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Han Mural Tombs: Reflection of Correlative Cosmology through Mural Paintings

Nataša VAMPELJ SUHADOLNIK*

Abstract

The main research materials of this study were tombs with murals from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). The article deals with the issue of the reflection of ancient Chinese cosmologic concepts in the iconographic design of Han mural paintings. A thorough analysis of the iconographic design of murals shows that they possessed not only a decorative function, but together with the architectural structure and other burial objects reflected the entire cosmic image. The analysis of tomb paintings reveals a developed correlative cosmology *yin-yang wuxing* which manifests its concrete image in symbolic codes of individual iconographic motifs. The article first displays a general review of tombs with murals, and then focuses on depictions in Han tomb murals, discussing representation of the images of celestial bodies, the symbolic polarity of the cosmical forces *yin* and *yang*, the symbolism of the four directions and the four seasons and the symbolic circling of the five *xings*.

Keywords: Han mural tombs, correlative cosmology of *yin-yang wuxing*, *Fuxi*, *Nüwa*, four animals

Izveček

Osnovni raziskovalni material pričujoče študije so predstavljale grobnice s poslikavo iz dinastije Han. Pričujoči članek se ukvarja s problematiko odražanja starodavnih kitajskih kozmoloških konceptov v ikonografski zasnovi grobnega slikarstva dinastije Han. Temeljita analiza ikonografske zasnove grobne poslikave je pokazala, da poslikava ni imela zgolj dekorativne funkcije, temveč je skupaj z arhitekturno strukturo in ostalimi pokopnimi predmeti odražala celotno kozmično podobo. Analiza grobnega slikarstva

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prikaže izdelano korelativno kozmologijo *yin-yang wuxing*, ki svoj odraz dobi v simbolnih kodah posameznih ikonografskih motivov. Članek najprej prikaže splošen pregled grobov s poslikavo, v nadaljevanju predstavi prikazovanje nebesnih teles, simbolno polarnost kozmičnih sil *yin* in *yang*, simbolizacijo štirih smeri in štirih letnih časov ter simbolno kroženje petih *xingov*, kot jih upodablja grobno stensko slikarstvo dinastije Han.

Ključne besede: grobnice s poslikavo iz dinastije Han, korelativna kozmologija *yin-yang wuxing*, *Fuxi*, *Nüwa*, štiri živali

1 Introduction

A tomb as a historical, social and cultural peculiarity represents a record of a certain period and the social structure of the time. It offers the possibility of reconstructing the concrete technological achievements as well as the more abstract-philosophical and other spiritual and cosmologic values once expressed and often taken for granted. The main reason which stood behind this unusual type of building in the society of that time was surely the ever present and widespread belief in the independent existence of the soul, idealized as possessing the same wishes and yearnings as the living representatives of the human world. The desire to transcend human fugacity in the form of the soul's life after death resulted in building sepulchral places and equipping them with numerous objects the deceased might need in the world unknown to the living man. The work of archaeologists today who continuously unearth newly discovered ancient tombs thus offers us progressive insight into earlier social activities and technological achievements. At the same time it enables a thorough understanding of the spiritual yearnings of that time, their understanding of philosophical views and natural processes and not the least, of the activity of the whole universe that is the central topic of the present article. The purpose of the present article is to connect individual aspects of the traditional cosmologic system of the Han 漢 Dynasty¹ with different material elements of the tomb structure. I propose to answer two questions: First, how and to what extent did the spiritual world manifest itself through the grave architecture? Second, to what extent is the cosmologic

¹ For all Chinese terms except for longer quotes from classical works, the official latinized version of the People's Republic of China, called *pinyin* 拼音, is used. The character is written only when a particular expression is used for the first time. In case the understanding of a character contributes to the understanding of the content, this is exceptionally added also when an individual expression is repeated.

conception present in the spatial and artistic design of Chinese Han tombs with murals?

The research materials of the present article were tombs with murals from the Han Dynasty, of which up to 61 (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2006) had been excavated by 2006. All the tombs that have been unearthed so far are located north of the Yangtze River, but most are situated in Henan 河南 province and the city of Luoyang 洛陽. Special methods are required for interpreting works of art connected to the tombs where regarding the iconology and ideas, symbolical messages need to be explained. This is a relevant element, which with the help of an ideal background makes it possible to explain the defined cosmologic meaning. As long as studies focus on the interpretation of individual motifs, the unveiling of the formative, sociological and symbolical images in the iconographic scheme remains fragmentary. Consequently, they fail to offer insight into the iconographic scheme as a whole or reveal its original historical significance. An individual pictorial motif was always juxtaposed with other motifs, thus creating a logical image of decorative tendencies. It is necessary to interpret individual motifs in the framework of the entire pictorial scheme, where the position of a certain motif and its role in linking the architectural structure with the pictorial scheme is of the utmost significance. While searching for the essential value of grave paintings, it is also necessary to consider individual factors contributing to the diversity of a particular grave scheme and to pay attention to not concede to a generalizing tendency. By bearing these facts in mind and with the aid of an interdisciplinary research orientation, the present article will try to illustrate the more profound message of the grave design.

2 A General Review of Tombs with Murals

Since the beginning of the 20th century archaeologists have excavated altogether 61 tombs dated to the period of the Han Dynasty. Besides the first discovered tomb in Henan province² in 1916, archaeological and research work prior to the formation of the People's Republic of China was concentrated in the area of

² The exact year of the discovery of the first tomb with murals, named *Balitai* 八里台 is not completely reliable, but the fact is that the painting in 1924 no longer belonged to China, but had been sold in Paris to the American Museum in Boston. If the memory of the antique dealer is reliable, the tomb was discovered around 1916 (see Su 1984, 22).

Liaoning 遼寧 province where Japanese experts unearthed 5 tombs. Excavation and study of other 55 tombs were mainly performed after the formation of the new country, when the archaeological work was more systematically and clearly defined. Thus in the 50's of the last century 11 tombs were discovered and unearthed, in the 60's 3, in the 70's 10, in the 80's 16, in the 90's 11, and since the beginning of the 21st century another four tombs have been unearthed: two in Shaanxi 陝西 province (in Xi'an 西安 and in Xunyi 旬邑), one in Yintun 尹屯 in the vicinity of Luoyang in Henan province and one in Shanxi 山西 province in the town Yuncheng 運城 (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2006, 91).

The largest concentration of the tombs is in Henan province (21 tombs), especially in the environs of Luoyang city (15 tombs) which was an important economic, political and cultural centre as well as the capital of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In the surrounding areas of Henan province there are 18 tombs, in Inner Mongolia 内蒙 4, Gansu 甘肅 6 and Liaoning 遼寧 12. The majority of the unearthed tombs were situated in significant political centres, strategic military points or the economically and culturally flourishing cities of that time. From this background data it is clear that the centre of the creation of eternal places and their iconographic symbolism was located in the central region of Henan province, especially in Luoyang. Other rather remote regions at the outskirts of Chinese territory had notable military posts which guarded frontiers at the line of the Great Wall, blocking eruptions of nomadic neighbours from the north. The region of Liaoyang played the role of the capital of the eastern prefecture of that time.

These tombs belonged to wealthy officials, generals and other members of Chinese society highly ranked on the social scale. Thus grave mural paintings do not merely reflect the artistic tendencies of that time, but also present the social life of the ruling class of the Han Dynasty, their ideology and mentality and the rank of the deceased.

In attempting to classify the images by content, we can almost immediately see how diverse and opposing arrangements of images fall into individual frameworks. However, it is only after having considered the entire compositional design that the numerous, at first glance disconnected, motifs gradually reveal a hidden image, whereby one should not forget to consider also the connection between the iconographic classification and the architectural structure. By transposing certain images from the mythological or real world into a pictorial representation of three dimensional structures the form and meaning of the images as well as individual

architectural parts of the sepulchral complex change. At first, a bare sepulchral framework, offering the deceased a physical space where his corpse is kept, may change through individual pictorial images into a diminished form of the universe which within the limits of the cosmic space preserves the eternity of its own existence. It is only by studying individual scenes within the framework of the entire composition, and researching the connections between the content classification and architectural elements that general sociological and symbolic studies will gain a more solid basis. Thus murals in the tombs can only be properly interpreted in their original architectural arrangement.

On the basis of the relation between the constructional elements and individual motifs we can classify the content of the paintings into two basic groups of scenes: scenes from the heavens and celestial world, and scenes from the earth or earthly world. The scenes from the heavens to which all celestial bodies and other mythological and divine creatures of the heavenly kingdom belong are depicted on the ceiling of the tomb, on the upper parts of the walls and on the upper parts of partition walls. Scenes from the earthly world depicting private and official activities of everyday life; feasts and other images, cover the big mural areas of the sepulchral chamber. The division into heaven and earth which by themselves embody the cosmical forces *yang* 陽 and *yin* 陰 offers a rich symbolism of the two complementary forces: heavenly and earthly images reflect a constant interlacement of these two forces which encompass all the entities in the cosmic balance. Thus heavenly and earthly scenes with the artificially constructed universe in a spatial image contribute to the each and every moment created eternity.

3 The Universe as Seen in the Architectural Design of Tombs with Murals

A thorough analysis and survey of tombs and their iconographic elements have revealed that mural paintings possessed more than a mere decorative function. They had a much more profound meaning. Alongside the construction of the grave chamber and other burial objects, they reproduced the entire universe as perceived by the population of that time. Thus the soul of the deceased could attain immortality in the ever changing but never ending cosmos, and man's questions in their search for eternity in a highly volatile world could be answered. The analysis

of grave murals has revealed an elaborate correlative cosmology based upon the binary system of the complementary pair of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 whose mechanism of constant interaction of rising and falling movement creates the source of the vital motive force of the universe. At its core it represents the continuous circle of birth, death and rebirth manifested in the circulation of the five dynamically interacting cosmic phases (*wuxing* 五行). Furthermore, a tendency to transform a religious object into a microcosm of the universe is captured in the grave construction. The common structure of grave chambers with round ceilings and square-based bearing walls manifests the *Gaitian* theory 蓋天說 and the widespread concept of a round heaven and a square earth. This chapter will explore and illustrate the construction design of sepulchral chambers in great detail, while the rest of the article will deal with the depiction of celestial bodies, the symbolic polarity of the cosmic forces *yin* and *yang*, the symbolism of the four directions and seasons as well as the symbolic circulation of the five *xings* as depicted by the Han grave mural paintings.

The *Gaitian* theory and its general concept of a round heaven and a square earth—*tianyuan difang* 天圓地方 with the metaphorical image of a large round umbrella rising above a square based carriage on a vertical pole, clearly interpreted the vision of heaven. The theory perceives heaven as a kind of a wheel that carries with it the sun, the moon and the stars, while the earth stands motionless underneath. Among the three more or less widespread views upon the structural form of the universe, the *Gaitian* theory with a round heaven and a square earth achieved the greatest influence and echo among a wider population. There is significant documentary evidence in numerous objects from that time, and it is also clearly seen in the construction design of tombs with murals.

In the long period of the Han Dynasty, the underground structure of horizontally built grave chambers developed from a simple form into a more complex one, usually consisting multiple chambers and an inclined grave path. Tombs from the middle and late period of the Western Han Dynasty, oriented towards the south or east, mainly comprised only one main chamber and two to four side chambers. The whole structure with a roof-shaped ceiling, a gable and a front wall representing the door sought to remind people of the home of the deceased. Tombs from the period of the Wang Mang's 王莽 intermezzo and the early period of the Eastern Han Dynasty reveal a similar construction design, except that brick stones were also used as a building material. It was in this period

that there a greater number vaulted ceiling constructions built from rectangular bricks started to appear, a design which became widespread in the Eastern Han Dynasty (Fig. 1).

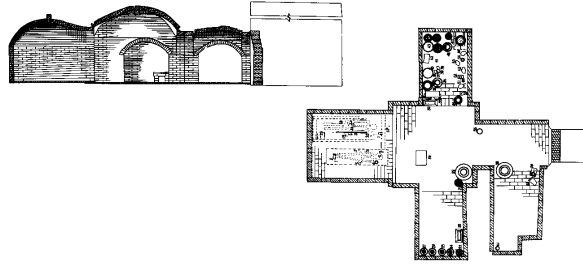


Fig. 1: Construction of the *Luoyang beijiao shiyouzhan* Tomb
洛陽北郊石油站壁畫墓. (After: Huang 1996, 142)

In the middle and late period of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the vaulted structure became a commonplace in building sepulchral chambers. The grave design gradually reveals more complex structures, as more side chambers appear, and besides the central chamber a front and a rear room appear as well. These not only resemble the homes of the owners of the tombs, but simultaneously allude to the whole household, as other members of the family were normally buried there as well.



Fig. 2: Grave chambers of the *Bu Qianqiu* tomb
卜千秋壁畫墓. (After: Huang 1996, 63)

From the concise constructional scheme above, it can be seen that the form of the ceilings represents the idea of a round heaven which covers the square earth. At first, the majority of ceilings have a flat middle section, sloping towards the walls (Fig. 2). When the walls do not form a square, they mostly form a rectangle. They are always designed in a quadrangular form. Later, round and dome-shaped vaults (Fig. 3) start to appear, and the ceiling with a flat middle section gradually disappears from the interior grave structure.



Fig. 3: Central chamber of the *Mixian Dahuting 2 hao* tomb
密縣打虎亭 2 號畫像石, 壁畫墓. (After: Huang 2003, Fig. 8)

In the first version of the *Gaitian* theory, the image of a round heaven is compared to an open umbrella which instead of bending downwards spreads its spokes in all directions in approximately the same flat surface.

周髀家云: 天圓如張蓋, 地方如棊局. (*Jinshu*, Fang 1998, 279; *Suishu*, Wei 1996, 506)

The *Zhoubi* school claimed that the heaven was round as an open umbrella and the earth was square as a chessboard.

Therefore, some scholars believe that the old version of the *Gaitian* theory saw the heaven as a flat surface parallel to the earth plane (Major 1993, 38). It is only with the appearance of the second version of the *Gaitian* theory, recorded in the *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經 (*Mathematical Classic of the Zhou Gnomon*), that the image of the heaven in the form of a hemisphere dome is clearly shown.

天象蓋笠, 地法覆盤. 天地各中高外下. (Li and Sun 1995, 85)

The heaven resembles a covering rain that, the earth resembles a dish turned upside down. The heaven and the earth are higher in the centre and lower around the outer parts.



Fig. 4: The main chamber of *Xi'an Jiaotong daxue* tomb
 西安交通大學壁畫墓. (After: Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 1991, Figure (*tuban*) 1)

A similar development of theoretical suppositions about the image of the heaven can also be noticed in the ceiling construction of grave chambers. At first ceilings with a flat centre prevailed, which was later replaced by the vaulted round or dome-shaped ceiling constructions. In some graves, constructions in the form of a dish turned upside down appear, providing further evidence for the attempt to capture the heavenly image in the ceiling construction. On the other hand, the physical evidence taken in conjunction with these written accounts supports and enables an empirical reconstruction of these theories. For example, the original ceilings with a flat centre offer evidence for a parallel image of the heaven and the earth. Here, it has to be remembered that a grave construction taken by itself does not offer enough evidence to reconstruct the *Gaitian* theory. It can only be confirmed with an analysis of pictorial motifs which in connection with the architectural design create an expressive iconographic scheme of the entire cosmologic composition. Only when a certain scene is located at an exactly defined place, not only in the iconographic composition but in the whole architectural design, does it become a relevant source of information in the context of the whole composition. It then not only tells us about the literary content of the paintings, but offers evidence of construction and iconographic information. The ceiling depicts with complementarily operating forces *yin* and *yang* and the eternal cycles of the five *xings*, symbolizing heaven and celestial bodies in an organic whole with individual godlike creatures which are sometimes represented on the upper parts of the walls. It is especially the middle and lower parts of the walls that routinely depict scenes that reflect the real earthly life of the deceased and his soul (Fig. 3). Above the door, lintels, or walls above the door can be depicted guardians

of the tomb either in the form of godlike creatures or in the form of real guardians. In some tombs, a brown-red line even more clearly indicates the boundaries of heavenly and earthly scenes, and thereby bifurcate the interior of the tomb into a round heaven and square earth (Fig. 4).

4 The Depiction of Celestial Bodies

The next step in the reconstruction of an artificial universe is the depiction of celestial bodies on the ceiling of the tomb. Although we cannot talk about any accurate celestial maps, the clear circles on the ceiling in an exactly defined structure indicate various constellations.

According to written sources, celestial images were painted on the ceiling of the tombs in the 3rd century B.C., if not even before. “Above are celestial bodies, below is the image of the earth” (Sima 2000, 160) is an expressive description of Qinshi’s 秦始皇 underground palace. Thus the first material evidence is provided by the tombs from the Han Dynasty. The oldest tomb with a celestial map on the ceiling, called *Luoyang shaogou 61 hao* 洛陽燒溝 61 號壁畫墓, was unearthed in 1957 in the city of Luoyang (see Henan sheng wenhuaju wenwu gongzuodui 1964). It dates from the later period of the Western Han Dynasty, the time of the emperors Yuan 元帝 and Cheng 成帝 (48–7 B.C.). Twelve bricks of the ceiling of the front chamber represent in a successive horizontal composition the sun, the moon and stars, among which twist red and black patterns of clouds (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Ceiling painting in the *Luoyang shaogou 61 hao* tomb
洛陽燒溝 61號壁畫墓. (After: Wei and Li 1995, 11)

On the ceiling are represented only individual celestial bodies, identified by Li Falin (Li 1986) and Xia Nai (Xia 1965) as individual lodges of the 28-lodge system and other constellations. The red sun with a bird is located at the beginning of the painting on the eastern side, and the moon with a toad and a hare is located among stellar images towards the western side of the tomb. The circulation of the universe is here clearly captured in the intertwinement of the forces *yin* and *yang*, indicated by the sun with the bird in the east and the moon with the toad and the hare in the west. The cyclic circulation of time is even more clearly indicated by the number 12 and the fact that the scene is composed of exactly 12 bricks³. The number 12 played a very important role in the concept of time and space at that time. Even before the Han Dynasty they knew of 12 earthly branches and 10 heavenly stems which helped to count days and form a cycle of 60 years. In the poem *Tianwen* 天問 from the *Chuci* 楚辭 we can already perceive a 12-part division of the universe (*Chuci*, Zhou 1993, 94) and the number 12 appears also in more serious astronomical treatises of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. A period of 12 years marked a heavenly year, the result of the observation of the movement of Jupiter. Accordingly, they divided the area around the ecliptic into 12 parts of approximately the same size, and named them by 12 earthly branches. The division of the year into 12 months is important as well, and *Huainanzi* reminds us that “The heaven has twelve months with which it regulates 360 days” and that also “a man has 12 joints with which he controls 360 knuckles” (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 283). Besides the division of the year into 12 parts, the time unit of one day was divided into 12 two-hour parts which were also connected with 12 earthly branches. The concept of time at that time can be related to the paintings on the tomb ceiling. It was in accordance with the whole iconographic design indicating the circulation of day and night, of the year or even of the heavenly year. The image of the sun and the moon especially attracts attention. The sun is depicted on the first and the moon on the seventh brick, i.e. exactly in the middle of the painting which splits the whole into two parts. The first six bricks and the sun thus symbolize the day, and the moon with the following five bricks symbolize the night. Evidently each brick could represent one out of twelve two-hour periods of the day. This was an attempt to reproduce the cycle of time which by the constant exchange of day and night never ends and thus creates eternity. It is highly

³ According to Xia Nai and Li Falin, only individual lodges and constellations chosen from the five heavenly palaces are depicted. The fact that the scene is depicted on 12 bricks is, according to them, irrelevant (See Xia 1965 and Li 1986).

probable that within this context bricks no. 2 and 11 depict the Great Bear *beidou* 北斗, which even more emphasizes the temporal circulation of the cosmic image. *Beidou* played a very important role in Chinese astronomy, as it never disappeared from the observers' eyes and it always seemingly circled around the North Pole. Taken as a guide it helped to discover the locations of invisible lodges and other constellations, and furthermore, its circulation around the equator and the ecliptic formed four palaces. It also played the important role if a time determinant, marking the progress of the night time and the change of individual seasons, and thus contributed to the formation of the earliest time system. It soon became a symbolic image of the emperor's carriage whose circular movement around the North Pole governed the whole heavenly image. While such a role is depicted on the stone in the *Wurong* 武榮 temple from Shandong province (Fig. 6), Sima Qian 司馬遷 in his historical work *Shiji* 史記 comments as follows:

斗為帝車, 運於中央, 臨制四鄉. 分陰陽, 建四時, 均五行, 移節度, 定諸紀, 皆系於斗. (Sima 2000, 1022)

Beidou serves as the emperor's carriage. Circling around the heavenly centre, it controls the four directions, separates the *yin* and *yang*, indicates the four seasons and balances the harmony of the five *xings*. It arranges the degrees of solar sectors and defines all units of the calendar year. All this refers to *dou*.



Fig. 6: Depiction of the emperor's heavenly carriage in the form of the Great Bear, the *Wurong* temple in Shandong province. (After: Feng 2001, 91)

Other stellar imageries in tombs depict individual lodges, in some case even the whole system of 28 lodges. The latter can be seen in the tomb *Xi'an Jiaotong daxue* 西安交通大學, excavated in 1987 in Xi'an city in Shaanxi province (see Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 1991). Within two concentric rings on the ceiling, 28 lodges are depicted among which four divine animals and other images of people and animals appear (Fig. 7). Stars, which are depicted here in white with a

black border, are not individually arranged on the ceiling, but connected with lines indicating individual constellations. The connection of the astronomical and the mythological traditions is interesting: it joins together the individual constellations with certain images of people or animals that are in some way connected with an individual constellation. Thus the constellation *niu* 牛 (*ox*), also named *qianniu* 牽牛 (*ox's dragging* or *shepherd*) is depicted in the image of an ox dragged by a shepherd, and the composition also includes 6 stars from this constellation.



Fig. 7: A scene on the ceiling of the *Xi'an Jiaotong daxue* tomb
西安交通大學壁畫墓. (After: Chen 2003, colour Fig. 3)

The division of the 28 lodges into four palaces is clearly symbolized by the four divine animals. They are placed between two circles and indicate the four directions, coinciding with the correct orientation of the grave chamber. Analogously, the blue green dragon is depicted in the east between the seven lodges of the eastern palace, the red bird in the south between the seven lodges indicating the southernmost part, the white tiger in the west and the black tortoise in the north of the grave chamber. The images of the four animals often appear in other toms as well. They not only embody the presence of the physical *space*, but by symbolizing the four seasons also embody the presence of the *temporal* cosmic component.

An overview of the stellar paintings reveals that the majority mainly depict 28 lodges and the office of the North Pole with the emperor's carriage, represented by the *beidou* constellation. Chinese astronomers devoted a lot of attention to the North Pole region and the 28 lodges, so the frequency of their depiction seems consistent. *Beidou* and other stars around the North Pole never disappeared from the night-time observers' eyes, which is in contrast with the 28 lodges whose

individual constellations were not visible during a certain period. For this reason they connected both systems, and thus the observation of *beidou* contributed to the location of the invisible lodges. Both systems played an important role in Chinese astronomy, which is the chief reason why they are often depicted on the ceiling of grave chambers.

The image of the stars on the ceiling is not just a result of the varied astronomical activity. It is rather mainly an expression of man's desire to connect his destiny with something more permanent than his short life. Among all the objects observed, stars and planets are those which with their accurate and regular movement keep a relatively permanent status. An approximate understanding of their routine and routes could bring answers to man's eternal desire to transcend the transitoriness of his own existence. If celestial bodies, people and other earthly creatures are a part of one and the same universe, then people could get a little closer to this eternal component of the universe, just like stars which possess an eternal spot in the heaven. In order to prove the unity of the universe, they tried to connect the routine of the stars with human activities, personify constellations and inspire them with the qualities of deities and spirits. This is strongly reflected in tomb paintings, as images of animals and people often appear among the stars. By depicting these images which symbolized different constellations, the stars and people became organically connected in the integrity of one universe. With the mechanism of the interrelated temporal and spatial design of the whole universe, the souls of the deceased could achieve immortality just like the stars. Thus the presence of stars on the rounded arch had the function of placing the deceased in the eternal context of the universe, which has the essential creative force of forming new life.

5 The Symbolic Polarity of the Cosmic Forces Yin and Yang

The union of *yin* and *yang* forces was conceived of as the source of life. Thus in order to achieve a cosmic balance and thereby overcome the transitoriness of human life, they represented the embodiment of both forces in different ways. However, one has to be very careful when trying to identify specific motifs carrying the symbolic meaning of the two forces, since concrete forms of specific representations can quite simply get reduced to a mere representation of these two forces. In order to search for ideological and symbolic meanings by taking account

of the literary tradition of that time, it is necessary to put stress on the location of the motif. Considering these decisive elements, the symbolic polarity of *yin* and *yang* was revealed in the following motifs: in the depiction of the sun and the moon; of two legendary deities *Nüwa* 女媧 and *Fuxi* 伏羲 who are often closely connected with the sun and the moon, of the *Mother of the Western Kingdom* (*Xiwangmu* 西王母) and her opposite partner the *Father of the Eastern Kingdom* (*Dongwanggong* 東王公); and in the motif of the intertwining of two creatures of the (usually) opposite sex.

5.1 The Sun and the Moon, and *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*

In Han grave paintings, the moon and the sun painted on the round ceiling or upper parts of walls are exceptionally frequent motifs. The sun is usually painted in the eastern and southern part and the moon in the western and northern part. In accordance with the mythology, the sun is generally represented alongside the image of a bird, while the moon is depicted with the image of a toad. Furthermore, they are also often represented together with the image of two deities *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* (Fig. 8).

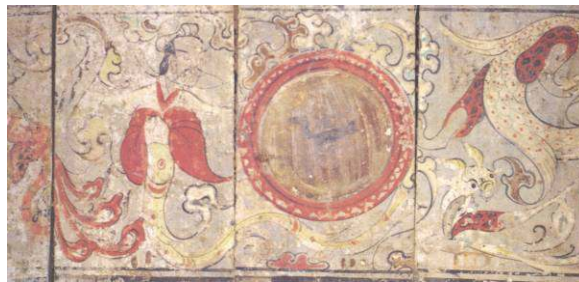


Fig. 8: *Fuxi* and the sun on the ceiling of the *Qianjingtou* tomb
洛陽淺井頭壁畫墓. (After: Huang 1996, 82)

The manner in which the sun and the moon are depicted, and the fact that they always appear together as complementary polar motifs, reveal their symbolic role of *yin* and *yang*. The fact that the sun represents the essence of *yang* and the moon the essence of *yin*, both playing the leading role in the cosmogonic process of creation of the universe, was prominently mentioned at the beginning of the third

chapter of *Huainanzi*. The evolution of space and time from the primordial chaos is described with the aid of the dualistic operations inside *dao* 道.

天地之襲精為陰陽，陰陽之專精為四時，四時之散精為萬物。積陽之熱氣生火。火氣之精者為日。積陰之寒氣為水。水氣之精者為月。 (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 165–167)

The joint essence of Heaven and Earth forms *yin* and *yang*, the accumulated essence of *yin* and *yang* forms the four seasons, the dispersed essence of the four seasons forms ten thousand things. The hot *qi* of the accumulating *yang* creates fire, the essence of fiery *qi* is the sun. The cold *qi* of the accumulating *yin* creates water, the essence of the watery *qi* is the moon.

Further in this chapter of *Huainanzi* the author offers a causal explanation of the functioning of individual substances, informing the reader in great detail that the sun is the ruler of *yang* and the moon the predecessor of *yin*.

日者，陽之主也 ... 月者，陰之宗也 ... (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 171–172)

The sun is the master of *yang* ... The moon is the essence of *yin*

The iconographic groundings of showing the sun with a bird and the moon with a toad, symbolizing the force of *yang* and *yin*, are further supported by the literary tradition.

日者，陽精之宗，積而成鳥，象鳥而有三趾。 (Wang 2001, 437)

The sun is the fundamental essence of *yang*. By accumulating it turns into a bird, such as a crow it has three legs.⁴

月者陰精之宗，積而成獸，象蜎兔。 (*Huainanzi* 7, He 1998, 509)

The moon is the fundamental essence of *yin*. By accumulating it turns into an animal such as a toad or a hare.⁵

Furthermore, the sun is always depicted in the east or south, while the moon as its opposite is always closely associated with the western direction. In the correlative cosmology of *yin-yang wuxing*, the eastern orientation is always marked with *yang*,

⁴ This quotation was recorded in *Ling xian* 靈憲 (*Spiritual Constitution*) by Zhang Heng 張衡, an astronomer of great fame during the Eastern Han Dynasty. See also Wang 2001, 437.

⁵ This quotation was recorded in *Ling xian* by Zhang Heng. In the *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 the quotation appears as a note to the following quotation: “Inside the moon, there is a toad”, which was recorded in the seventh chapter of the *Huainanzi* (*Huainanzi* 7, He 1998, 509).

and the western with *yin*. Even in accordance with the *Gaitian* theory, the sunrise is supposed to be a consequence of a too weak *yin* force in the east; this means that the *yang* force, strengthened in the southern parts, is dominant there. Inversely, in the west, the force *yang* loses its power and the sun gradually sets under the dominance of the *yin* force.

In grave paintings, besides the sun with a black bird and the moon with a green toad, two creatures with a human face and a snake-dragon's body are often depicted which as well symbolize the two forces (Fig. 8). They usually embrace the sun and the moon with their long tails or hold them above their heads; besides the sun and the moon they often also hold a carpenter's square and a pair of compasses (Fig. 9). These tools that enable the creation of straight and circular geometrical shapes allude to their creative role in the formation of the universe—the round heaven and the square earth. This is exactly the same role as mentioned in the mythological tradition: *Nüwa* appears as a goddess who contributes to the formation of the cosmical natural order and the birth of the human race; and *Fuxi* appears as a type of a legendary ancestor who arranges and leads the human world, instructing the numerous advanced social and philosophical solutions.



Fig. 9: *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*, paintings on a stone table in the *Wuliang* shrine
武梁祠. (After: Wu 1989, 246)

The comparative method of interpreting philosophical and mythical-literary sources clearly shows that it is correct to claim that *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* embody the cosmic forces of *yang* and *yin*. The comparison of the silken manuscript (*Chu*

boshu 楚帛) from Hunan (dated from the Warring States Period) with the individual cosmogonic excerpts from the *Huainanzi* reveals a gradual transformation of mythological images into more abstract ideas of natural philosophy. The text from the silken manuscript⁶ unfolds a narrative in which *Fuxi* appears and marries *Nüwa* when the cosmos is the spacious and shapeless and when Heaven and Earth are yet to form. From their union four sons are born. The four sons comprehend the fundamental cosmologic principle of *yin* and *yang*, and thus cause the beginning of the cosmos—the separation of Heaven and Earth. In this kind of mythic description of the cosmos, *Fuxi* is born in the time of primordial chaos. With the union of *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* before the existence of the human race, the first couple of male and female principle appears, while the process of separation of the heaven and the earth commences. The quotation from the seventh chapter of the *Huainanzi* reveals a similar role of the first two deities who weave the heaven and design the earth:

古未有天地之時，惟像無形 ... 有二神混生，經天營地 ... 於是乃別為陰陽，離為八極，剛柔相成，萬物乃形。 (*Huainanzi* 7, He 1998, 503–504)

In the ancient times when there were no heaven and earth, there were images but no shapes ... Two deities are born and united, they weave the heaven and form the earth ... Therefore they divide into *yin* and *yang* and separate into eight utmost poles, the hard and the soft mutual forms, and thus the ten thousand things take shape.

Gao You, a commentator from the Eastern Han Dynasty, marked the two deities as the deities of *yin* and *yang*.

二神，陰陽之神也。 (*Huainanzi* 7, He 1998, 503)

Two deities are the deities of *yin* and *yang*.

The presence of two deities in the primordial stage of the cosmos, clearly named as *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* in the Chu silken manuscript, is also noticeable in other quotations (*Huainanzi* 1, He 1998, 4). In the process of abstraction, the concrete images of *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* thus became the two cosmic forces of *yang* and *yin*. In the seventh chapter of the *Huainanzi*, which presents the birth of the two deities and their formation of the heaven and the earth, the abandonment of the mythic

⁶ The text is very deficient, as a number of characters are illegible. However, we are indebted to the numerous contemporary experts who confirm the above mentioned content. The explanations of this text in this article is based on Feng Shi (2001) and Lian Shaoming's (1991) transcription of the text.

domain and the approach towards a more philosophical abstract explanation of the universal creation is already perceivable. Two deities born out of the cosmic chaos divide into *yin* and *yang*, which mutually form as the hard and the soft, and thus ten thousand things take shape. The third chapter of the same cosmologic reading manifests the dualism of that kind even more clearly, while the abstraction and rationalization of the cosmic creation entirely reject the mythic view of the universe. The evolution of the universe from the primordial chaos comes into being by means of the division of binary opposites, inherent in the *Dao* itself. The concrete mythological figures are entirely eliminated from the process of the universe creation, while the creation of all ten thousand things is attributed to “the dispersed essence of the four seasons” which originates from the essence of *yin* and *yang* (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 165–167). The four seasons are thus produced from *yin* and *yang*, just as the four sons are descendants of *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*. And these four sons of *Fuxi* and *Nüwa* are nothing else than the deities of the four seasons. In the absence of the sun and the moon they determine the four temporal points of the universe, and after the appearance of the sun and the moon they move the heaven cover to start circling.

5.2 *Xiwangmu* and *Dongwanggong*

Xiwangmu 西王母 and *Dongwanggong* 東王公, *the Mother of the Western Kingdom* and *the Father of the Eastern Kingdom*, represent the next couple embodying the forces *yin* and *yang*. Their images appear in mural paintings, on lacquered objects, and bronze mirrors, but mainly as relief images on stones or bricks that were discovered in a great number in Shandong province. A rich literary tradition reveals a multifunctional role of the mother with many attributes which develop in accordance with the changing values of social mythological concepts. An interpretation within the developing formula is needed, enveloping the mother into different symbolic covers in different periods. Among these, an especially important function is played by the symbolic role of the *yin* cover which does not appear before the Eastern Han Dynasty. It is precisely this role which needs the creation of the opposite sex which would embody the *yang*. Thus in the 2nd century there appears the image of the *Father of the Eastern Kingdom* who represents the partner of the *Mother of the Western Kingdom*. Although their symbolic role was first clarified by Wu Hung (Wu 1989, 108–141), further research reveals that *Xiwangmu* as the symbolical image of *yin* does not actually

become relevant before to the Eastern Han Dynasty, but its source had developed before this period.



Fig. 10: *Xiwangmu* and her kingdom, *Yanshi Xin cun* tomb, Henan province
偃師辛村壁画墓. (After: Huang 1996, 137)

Among numerous attributes, a hare and a toad are the most usual motifs depicted together with the goddess *Xiwangmu* (Fig. 10). The mythological tradition offers a many materials in their connection with the moon, as both were supposed to live in the moon itself. In the grave art, the moon is thus often depicted with a hare and a toad. The appearance of the toad within the moon can be related to the tale of *Yi* 羿, an archer's wife *Heng E* 姮娥. After stealing the gift of the *Xiwangmu* from her husband she runs away to the moon where she is transformed into a toad. The toad thus possesses the elixir of immortality, and simultaneously the natural cycle of the toad itself indicates the circulation of vital force. The hare is also an important element in the lunar cult of immortality, as he was supposed to be responsible for the production of the elixir of eternal life whose tree was located within the moon. The toad and the hare thus became important components of the mother's kingdom and the cult of immortality. Simultaneously, they both indicate *Xiwangmu*'s later cosmologic role which perfects itself in connection with the male representative of the opposite kingdom. Namely, the toad and hare with their permanent abode on the moon represent the lunar essence which is "the fundamental of the accumulating yin" (*Lü shi Chunqiu*, 92). A more concrete image is cited by Zhang Heng 張衡 who says: "The moon is the fundamental essence of yin. By accumulating it turns into an animal such as a toad or a hare" (*Huainanzi* 7, He 1998, 509). Thus, the moon, the toad and the hare are recognizable symbols of the cosmic force *yin*, and the fact that they appear in the

vicinity of *Xiwangmu* contains anticipations of her later role. Further, her abode in the western mountains is located in the domain of the prevailing *yin*, which is clearly indicated by calling the goddess the “*Mother of the Western Kingdom*”.

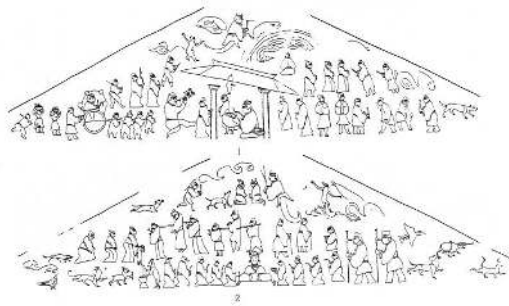


Fig. 11: Depiction on the western and eastern gable of the *Xiaotang shan* temple, Shandong province.
1–eastern gable with *Fuxi* and *Fengbo*, 2–western gable with *Nüwa* and *Xiwangmu*.
(After: Xin 2000, 155)

In the earliest depiction, i.e. in the *Bu Qianqiu* tomb 卜千秋壁畫墓, *Xiwangmu* has not yet assumed a role of *yin*, since the both forces are conspicuously manifested by *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*, the sun and the moon or other intertwining figures. However, the triangular endings of the western and eastern walls in the *Xiaotang shan* 孝堂山 temple in Shandong province (Fig. 11) already evidences the next step in the gradual assumption of a cosmic role (Wu 1989, 108–141).

The western gable shows *Nüwa* at the top, with *Xiwangmu* frontally depicted below her. So already in the 1st century AD *Xiwangmu* is depicted together with *Nüwa* embodying the universal force *yin*. This is complimented by the depiction on the opposite side of the wall on the eastern gable where *Fuxi* with a carpenter's square occupies the upper position, and below him is depicted a bigger image jumping in the air. Other depictions show the opposite partner of *Xiwangmu* as an image blowing into the roof (Xin 2000, 154). This image is identified as *Fengbo* 風伯 (*The Master of the Wind*), who in the cosmic space represents a natural deity determined to control the wind (Xin 2000, 154; Wu 1989, 112–116). Wu Hung describes this image as the embodiment of *yang*, as it was precisely the connection between the east and the dragon that was supposed to explain his appearance and role in the eastern parts of the temples from the Eastern Han Dynasty (Wu 1989,

112–116). The symbolic polarity of the *Mother of the Western Kingdom* and the eastern *Master of the Wind*—as well as their wider role in the cosmic space—is not only indicated by their opposite position in the west and the east, but also by the clear depiction of *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*. However, this was far from an ideal depiction of the embodiment of the two forces, as the images apart from their opposite position have no common characteristics. At this time *Fengbo* represented only a transitional phase before the creation of the entire polar opposition, which ended in the middle of the second century. Thus it was beside the *Mother of the Western Kingdom* that the *Father of the Eastern Kingdom* first appeared, whereby the names of both deities (*Xiwangmu* 西王母: *xi*/west, *wang*/king, *mu*/mother, woman; *Dongwanggong* 東王公: *dong*/east, *wang*/king, *gong*/man) indicate the perfect polarity of both creatures and their symbolism of cosmic forces. This type of depiction soon became a popular motif which spread from the East to the central region of Chinese territory. The influence of their cosmic role reached the border regions of Chinese territory, and beyond to Inner Mongolia as well. The mural from the *Helingeer* 和林格爾 tomb from Inner Mongolia from the Eastern Han Dynasty represents on the eastern side of the front chamber the *Father of the Eastern Kingdom*, and on the western the *Mother of the Western Kingdom*.

In the Eastern Han Dynasty, *Xiwangmu* and *Dongwanggong* become a widely spread symbol of the essential intertwinement of the cosmic forces *yin* and *yang* from whose union the eternal rhythm of the universe is born.

6 Four Directions and Four Seasons

Certainly the four divine animals are the most common motif in Han grave art, typically termed in Chinese literature *si xiang* 四象 (*four images*), *si ling* 四靈 (*four spirits*) or *si shen* 四神 (*four deities*). These four mythological animals are the blue-green dragon, the white tiger, the red bird and the black tortoise.

Their role in the cosmologic scheme of the *yin-yang* and the five *xings* theories is clearly indicated in the third chapter of the *Huainanzi* (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 183–188). The four symbolical images are represented as four of the five divine animals, each guarding its own palace and contributing to the creative circling of the five phases. With reference to cosmological meaning, the blue-green dragon

symbolizes the eastern palace, the culmination of spring and the beginning of the rise of *yang*. In the south, his role is assumed by the red bird that helps the southern deities at balancing and controlling the fiery phase, the culmination of summer activities and the *yang*. The white tiger continues this role on the western side, which is connected with gradual dying away, pointing to autumn activities and the beginning of the rise of *yin*. To the north, at the utmost point of the *yin* and at the culmination of the winter season, the northern deities get help and guardianship from the black tortoise. Their role as guardians or as a kind of regulators of the four directions is also indicated in the geographical work *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖 (*An Outline of the Three Regions around the Capital*):

蒼龍, 白虎, 朱雀, 玄武, 天之四靈, 以正四方. (Wang 1995, 38)

The blue green dragon, the white tiger, the red bird, and the black warrior⁷ are four spirits of the heaven regulating the four directions.

Their connection with the four cosmic directions is clearly indicated by grave murals as well, as they usually assume the position described in literary sources. The dragon is thus usually depicted on the eastern side, the tiger on the western, the bird on the southern and the tortoise on the northern side (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: White tiger on the western side, the *Binwang* 邠王 tomb.
(After: Greiff and Jin 2002, Fig. 23)

In their precise placement at a defined position in accordance with the whole architectural design and pictorial composition, their location is a relevant source of iconographic information and their symbolic roles. In this sense the soul of the deceased is equipped with an accurate orientation and placed into a cosmic space,

⁷ The black tortoise is usually mentioned as *xuan wu* 玄武 (*the black warrior*) whose image is defined by literary and iconographic sources as a tortoise routinely encircled by a winding snake.

which facilitates its way into life after death and place it in an eternal place in the artificially constructed universe. The accurate arrangement of the four deities enables the cosmic balance—a harmonious intertwinement of both cosmic forces and their movement in the circle of the five *xings*, once again defined by divine symbols in the image of the four animals. The spatial orientation of the grave chambers is thus clearly defined with the help of the four animals who furthermore protect the tomb and the owner from evil spirits, bring luck and visually express a wish for harmonious movement with the cosmic space, and thereby a wish for an immortal form of materialization of their existence. The function of guarding the tomb and chasing away evil spirits is indicated by their locations, being often depicted above individual doors or at the door.

Furthermore, the four animals are further often depicted among the motifs of the entrance into the heavenly kingdom. They are a component part of their accompaniment, leading the soul to heavenly paradise. The leading role is corroborated by a description in a verse in the *Xishi* 惜誓 poem (*A Regretted Trust*) in the *Chuci*:

飛朱鳥使先驅兮，駕太一之象輿。蒼龍蚴虬於左驂兮，白虎騁而為右駢。
(*Chuci*, Zhao 1993, 313)

The flying red bird in front of me is leading me, carrying the symbolic carriage of the deity *Taiyi*. The blue-green dragon as the left horse is windingly moving, the white tiger as the right horse is freely galloping.

They can also be noticed among stellar images which represent individual lodges or the whole system of 28 lodges. The system of 28 lodges was divided into four big stellar areas or four palaces (四宮 *sigong*), related to the four cardinal directions. Each palace had seven lodges which were further related to the four seasons and the four divine animals which symbolized individual palaces and directions. Thus the eastern palace with seven lodges, connected with spring, was represented by the blue-green dragon; the southern belonged to the red bird; the western to the white tiger and the northern palace was symbolized by the black tortoise. Such depictions can be seen in the *Xi'an Jiaotong daxue* tomb where two concentric circles are depicted and their centre is congruent to the centre of the round ceiling (Fig. 7). Inside the circles individual images of people and animals are represented, among which the images of the four divine animals are especially prominent.

The divine animals of the four directions not only symbolize the spatial concept, but also by symbolizing the four seasons indicate the temporally cyclic circle. These roles were already assigned to them in the *Huainanzi* which refers to them as four of the five animals which help the other deities to control the four seasons (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 183–188). Besides this, with their four colours, four directions and four seasons they indicate the theory of the five *xings* whose cosmic idea of circulation is just as well skillfully captured in the iconographic design of the grave mural painting.

7 The Symbolic Circulation of the Five *Xings*

The most common manner of depiction of the five *xings* in the grave murals is the depiction of individual component parts of the five palaces into which the heaven was divided. Four palaces were arranged along the heavenly equator, while the fifth (central) palace spread around the North Pole, which in Chinese cosmology always had a special place due to the apparent rotation of the stars around the pole. In Sima Qian's historical work *Shiji*, the chapter *Tianguanshu* 天官書 (*Treatise on the Celestial Offices*) clearly represents the division of the heaven into five palaces (Sima 2000).

The *Luoyang Shaogou 61 hao* tomb has already been mentioned. Its ceiling between the sun and the moon represents only individual stars wrapped in the clouds. Xia Nai concluded that the stars represent individual constellations and lodges which were randomly chosen from the five heavenly palaces (Xia 1965). An even clearer image of the five *xings* is represented in the ceiling painting of the *Yintun* tomb near Luoyang. On the four walls are depicted which support the stellar image of the heaven, clearly indicated on the dome-like construction of the ceiling design (Fig. 13).

In the middle of the ceiling the sun and the moon are depicted, and around them on individual sides are represented the lodges and other constellations belonging to the five heavenly palaces. The thicker brown-green lines even more clearly divide the ceiling construction into the five palaces which thinner brown red lines further divide them into individual lodges and other constellations. The location of individual lodges and other constellations accords with the correct orientation, as we can find constellations on individual sides belonging to the corresponding directions. Particularly interesting is the location of the central

palace which is not depicted in the centre of the ceiling as we might expect, but appears rather in the northeastern part of the slanting and sloping ceiling construction. The middle part is occupied by the depiction of the sun and the moon, and thus they had to find a more suitable location, slightly moved to the northeastern part. The other four sides further depict lodges of individual palaces, among which on the eastern, western and northern side appear concrete images of animals guarding and supervising their local area.



Fig. 13: The central chamber of the *Yintun* tomb in the vicinity of Luoyang.
(After: *Luoyangshi di er wenwu gongzuodui* 2005, 133, Figure (*tuban*) 7. 2)

Besides the lunar lodges of individual heavenly palaces, the iconographic composition often reveals individual deities, their assistants, planetary spirits and divine animals guarding individual palaces. Such an iconographic composition can be seen in the rear chamber of the *Jinguyuan Xinmang* 金谷園新莽壁畫墓 tomb in Luoyang. On the ceiling and on the upper parts of the eastern, western and northern walls are depicted the divine assistants and animal guardians of all the five heavenly palaces (He 2002, 50; Luoyang bowuguan 1985).

The cosmologic chapters of the *Huainanzi* and other ancient literary sources clearly represent and name individual divine images of these palaces, and incorporate them into a perfected whole of the correlative cosmology of the five *xings*. In the third chapter of the *Huainanzi* we can read that the “wooden” east is controlled by *Tai Hao* 太皞 with his assistant *Gou Mang* 句芒 and the blue-green dragon, all controlling the spring growth. The south in the sign of fire is controlled by *Yandi* 炎帝, his assistant *Zhu Ming* 朱明 and the red bird, all governing the summer merriness. The metal west is governed by the deity of the autumn *Shao Hao* 少昊, his assistant *Ru Shou* 蓐收 and the white tiger, and the northern water

area is controlled by the deity *Zhuan Xu* 顓頊, his assistant *Xuan Ming* 玄冥 and the black warrior who carefully watch over the winter sleep. The central part belongs to the deity *Huangdi* 黄帝, his assistant *Hou Tu* 后土 and the yellow dragon. They are in charge of the correct circling of the four seasons and control all the four directions (*Huainanzi* 3, He 1998, 183–188).

The whole system of depiction composed of 16 images in the *Jinguyuan Xinmang* tomb clearly, thus perfectly and systematically, reflects the *yin-yang wuxing* theory. The cosmical forces *yin* and *yang* are indicated by the sun, the moon, a bird, and a toad, along with correct placement on the southern and northern side of the tomb, while the circulation of the five *xings* is represented by the five assistants of the five palaces (*Hou Tu*, *Gou Mang*, *Zhu Rong*, *Ru Shou*, *Xuan Ming*) and the five divine animals (yellow dragon, blue-green dragon, red bird, white tiger and black tortoise) that are immediately connected with the image of leading the soul into the heaven.

8 Conclusion

The use of diverse methodological theories and archaeological materials offers answers to the questions of how and to what degree the cosmologic perception manifested itself in grave architecture and its art. The cosmologic perception was manifested not only in individual parts of the tombs, but with the aid of individual constructs the entire image of the universe was presented, and thus the grave structure is transformed into a microcosmic image of the whole universe. The universe is not only captured in the construction design of a round ceiling rising above square chambers, creating a framework of the artificial cosmic place, is further embodied in the form of symbolic codes, found in the iconographic scheme of the murals. The analysis of grave paintings has shown that the basic component of the Han grave painting concept is represented by the correlative cosmology of *yin-yang wuxing*.

The round ceiling and the square base formed the framework of the universe. The sun, the moon and the stars created artificial celestial bodies. Individual motifs of the intertwinement of two creatures of usually opposite sex, *Fuxi* and *Nüwa*, the *Mother of the Western* and the *Father of the Eastern Kingdom* and the sun and the moon separately symbolized the *yin* and *yang* principle. The four divine animals were used to depict the four seasons and directions. With individual

representatives of the five heavenly palaces, and thus with the materialization of the theory of the five *xings*, a gradual creation of the whole cosmic image concluded with a perfect imitation of the outer universe.

The purpose of such iconographic design of the cosmic space was the representation of the source and the moving force of the birth of life, the representation of harmonious order and unobstructed succession of movement of cosmic principles. It was the representation of the eternal space where the soul of the deceased could find its eternal rest. It appears that only in such harmonious balance where two complementary forces with a constant interlacement create the end and the beginning of the universe, can both parts of the dual structure of the soul's concept enter the eternal cycle of changes. The representation of the heavenly world on the round ceiling offers home to the *hun* 魂 part of the soul which after death flies into the Heaven, and the representation of the earthly world on square walls indicates the *po* 魄 part of the soul which after death returns into the embrace of the Earth's soil. Both souls were thus reunited into a whole, and their union and intertwinement in the sense of *yin* and *yang* characteristically alludes to the fulfilment of the human desire for both souls to reunite. A human desire to be reborn and reach immortality in the framework of the eternal changes of the cosmic circle was attained, and the craftsman and artist's role in building the grave was thereby fulfilled.

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