife. The importance of filial acts in Buddhism, is obvious in the subject matter of mural paintings or stone carvings in Tang and Song Buddhist caves at Dunhuang in Gansu province and Dazu in Sichuan province, where both afford imagery based on sutras that stress filial piety.

In the Song period, the relation between filial piety and an afterlife is also reinforced by popular literature. The *Yijian zhi* (Record of the Listener), for instance, records a story in which a woman was extremely filial toward her mother-in-law, which led her to escape a sudden death. (Hong, 1981, 180) In other cases, the virtue of filial piety enabled people to free themselves from hell.

Though there were specific rewards for filial behaviour associated with different religious beliefs, filial piety was often closely bound up with ideas about life after death. There was an inherent connection between filial piety and a benign existence in one's afterlife. This association may be one of the main reasons why images of filial sons appear in so many tombs that span from the Song to Jin and Yuan dynasties. The efficacy of filial acts and the agency of their images play a crucial role in ensuring the deceased a blessed life after death. It is clear that when filial piety scenes were added to tombs, they were expected to provide the best possible afterlife for the tomb occupants. The above discussion has shed light on the symbolism of tomb space and the imagery of the afterlife during this period. Pictures of filial paragons existed as efficacious images which gained significance by being located in tombs and in the afterlives of tomb occupants. They were an effective means by which a desired effect could be achieved. Alongside other pictorial themes and the physical reality of Song decorated tombs themselves, they enabled a set of beliefs on life after death, to be conceived and translated into visual form.

Name and place	Tomb structure	Position of filial piety scenes	Major pictorial subjects	Form	Inscription	Publication
Zhangpan sarcophagus at Mengjin (1106)	Unknown	Three sides of the sarcophagus	Filial sons, tomb occupants, and immortals	Line carving	Yes	*Wenwu*, 1984:7
Le Chongjing's sarcophagus at Luoning (1117)	Unknown	Three sides of the sarcophagus	Tomb occupants, immortals, and filial sons	Line carving	Yes	*Wenwu*, 1993:5
Wang Shisan Xiucai's sarcophagus at Luoyang (1123)	Unknown	Three sides of the sarcophagus	Immortals and filial sons	Line carving	Yes	*Kaogu yu wenwu,* 1983:5
Xicun sarcophagus at Gongxian (1125)	Unknown	Two sides of the sarcophagus	Filial sons, a women opening a door, and flowers	Line carving	Yes	*Zhongyuan wenwu*, 1988:1
Huixian sarcophagus	Unknown	Two sides of the sarcophagus	Only filial sons	Line carving	Yes	Zhou 2000, vol. 8, p. 135.
Yiyang sarcophagus at Henan	Unknown	Two sides of the sarcophagus	Tomb occupants, filial sons, and flowers	Line carving	Yes	*Wenwu*, 1996:8
Yizhong tomb at Linxian	Single square-chambered tomb	North, east and west walls	Filial children, and Four Directional Animals	Painting	No	*Zhongyuan wenwu,* 1990:4
Beiyuancun tomb at Songxian (1107-1110)	Single octagonal-chambered tomb	North, east, west walls and two sides of tomb corridor	Filial sons, tomb occupants, and guardians	Painting	No	*Zhongyuan wenwu*, 1987:3
Song Silang's tomb at Xin'an (1126)	Single octagonal-chambered tomb	Two sides of tomb corridor	Filial sons, tomb occupants, food preparations and theatrical performances	Painting	Yes	Luoyang 2003, pp. 41-42.
Heishangou tomb at Dengfeng (1097)	Single octagonal-chambered tomb	Upper part of tomb walls	Filial sons, tomb occupants, and performances	Painting	Yes	*Wenwu*, 2001:10
Sicun tomb at Xingyang	Single hexagonal-chambered tomb	Upper part of tomb walls	Only filial scenes	Painting	Yes	*Wenwu*, 1982:4
Gaocun tomb at Dengfeng	Single octagonal-chambered tomb	Upper part of tomb walls	Filial sons, tomb occupants, food preparations, and immortals	Painting	Yes	Zhengzhou 2005, pp. 62-88.
Gubozui tomb at Xingyang	Single hexagonal-chambered tomb	Upper part of the tomb walls	Only filial scenes	Painting	Yes	Zhengzhou 2005, pp. 24-30.
Cailiaochang Song tomb at Luoyang	Single square-chambered tomb	Upper part of east and west tomb walls	Filial sons, and lattice doors	Brick relief	No	Luoyang 2003, pp. 46-47.
Pingmo tomb at Xinmi	Single hexagonal-chambered tomb	Upper part of tomb walls	Filial sons, tomb occupants, and performances	Painting	Yes	Zhengzhou 2005, pp. 41-46.
Chengguan tomb at Linxian	Single square-chambered tomb	North, east and west walls	Filial sons, feasting, and performances	Brick relief	No	*Kaogu yu wenwu*, 1982:5
Huguan tomb at Shanxi (1087)	Single square-chambered tomb with two niches	East and west walls, and either side of niche entrances	Guardians, attendants, and filial sons	Brick relief	No	*Wenwu,* 1997:2
Guxian M2 tomb at Changzhi (1078)	Single square-chambered tomb	North wall	Filial sons, attendants, guardians, and Four Directional Animals	Painting	No	*Wenwu,* 2005:4
Wumacun tomb at Changzhi (1081)	Single square-chambered tomb	North, east and west walls	Only filial scenes	Brick relief	No	*Kaogu*, 1994:9
Xibaitucun tomb at Changzhi (1088)	Single square-chambered tomb with niches	North wall and either side of niche entrances	Filial sons, guardians, and attendants	Painting	No	Shanxi 2000, pp. 131-137.

Table 1
Filial Piety Scenes in Song tombs

Tomb	Chengguan tomb at Linxian	Huguan tomb at Shanxi	Zhangpan sarcophagus at Mengjin	Beiyuancun tomb at Songxian	Xicun Sarcophagus at Gongxian	The Yuan Text Compiled by Guo Jujing (*fl.*1295—1321)
Date	1068—1117	1087	1106	1107—1110	1125	
Technology	Brick relief	Brick relief	Line carving	Painting	Line carving	
Number	24	20	24	15	24	24
	Dong Yong	√	√	√	√	√
	Yang Xiang	√	√		√	√
	Lu Ji	√	√		√	√
	Jiang Shi		√		Jiang Shi's wife	√
	Wang Pou					√
	Zengzi	√	√		√	√
	Tanzi	√	√	√	√	√
	Ding Lan	√	√	√	√	√
	Cai Shun	√	√			√
	Shun	√	√	√	√	√
	Lao Laizi	√	√	√	√	√
	Guo Ju	√	√	√	√	√
	Wang Xiang	√	√	√	√	√
	Meng Zong	√	√	√	√	√
	Wang Tingjian					
	Lu Yigu	√	√		√	
	Han Boyu		√	√	√	
	Liu Yin	√	√	√	√	
	Yuan Gu	√	√	Yuan Jue	√	
	Deng You					
	Bao Shan	√	√		√	
	Cao E	√	√	√	√	
	Jiang Gong					
	The crow					
		Tian Zhen	√	√	√	
			Zhao Xiaozong	√	√	
			Liu Mingda		√	
			Wang Wuzi's Wife		√	
			Min Sun		Min Ziqian	√
				Emperor Wen of the Han		√
					Mother Cai	
						Zhong You
						Jiang Ge
						Lady Tang
						Zhu Shouchang
						Yu Qianlou
						Wu Meng
						Huang Tingjian

Note: table content based on Zhao Chao's essay on the Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety, see Zhao 1988.s

Table 2
Different Sets of Filial Paragons in Song Tombs

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