

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Searching for Traces of the *Shi* in Tombs of the Jin Dynasty

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## Abstract

Scholars of Jin history have noted a flourishing literati culture after the mid-Jin period, but excavated tombs suggest a more complicated picture. The *shi*, referring to literati without official titles, constituted a prominent group in Northern Song tombs, as evidenced by their epitaphs, but this group appears to have nearly vanished from the Jin tombs. To search for traces of the *shi*, this article comprehensively examines the social elites' tombs with burial inscriptions and ink writings, where the *shi* would most likely be laid to rest. It shows that the text and paratext of epitaphs, as well as the tombs that yielded them, contain direct information about the *shi* and their interactions with other officials and non-official elites. Analysis of ink writings suggests that the *shi* played a role in the advanced literary expression in the tombs of some non-literati local elites. Examining these traces of the *shi* in tombs allows us to reintegrate them into broader society, investigate their interactions with other elites, and attain a more holistic understanding of Jin elite society and culture.

**Keywords:** North China; Chinese literati under Jurchen rule; burial inscription; epitaph; land deed; burial note; ink writings of popular literature in Jin tombs

The process by which meritocratic elites, recruited through education and examinations, supplanted hereditary lineages to dominate the social, political, and cultural realms during the Song dynasty has received extensive study.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have also

<sup>1</sup>The research is extensive, and what follows is selective: Denis Twitchett, *The Birth of the Chinese Meritocracy: Bureaucrats and Examinations in T'ang China* (London: China Society, 1976); Robert A. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elites of Fu-Chou, Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Song* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Peter K. Bol, "This Culture of Ours": *Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); Beverly J. Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, & the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1998); Tao Jinsheng 陶晉生, *Beisong shizu: jiazu, hunyin, shenghuo* 北宋士族：家族·婚姻·生活 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 2001); Huang Kuanchong 黃寬重, *Songdai de jiazu yu shehui* 宋代的家族與社會 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 2006).

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examined the fate of these literati elites in the coexistent northern regimes that prioritized martial qualities, particularly during the Jin dynasty.<sup>2</sup> They have delineated a late-Jin intellectual revival, a cultural renaissance where talented men of the post-war generations championed accomplishments in literature and classical studies. The *Zhongzhou ji* 中州集 (*Collection of Central Regions*) by Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257), written with a tone of nostalgia after the Mongol conquest, provides one of the most crucial testimonies to this flourishing culture of Chinese intellectuals under Jurchen rule.

As stated in the preface to the *Zhongzhou ji*, Yuan's vivid accounts aim to preserve the words and deeds of the illustrious literati active during the heyday of the Jin.<sup>3</sup> These literati include both those who succeeded in obtaining official titles, known as the *shi-dafu* or scholar-officials, and those who did not and remained without title, to whom I will refer as the *shi*. Intriguingly, when we shift our attention to Jin tombs discovered and reported by archaeologists, only scholar-officials can be identified in the epitaphs buried within. The *shi* are almost absent. This phenomenon is remarkable because, in Northern Song tombs, both scholar-officials and *shi* have a pronounced presence, as demonstrated in their epitaphs. It seems as though the *shi* suddenly disappeared from society during the Jin, which is certainly not the case. How do we explain the discrepancy between Jin literati's accounts and the phenomenon disclosed in excavated tombs?

In the imperial past, Chinese tombs were hierarchically constructed, adorned, and furnished with burial goods, reflecting the social status of the occupants and allowing for the reconstruction of a stratified “underground society.” This article commences with a comprehensive survey of all Jin tombs to understand their temporal, geographical, and social distribution. To search for the *shi*, it then focuses on tombs where traces of the *shi* are most likely to be found—those bearing burial inscriptions and ink writings—for a detailed analysis. Unlike Yuan's insider documentation, which offers insights into the internal dynamics of the literati circle, the unearthed tombs encompass a diverse range of social elites beyond the literati. Consequently, it becomes possible to reintegrate the *shi* into the broader social fabric and assess their social standing compared to other elites. The dialectic between transmitted texts and excavated materials enables us to gain a more holistic and nuanced picture of Jin elite society and culture.

### Disparity between Transmitted Texts and Excavated Tombs

The Jin conquered the Liao and Northern Song, bringing the territories of the former Liao and parts of the Northern Song, mainly the area to the north of the Huai 淮 River,

<sup>2</sup>See Peter K. Bol, “Seeking Common Ground: Han Literati under Jurchen Rule,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987), 461–538; Herbert Franke, “The Chin Dynasty,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*, edited by Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 304–13; Jing-shen Tao, “Public Schools in the Chin Dynasty,” in *China under Jurchen Rule*, edited by Hoyt C. Tillman and Stephen H. West (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 50–67; also the Introduction by Hoyt C. Tillman and Stephen H. West in *China under Jurchen Rule*, 1–20; Iiyama Tomoyasu 飯山知保, *Kim Gen jidai no Kahoku shakai to kakyō seido: mō hitotsu no “shijinsō”* 金元時代の華北社会と科挙制度—もう一つの「士人層」 (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 2011); Jinping Wang, *In the Wake of the Mongols: The Making of a New Social Order in North China, 1200–1600* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018), 28–62.

<sup>3</sup>Yuan Haowen 元好問, *Zhongzhou ji* 中州集, *Sibu congkan chubian* 四部叢刊初編 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1965), *jibu* 421, 1–162.

**Table 1.** Total Excavated Tombs and the Tombs with Burial Inscriptions

Type	Epitaph	Land Deed	Burial Note	Total Tombs
Liao	118 (14.0%)	1 (0.1%)	13 (1.5%)	840
N. Song_Total	222 (14.6%)	133 (8.7%)	18 (1.2%)	1524
N. Song_North1	109 (16.0%)	21 (3.1%)	18 (2.6%)	680
Jin	40 (6.4%)	36 (5.7%)	33 (5.3%)	627
S. Song	155 (22.4%)	132 (19.1%)	0 (0.0%)	692

1North China includes modern provinces of Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia (Gansu and Ningxia are included because the southern regions of the two provinces belonged to the Northern Song)

under its control. During the dynastic transition, people living in the parts of North China formerly under the Northern Song rule experienced perhaps the most dramatic changes. First and foremost, the Jurchens, a federation of forest tribes from modern Manchuria, replaced the Han Chinese Zhao clan to become the new rulers, forcing a significant number of the ruling elite, of whom scholar-officials constituted a considerable part, from the Central Plains.<sup>4</sup> The area most affected included modern Shandong, Henan, Shaanxi, and the southern part of Shanxi and Hebei.

Tombs of the Liao, Northern Song, and Jin offer a glimpse of the social changes in the aftermath of the Jurchen wars. The tomb data are collected from more than 120 excavation reports, covering 840 tombs from the Liao, 1,524 from the Northern Song, 627 from the Jin, and 692 from the Southern Song. The online appendix to this article provides a full list of the Jin tombs consulted in this research.

Epitaphs serve as an effective marker for the elite. The tombs that yielded epitaphs account for only a small fraction of the total tombs excavated, with Liao and Northern Song around 14 percent and the Jin 6 percent (Table 1). The actual numbers can be lower because low-level small burial pits are often not properly published and, therefore, cannot be cataloged for analysis. These tombs with epitaphs buried within often feature a more spacious grave chamber, more elaborate decoration, or a larger number of burial goods. Their owners, no doubt, belonged to the upper echelons of society, and their pedigrees, marriage ties, official careers, or occupations were often recorded in detail in their epitaphs.

A look at the deceased's occupational information recorded in the epitaphs shows a clear contrast between the North and the South. Although officials were the most dominant users of epitaphs in all three dynasties, the *shi*, who constituted the second largest group of epitaph users after officials during the Northern Song, did not appear in the Liao and Jin. The absence of *shi* in epitaphs from Jin tombs can be seen as a continuation of the Liao, where the presence of *shi* users was so scarce that they did not form a recognizable group in burials. However, given that the Jin also inherited the Central Plains from the Northern Song, where were the prominent *shi* users once active in this area during the former dynasty? To a certain extent, this attests to the devastation of the Song–Jin war, which drove most scholar-officials and their families, of which many were *shi*, away from the Central Plains, causing a restructuring of local powers in this region.

<sup>4</sup>For the history of the Liao and Jin, see Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6*.

Shortly after the Jurchens established the Jin regime, the *jinshi* civil service examinations were resumed to recruit local officials, with more than six thousand men participating.<sup>5</sup> During the latter half of the twelfth century, as the Jin emperors actively restored schools and Confucian learning, new generations of scholars and literati rose, inaugurating the so-called “late Jin intellectual revival.”<sup>6</sup> Overall, the Jin government conferred more *jinshi* degrees than the Northern and Southern Song did.<sup>7</sup> The pass rates varied depending on period and place, but those who succeeded in passing the exams remained the select few.<sup>8</sup> Even in the *Zhongzhou ji*, 37 out of 235 recorded illustrious men, most of whom originated from Hebei and southern Shanxi districts, the two cultural centers of *jinshi*, did not hold official titles.<sup>9</sup> Intriguingly, no such a group can be readily identified in excavated tombs.

The near absence of *shi* in Jin tombs is a puzzle. It is unlikely that none of their tombs have been discovered, given the many tombs excavated. The more plausible hypothesis is that these men rarely marked their resting places with epitaphs, as their Northern Song forerunners or Southern Song counterparts did. Whether this was due to the sumptuary law that reserved the use of epitaphs exclusively to officials with titles is unknown, as the Jin government’s regulations do not survive. Whatever the reason, most Jin-dynasty *shi* did not bury an epitaph in their tomb to affirm their cultural elite affiliation. The following questions arise: Did they give up marking their identity as cultural elites in the afterlife altogether? Or did they adopt other ways to do it? Moreover, are there other traces in tombs expressing the presence of *shi*? The disparity of historical pictures derived from transmitted texts and excavated tombs allows us to rethink the position of the *shi* in Jin society.

### Overview of Jin Tombs

Unlike elite tombs of the earlier periods, which have grander scales and magnificent burial contents, those of the Liao, Song, and Jin tend to be more moderate. In the 1990s Dieter Kuhn comprehensively cataloged and analyzed more than 800 burials of the Song dynasty and looked into certain remarkable aspects of Song burial customs, such as the frugality of intellectuals’ tombs, the adoption of couple burials, and the textual contents and natures of epitaphs and land deeds, among other aspects.<sup>10</sup> As renowned Song scholar-officials’ family cemeteries have been discovered in recent decades, cross-examination between the burials and their owners’ writings preserved in transmitted texts becomes feasible. This sheds light on the Song high elite’s endeavors in formulating a ritual system that was rooted in the Classics and suitable for contemporary use.<sup>11</sup> Kuhn also extended his study to the Liao dynasty, comparing Liao

<sup>5</sup>Iiyama, *Kin Gen jidai no Kahoku shakai to kakyō seido*, 29–46.

<sup>6</sup>Bol, “Seeking Common Ground,” 461–538.

<sup>7</sup>Hoyt C. Tillman, “An Overview of Chin History and Institution,” in *China under Jurchen Rule*, edited by Hoyt C. Tillman and Stephen H. West (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 23–38.

<sup>8</sup>Iiyama, *Kin Gen jidai no Kahoku shakai to kakyō seido*, 156–67.

<sup>9</sup>Chen Chao-yang 陳昭揚, “Jindai Hanzu shiren de diyu fenbu” 金代漢族士人的地域分佈, *Hanxue yanjiu* 26.1 (2008), 103–35.

<sup>10</sup>Dieter Kuhn, ed., *Burial in Song China* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1994); Dieter Kuhn, *A Place for the Dead: An Archaeological Documentary on Graves and Tombs of the Song Dynasty (960–1279)* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1996).

<sup>11</sup>Hsu Ya-hwei 許雅惠, “Songdai shidafu de jinshi shoucang yu liyi shijian: yi Lantian Lüshi jiazou weili” 宋代士大夫的金石收藏與禮儀實踐：以藍田呂氏家族為例, *Zhejiang daxue yishu yu kaogu yanjiu* 3 (2018), 131–64.

tombs with Song tombs to investigate “how the Qidan reshaped the tradition of the Chinese tomb.”<sup>12</sup> Recently, some scholars followed Kuhn’s lead, analyzing how the Khitan nobility appropriated Han-Chinese burial practices while at the same time preserving their subjectivity.<sup>13</sup>

Compared with the macro-scale comprehensive research on Liao and Song tombs, the study of Jin tombs is more thematic. A notable body of scholarship focuses on the richly decorated brick-chamber tombs in northern China during the late Northern Song and Jin, particularly those carved or painted with the characteristic tomb portraits of the deceased, filial piety stories, and theatrical and domestic scenes in southern Shanxi. Some unveil the textual sources of the depicted pious sons and the modular characteristics of their design.<sup>14</sup> Others approach these popular motifs from ritual and religious perspectives, viewing them as visual documentation of certain ritual performances or a means to facilitate the dead’s afterlife happiness or their pursuit of post-mortem immortality.<sup>15</sup> The owners of these tombs are generally believed to be non-literati local elites, such as wealthy landlords or merchants.<sup>16</sup>

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of excavated Jin tombs. More than 600 Jin tombs have been published, centered in the modern provinces of Hebei and Shanxi (Table 2). This geographical distribution aligns with scholars’ discussion of the political and cultural landscape of the Jin, that is, after the Jurchen war, north and east of the Yellow River, namely, the Hebei 河北 and Hedong 河東 areas. These became prosperous inner lands that produced the most significant number of *jinsi*.<sup>17</sup> It is noticeable that these areas were previously divided between the Liao and the Northern Song,

<sup>12</sup>Dieter Kuhn, *How the Qidan Reshaped the Tradition of the Chinese Dome-shaped Tomb* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1998).

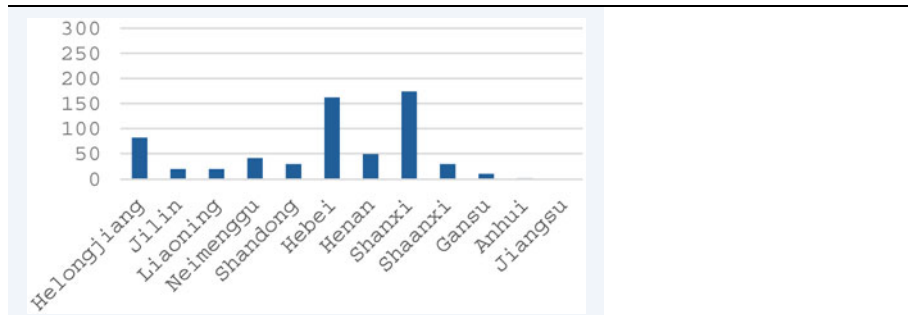
<sup>13</sup>Liu Wei 劉未, “Liaodai Qidan muzang yanjiu” 遼代契丹墓葬研究, *Kaogu xuebao* 2009.4, 497–546; Wu Hung, “Two Royal Tombs from the Early Liao: Architecture, Pictorial Program, Authorship, Subjectivity,” in *Tenth-century China and Beyond: Art and Visual Culture in a Multi-Centered Age*, edited by Wu Hung (Chicago: Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2012), 100–125; Nicolas Tackett, “Mortuary Cultures across the Chinese-Steppe Divide,” in *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 211–45.

<sup>14</sup>Kuroda Akira 黒田彰, *Kōshiden no kenkyū* 孝子伝の研究 (Kyoto: Bukkyō Daigaku Tsūshin Kyōikubu, Hatsubai Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2001); Fei Deng, “Modular Design of Tombs in Song and Jin North China,” in *Visual and Material Cultures in Middle Period China*, edited by Patricia Ebrey and Susan Huang (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 41–81.

<sup>15</sup>Jeehee Hong, *Theater of the Dead: A Social Turn in Chinese Funerary Art, 1000–1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016); Deng Fei 鄧菲, *Zhongyuan beifang diqu Songjin muzang yishu yanjiu* 中原北方地區宋金墓葬藝術研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2019), 205–55. Hsueh-man Shen’s discussion of the Liao tombs in Xuanhua also belongs to this line of discussion; see Hsueh-man Shen, “Body Matters: Manikin Burials in the Liao Tombs of Xuanhua, Hebei,” *Artibus Asiae* 65.1 (2005), 99–141. For a discussion of post-mortem immortality in Daoism, see Anna Seidel, “Post-mortem Immortality or: The Taoist Resurrection of the Body,” in *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions*, edited by S. Shaked (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 223–37.

<sup>16</sup>Jeehee Hong, “Changing Roles of the Tomb Portrait: Burial Practices and Ancestral Worship of the Non-Literati Elite in North China (1000–1400),” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 44 (2014), 203–64.

<sup>17</sup>Ren Wanping 任萬平, “Lun Jindai wenhua quyu jiegou” 論金代文化區域結構, in *Liao Jin shi lunji* 遼金史論集, vol. 5, edited by Chen Shu陳述 (Beijing: Wenjin chubanshe, 1991), 237–54; Chen, “Jindai Hanzu shiren,” 103–35; Iiyama Tomoyasu 飯山知保, “Jindai keju zhidu bianqian yu difang shiren” 金代科舉制度變遷與地方士人, *Kejuxue luncong* 2010.1 (2010), 12–27. For the population numbers of the Jin dynasty, see Wu Songdi 吳松弟, “Liao Song Jin Yuan shiqi” 遼宋金元時期, in *Zhongguo renkoushi* 中國人口史, vol. 3, edited by Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2000), 201–22.

**Table 2.** Geographical Distribution of Jin Tombs

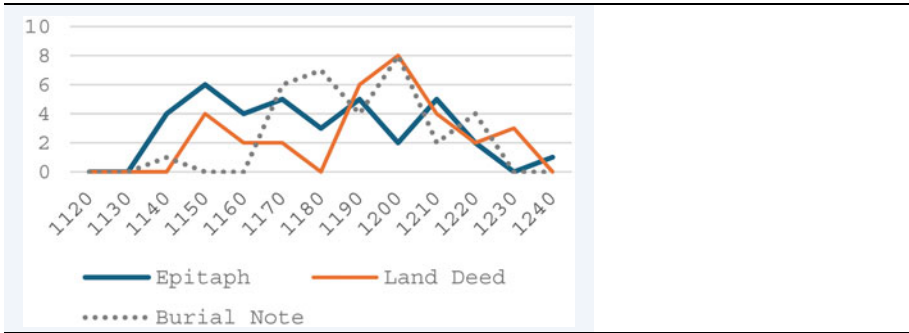
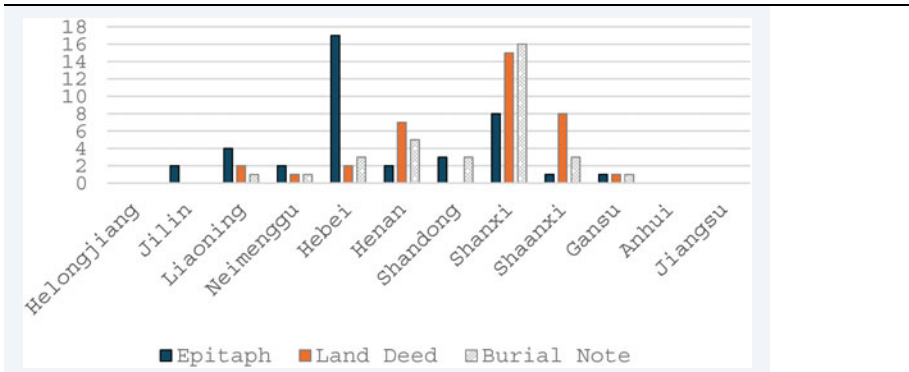
with the northern part being the Southern and Western Capitals of the Liao and the southern half the border areas of the Northern Song. Despite the Jin unification of the two halves, this North–South divide continued into the first half of the twelfth century. This was manifest in the southern region’s advantage in producing more *jins*. In contrast, the highest-level official positions were dominated by the northerners with former Liao connections.<sup>18</sup> Only after the second half of the twelfth century did such a divide become less pronounced. The discussion in the next section demonstrates that more traces of the *shi* can be located in the Hedong area, where Han Chinese culture revived and flourished under Jurchen rule.

### Burial Inscriptions and the Social Elites Who Used Them

To search for traces of the *shi*, we begin with tombs that contain writings, especially burial inscriptions. In addition to epitaphs, which scholars widely consult when discussing the upper classes, this study also includes land deeds and burial notes (*zangji* 葬記). Epitaphs and land deeds usually have a tangible material existence, with lengthy textual content engraved or written on a piece of stone or brick. In contrast, burial notes often lack corporeal form, with brief contents carved on coffins or written directly with ink on the walls. Although different in nature, textual length, and material form, these inscriptions shared the same purpose of marking burials, therefore, all including a burial date and the deceased’s personal or familial information. Because most burial inscriptions have been found in more elaborate tombs, they also marked the upper stratum of society, in which the *shi* were most likely embedded.

Out of more than 600 unearthed Jin tombs, only a small fraction contain burial inscriptions: those with epitaphs account for forty, land deeds for thirty-six, and burial notes for thirty-three, as shown in Table 1. Tables 3 and 4 show the temporal and geographical distribution of the three types of burial inscriptions. The numbers in the temporal distribution (Table 3) are too low for statistical analysis. Still, they offer a rough sketch of the development, showing the gradual rise of burial notes against the decline of epitaphs, which traditionally comprised most burial inscriptions. Juxtaposing the numbers across the Liao, Northern Song, and Jin in Table 1, along with the numbers of North China calculated separately for the Northern Song, makes this trend even more remarkable. Both Liao and Northern Song have only limited tombs bearing burial

<sup>18</sup>Chen, “Jindai Hanzu shiren,” 103–35.

**Table 3.** Temporal Distribution of Jin Tombs with Burial Inscriptions by Inscription Type**Table 4.** Geographical Distribution of Tombs with Burial Inscriptions of Different Types by Province

notes, under 3 percent, whereas the number increases to above 5 percent in the Jin. It is also noticeable that all the Northern Song tombs bearing burial notes come from the North, suggesting that using burial notes was a northern practice. This North–South divide continued into the Jin and Southern Song: burial notes became increasingly popular in Shanxi, Henan, and Shaanxi (Table 4), whereas no burial notes were found in the Southern Song.

The following sections investigate the three types of burial inscriptions from the Jin dynasty. Used by social elites of different backgrounds, some burial inscriptions contain more direct information about the *shi*, while others only allude to them with circumstantial evidence. In the latter case, considering other aspects of tombs, such as murals and burial goods, is necessary for a more holistic assessment.

### Epitaphs

Among the three types of burial inscriptions, epitaphs held the highest place in the social hierarchy. They functioned as status symbols for officials, governed by sumptuary

laws that permitted only those above certain ranks to have formal epitaphs.<sup>19</sup> Most epitaphs belonged to officials; however, some affluent local elites also imitated officials and included epitaphs in their tombs. These epitaphs were generally shorter and of more moderate size. During the Jin, the use of epitaphs dramatically declined. Most of them have been found in modern-day Hebei, the political center housing the Central Capital (Tables 1 and 4).

Among officials' epitaphs, those unearthed from the family cemetery of Lü Siyan 呂嗣延 (1062–1126) from Lugu 魯谷, Shandong, emphasize Confucian learning the most.<sup>20</sup> They portray the family as champions of Confucian learning, producing successful *jinshi* throughout the generations from the Liao to Jin. Their tombs, all second burials with limited size and burial goods, indicate their adoption of cremation. This custom was considered Buddhist in origin and thus often harshly criticized by Neo-Confucian scholars of the Northern and Southern Song for its deviation from the orthodox classical practices.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, judging from the epitaphs, the Lü family is the most distinguished Confucian scholar-official family among unearthed Jin tombs.

Most officials' epitaphs focus on the deceased official's achievements without paying much attention to their literary talents or classical knowledge, giving the impression of a professional bureaucracy.<sup>22</sup> However, these literati qualities are stressed in the epitaphs of several men with low-ranking official titles.<sup>23</sup> Noticeably, some of these titles were only honorary ones obtained in alternative ways without real official duties. Therefore, it is more appropriate to count these men as *shi*, instead of scholar-officials. They include Lü Gong 呂恭 (died between 1161–1167) from Beijing and Jiao Gui 焦珪 (1094–1177) from Jiaozuo 焦作, Henan. Lü's epitaph lists the title of his collected writings, *Jinshan ji* 荆山集, as a testimony to his literary accomplishments.<sup>24</sup> Lü never held a *jinshi* degree. Instead, he obtained the honorary title after reacting to the government's call to open his granary during a famine. Lü's affiliation with the *shi* is further confirmed by a ceramic inkstone found in his grave chamber, bearing three engraved characters, 古瓦硯 (*guwayan*), denoting it as either an antique or a replica made after an ancient object. Jiao Gui, who also lacked a *jinshi* degree, served as a professor in the

<sup>19</sup>For the burial of epitaphs during this period, see Angela Schottenhammer, "Characteristics of Song Epitaphs," in *Burial in Song China*, edited by Dieter Kuhn, 253–306; Wang Xinyin 王新英 and Zhu He 祝賀, "Liao Jin Dangxiang Xixia muzhi yanjiu" 遼、宋、金党項西夏墓誌研究, in *Zhongguo gudai muzhi yanjiu* 中國古代墓誌研究, edited by Wang Lianlong 王連龍 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2023), 152–231; Miao Linlin 苗霖霖, "Jindai muzhi yanjiu shulun" 金代墓誌研究述論, in *Zhongguo gudai muzhi yanjiu*, 232–243. For a survey of Chinese epitaphs, see Zhao Chao 趙超, *Gudai muzhi tonglun* 古代墓誌通論 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2003).

<sup>20</sup>Beijingshi wenwu yanjiusuo 北京市文物研究所, *Lugu Jindai Lüshi jiazuo muzang fajue baogao* 魯谷金代呂氏家族墓葬發掘報告 (Beijing: Kexue, 2009), pl. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Patricia Ebrey, "Cremation in Sung China," *The American Historical Review* 95.2 (1990), 406–28.

<sup>22</sup>For examples, see Hebeisheng wenhuaju gongzuodui 河北省文化局文物工作隊, "Hebei Xinchengxian Beichangcun Jin Shi Liai han Shi Feng mu fajue ji" 河北新城縣北場村金時立愛和時豐墓發掘記, *Kaogu* 1962.12, 646–50; Chen Jinmei 陳金梅, "Qianshi Liaoning Beipiao chutu de sifang Jin Yuan mubei" 淺釋遼寧北票出土的四方金元墓碑, *Liaoningsheng bowuguan guankan* 4 (2009), 134–38.

<sup>23</sup>Wang Qinglin 王清林 and Zhou Yu 周宇, "Shijingshan Bajiaocun Jin Zhao Li mu muzhi yu bihua" 石景山八角村金趙勳墓誌與壁畫, *Beijing wenwu yu kaogu* 5 (2002), 179–201; Chen Kang 陳康, "Jindai Zhaogong muzhi kao" 金代趙公墓誌考, *Beijing wenbo wencong* 2002.4, 58–65.

<sup>24</sup>Active in the last years of the Liao, Lü's official title was conferred by the Northern Song government. After the Jin conquered his hometown, he received an equivalent title from the new ruler; Wang Qinglin 王清林 and Wang Ce 王策, "Ciqikou chutu de Jindai shigoumu" 磁器口出土的金代石槨墓, *Beijing wenwu yu kaogu* 5 (2002), 88–91.



local school. At the age of seventy he was bestowed a low-ranking military title due to the government's policy of demonstrating benevolence toward the elderly.<sup>25</sup> Jiao's epitaph portrays him as a successful local Confucian scholar, attracting tens and hundreds of students from near and far. It highlights his particular expertise in the *Zhouli* 周禮 (*The Rites of the Zhou*) and the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*The Book of Documents*).

Sometimes, officials holding military ranks, often obtained through *yin* protection, are praised for their literary predilections in the epitaphs.<sup>26</sup> A certain Zhang 張, originating from a military family in modern Beijing and holding a fifth-rank military title *xuanwu jiangjun* 宣武將軍, is recorded to have excelled at calligraphy, to have possessed every skill that scholar-officials professed, and to have often met friends in literary gatherings.<sup>27</sup> The epitaph also reports with regret that Zhang had the inclination to learn, but circumstances prevented him from doing so. Although somewhat worn, the fluent calligraphy of the epitaph in running script indicates a skilled hand behind the writing and corroborates the epitaph's portrayal of the tomb owner's literati image. Whether men like Zhang would be viewed as *shi* by their contemporaries is unclear, but he or his family certainly wished him to be regarded this way.

Epitaphs of non-official local elites also contain information about the *shi*. The fact that affluent families chose to include epitaphs in their resting places indicates their inclination to distinguish themselves from other local families in a literary manner. The tombs of Wu Gui 武珪 (1104–1169) and Guo Yongjian 郭永堅 (1123–1176) from Shanxi are such examples.<sup>28</sup> Guo's epitaph records that his father and grandfather occupied themselves with Confucian study but without success. Guo did not follow this path, but his son did and acquired *jinshi* candidacy. As for Wu Gui, his epitaph, written by his *jinshi* nephew, is beautifully calligraphed and carved (Figure 1). It portrays him as a successful manager, possibly a landlord or merchant, who became immensely wealthy under the Jin rule and then decided to hire scholars to educate his sons for the examinations. The murals in Wu's tomb are also remarkable. Of unusually high quality, they are clearly related to the court paintings of the Northern Song in terms of style and motifs, including a hermit in the landscape and the bird-and-flower.<sup>29</sup> These paintings betray a refined taste unseen in other local elites' tombs. It is hard to know whose taste these murals presented, but they certainly aimed to show the family's cultural capital.

<sup>25</sup>Chen Chaoyun 陳朝雲 and Liu Mengna 劉夢娜, "Dajin jinyi jiaowei Jiaojun muzhi yanjiu" 大金進義校尉焦君墓誌研究, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 2017.1, 66–73. For discussion of the Jin's granting official titles to the elderly, see Zhou Feng 周峰, "Jindai Guo Zhou muming kaoshi" 金代郭周墓銘考釋, *Beifang wenwu* 2018.2, 68–71.

<sup>26</sup>Zhou Feng 周峰, "Jindai Zhao Haogu muzhi kaoshi" 金代趙好古墓誌考釋, *Beijing wenbo wencong* 2018.4, 34–38; Beijingshi Haidingqu wenhua wenwuju 北京市海淀區文化文物局, "Beijingshi Haidingqu Nanxinzhuan Jinmu qingli jianbao" 北京市海淀區南辛莊金墓清理簡報, *Wenwu* 1988.7, 56–66.

<sup>27</sup>Beijingshi Haidingqu, "Beijingshi Haidingqu Nanxinzhuan Jinmu," 56–66.

<sup>28</sup>Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo 山西省考古研究所 and Lingchuanxian wenwuju 陵川縣文物局, "Shanxi Lingchuan Yuquan Jindai bihuamu fajue jianbao" 山西陵川玉泉金代壁畫墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2018.9, 22–32; Shanxi bowuyuan 山西博物院 and Jinchengshi wenwu yanjiusuo 晉城市文物研究所, "Shanxisheng Jinchengshi Haojiang M1 fajue jianbao" 山西省晉城市郝匠M1發掘簡報, *Wenwu jikan* 2022.2, 74–85.

<sup>29</sup>For a detailed discussion of these murals' association with the Northern Song court painting style, see Hsu Ya-hwei 許雅惠, "Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge: Shanxi Jinmu suojian de zhanhou shehui yu jiyi rencai liudong" 另類視角的宋金鼎革：山西金墓所見的戰後社會與技藝人才流動, *Xin shixue* 新史學 32.4 (2021), 147–49.

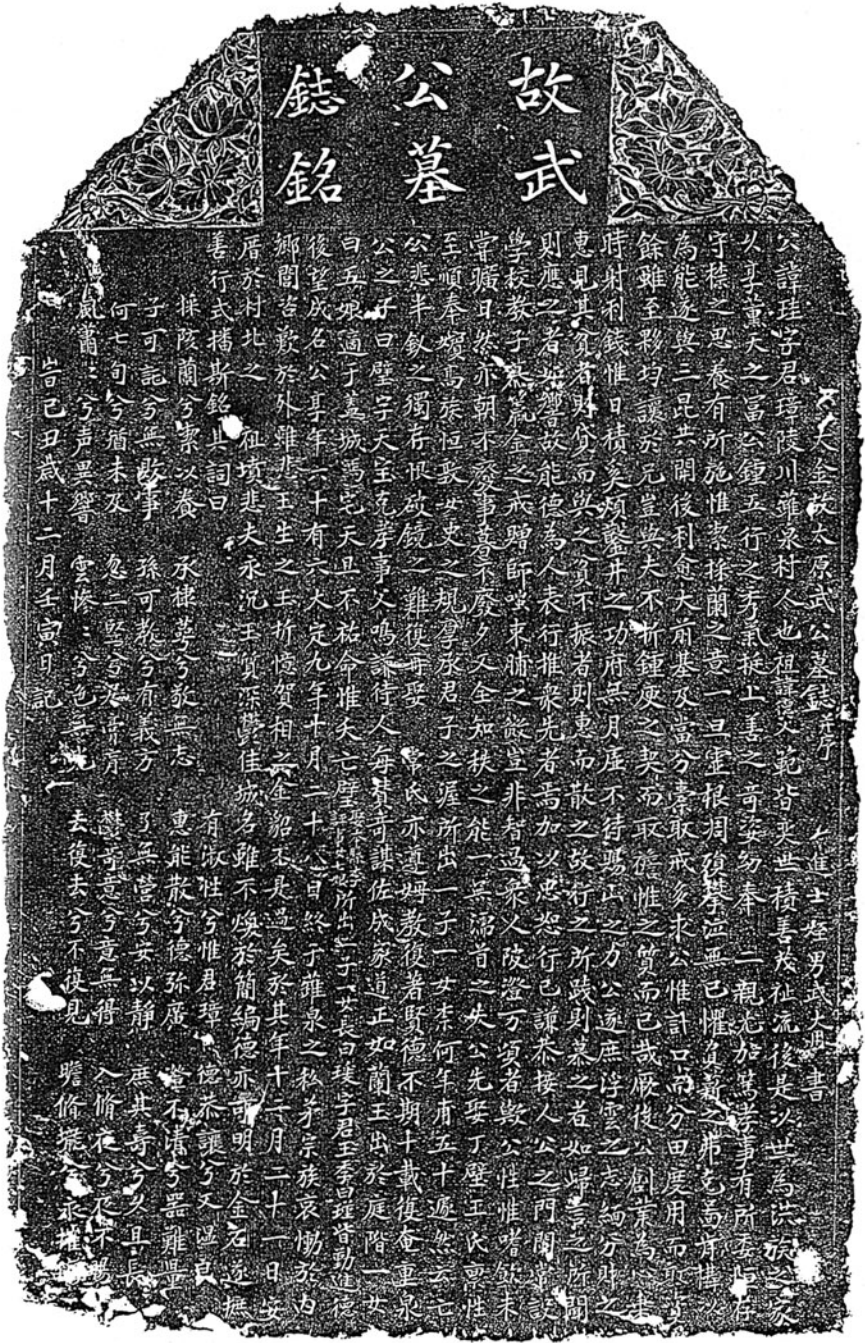


Figure 1. Rubbing of Wu Gui's epitaph, dated 1169, excavated in Lingchuan, Shanxi. After Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo 山西省考古研究所 and Lingchuanxian wenwuju 陵川縣文物局, "Shanxi Lingchuan Yuquan Jindai bihuamu fajue jianbao" 山西陵川玉泉金代壁畫墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2018.9, 31, Figure 15.

Local elites like Wu and Guo were not *shi*, but they recognized the value of Confucian study and the potential for officialdom that came with it. They supported family members in pursuing Confucian learning, eventually elevating the family's social status after the younger generation successfully obtained the *jinshi* degree or candidacy. The elevated family status and connections with the literati must have accounted for their burial with a nicely crafted, decent epitaph.

In addition to the textual content of epitaphs providing information about the *shi*, the paratext also offers some clues. First and foremost, composing and calligraphing epitaphs would involve literati, who were often socially connected to the deceased or their families. Their names and titles are generally listed as the front matter preceding the deceased's biography, and we often encounter the *xianggong jinshi* 鄉貢進士 as composers or calligraphers.<sup>30</sup> The *xianggong jinshi* was an honorary title referring to a *jinshi* candidate who obtained qualifications for attending the exam in the Capital through prefectural officials' recommendations but failed the exam.<sup>31</sup> These failed *jinshi* candidates were certainly *shi*. They appeared to be active in Liao and Jin society, writing epitaphs for social elites, both officials and non-officials. However, they rarely used epitaphs, as none of the unearthed epitaphs belong to them.<sup>32</sup>

In a few rare cases, the calligraphy on the epitaphs demonstrates the writers' extraordinary writing ability, suggesting their potential literati affiliation, as seen in the epitaphs of Chen Liang 陳諒 (1083–1139) from Qingyang 慶陽, Gansu, and Yu Yin 虞寅 (1115–1197) from Gaotang 高唐, Shandong.<sup>33</sup> Both epitaphs feature headings remarkably written in unusual ancient script, or *guwen* 古文, rather than standard seal script found on most covers or title spaces of epitaphs at the time (Figure 2).<sup>34</sup> The owners of these epitaphs were both military men active during the Song-Jin transition: Chen Liang was a Northern Song general who surrendered to the Jin and died in a war between the Jin and Xi Xia, while Yu Yin distinguished himself on the battlefield during the last years of the Northern Song but switched sides to serve the new regime with great success. Both writers of their epitaphs held low-ranking military titles: Li Fu 李扶, who wrote Chen's epitaph, held the title of "*chengxin lang* 承信郎" and served in a military camp, while Geng Kuanfu 耿寬夫, who wrote Yu's epitaph, held the title of *dunwu jiaowei* 敦武校尉 and worked in a regional wine bureau. Their ability to write in arcane, unusual script demonstrates their knowledge of ancient words.

<sup>30</sup>The epitaph of Guo Yongjian discussed previously was written by a *xianggong jinshi*. For more Jin epitaphs written by the *xianggong jinshi*, see Tomb No. 4912, 4922, 5004, 5190, 7165, 7314, 7915 in the Appendix.

<sup>31</sup>For the term *xiang gong*, see John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 52–53; for the term *xianggong jinshi*, see Gao Fushun 高福順, "Liaochao 'jinshi' chengwei kaobian" 遼朝進士稱謂考辨, *Shixue jikan* 2009.1, 92–95.

<sup>32</sup>In the combined list of Jin epitaphs compiled from archaeological excavations, museum collections, and transmitted texts, only an epitaph recorded in a local gazetteer was owned by a *xianggong jinshi*. See Wang Xinyin and Zhu He, "Liao Jin Dangxiang Xixia muzhi," 208.

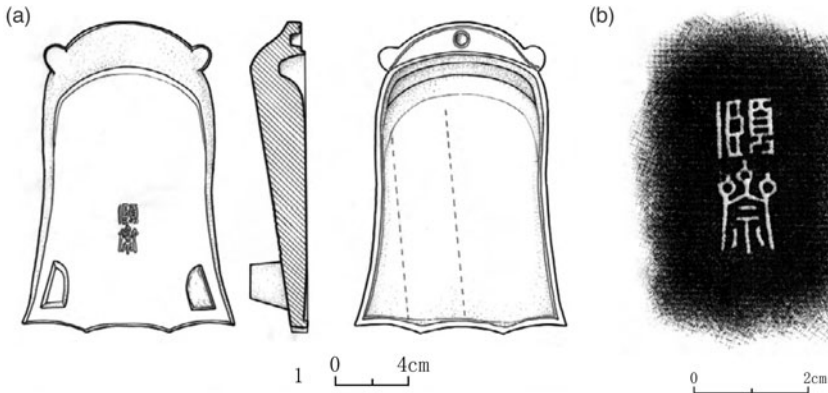
<sup>33</sup>Chen Kunlin 陳昆麟, "Shandong Gaotang Jindai Yu Yin mu fajue jianbao" 山東高唐金代虞寅墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1982.1, 49–51; Shen Haozhu 沈浩注, "Chen Liang muzhi kaolue" 陳諒墓誌考略, *Shaanxi lishi bowuguan guankan* 20 (2013), 255–61.

<sup>34</sup>Hu Pingsheng 胡平生, "Jindai Yu Yin muzhi de 'guwen' gaiwen" 金代虞寅墓誌的「古文」蓋文, *Wenwu* 1983.7, 89–90.



Figure 2. Ancient script on the cover of Yu Yin's epitaph, dated 1197, excavated in Gaotang, Shandong. After Chen Kunlin 陳昆麟, "Shandong Gaotang Jindai Yu Yin mu fajue jianbao" 山東高唐金代虞寅墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1982.1, 50, Figure 3.

Literati had already shown immense interest in ancient words during the Tang. This interest intensified as the *jinshi* 金石 antiquarian movement flourished during the mid-Northern Song and culminated in the publication of a comprehensive *guwen*



**Figure 3.** Inkstone with *yizhai* inscription. Tomb of Li Jurou 李居柔 (d. 1226), excavated in Xi'an, Shaanxi. After Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan 陕西省考古研究院, "Shaanxi Xian Jindai Li Jurou mu fajue jianbao" 陕西西安金代李居柔墓發掘簡報, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2017.2, 47, Figures 21–22.

dictionary during Emperor Huizong's reign.<sup>35</sup> These two rare epitaphs illustrate the enduring impact of the antiquarian movement in North China even after the demise of the Northern Song. Although holding low-ranking military titles (and working under military commanders in Li's case), these two men, equipped with special knowledge of ancient words like their Northern Song predecessors, might have been qualified as *shi*.

In summary, only two *shi* have been identified from the epitaphs, both holding honorary titles without real official duties. Nonetheless, indirect information about the *shi* can be found. Sometimes, they were mentioned in the epitaphs of their family, friends, and other social relations. In other cases, they were invited to compose or write epitaphs for their social relations, both officials and non-officials, leaving traces in the paratext. Finally, the calligraphy on a few epitaphs further reveals the writers' unusual literary skills, through which their potential *shi* affiliation could be inferred.

### Land Deeds

Land deeds, or *maidì juan* 買地券, serve as netherworld contracts for the deceased to prove their legitimate ownership of the grave land in the afterlife.<sup>36</sup> The practice of burying land deeds originated from the Central Plains during the Eastern Han period (25–220) and is still preserved in China and Taiwan today.<sup>37</sup> More than 300 Liao, Song,

<sup>35</sup>For the study of *guwen* during the Song and Jin, see Jonathan Hay, "Guo Zhongshu's Archaeology of Writing," *Journal of Chinese History* 3 (2019), 233–324; Ya-hwei Hsu, "Antiquities, Ritual Reform, and the Shaping of New Taste at Huizong's Court," *Artibus Asiae* 73.1 (2013), 148; Yunchiahn C. Sena, *Bronze and Stone: The Cult of Antiquity in Song Dynasty China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).

<sup>36</sup>Ina Asim, "Status Symbol and Insurance Policy: Song Land Deeds for the Afterlife," in *Burial in Song China*, edited by Dieter Kuhn, 307–70; Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China: How Ordinary People Used Contracts, 600–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). For a comprehensive examination of land deeds throughout Chinese history, see Lu Xiqi 魯西奇, *Zhongguo gudai maidiquan yanjiu* 中國古代買地券研究 (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2014).

<sup>37</sup>Anna Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts in Tombs," in *Dōkyō to shōkyō bunka* 道教と宗教文化, edited by Akitsuki Kan'ei 秋月觀暎 (Tokyo: Hiraikawa Shuppansha, 1987), 679–714; Huang Jingchun 黃景春, *Zhongguo zongjiaoxing suizang wenshu yanjiu: yi maidiquan, zhenmuwen, yiwushu*

and Jin tombs with land deeds buried inside have been collected for my research (Table 1). Comparing the number of all Northern Song tombs yielding land deeds with that of only the tombs in the North shows the South's predominance in the use of land deeds. This regional divide continued into the Jin and Southern Song. Land deeds of the Jin mostly originated from Shanxi (Table 4), while those of the Northern and Southern Song were concentrated in the Daoist centers of Sichuan and Jiangxi.<sup>38</sup>

A series of rites is required to make the netherworld contracts efficacious. According to the *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (*New Book of Earth Patterns*), which provides a template land deed for consultation, the weeds of the burial ground must first be cleared before the land deeds can be interred—one in the center of the burial ground and the other inside the grave.<sup>39</sup> Conducted by professional geomancers, these rites aim to drive away wandering spirits, pacify the deceased, and guarantee descendants a prosperous future. Therefore, the decision to bury land deeds also reflects the user's religious belief. It is remarkable that the Khitan and Jurchen nobilities, who had different belief systems from the Han Chinese, typically did not adopt land deeds in their tombs.<sup>40</sup> An ethnic divide existed in the use of land deeds.

Scholars agree that users of Song land deeds were primarily social elites, consisting of both officials and non-officials, with the latter being the majority.<sup>41</sup> This observation is mainly true for the Jin. Remarkably, epitaphs and land deeds have not been found together in Jin tombs (though such cases exist in Northern and Southern Song tombs), suggesting a distinction might have existed between the use of epitaphs and land deeds.

Only 3 out of 36 land deeds bear the official titles of the dead.<sup>42</sup> The individual who held the highest rank is Li Jurou 李居柔 (d. 1226), a third-rank civil official.<sup>43</sup> Li's tomb, found intact in Xi'an, Shaanxi, yielded an inkstone with what may be Li's style

*weizhu* 中國宗教性隨葬文書研究：以買地券、鎮墓文、衣物疏為主 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2018), 599–683.

<sup>38</sup>Asim, "Status Symbol and Insurance Policy," 307–70.

<sup>39</sup>Wang Zhu 王洙, et al., *Tujie jiaozheng dili xinshu* 圖解校正地理新書, 1192 Jin edition (Taipei: Jiwen shuju, 1985), 452–56. For discussion of the religious practice recorded in the *Dili xinshu*, see Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 173–88.

<sup>40</sup>For instance, among Liao-dynasty tombs, numbering more than 800, only a land deed belonging to a certain Niu 牛 family has been discovered. See Datongshi wenwu chenlieguan 大同市文物陳列館, "Shanxi Datong Wohuwan sizuo Liaodai bihuamu" 山西大同臥虎灣四座遼代壁畫墓, *Kaogu* 1963.8, 432–36. For discussions of the traditional death rituals of the Khitans and the specific types of burial goods adopted by the Khitan nobility, see François Louis, "Iconic Ancestors: Wire Mesh, Metal Masks, and Kitan Image Worship," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013), 91–115; Li Qingquan 李清泉, "Baoshan Liaomu: Qidan muzang zhongde 'guosu' yu shenfen jiangou" 寶山遼墓：契丹墓葬藝術中的「國俗」與身份建構, in *Baoshan Liaomu: cailiao yu shidu* 寶山遼墓：材料與釋讀, edited by Wu Hung and Li Qingquan (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2013), 49–120.

<sup>41</sup>For studies on the Song, see Asim, "Status Symbol and Insurance Policy," 321; Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life*, 159–65.

<sup>42</sup>These are the land deeds of Née Zhai 翟氏 (buried in 1149), Guo Yu 郭裕 (buried in 1210), and Li Jurou 李居柔 (d. 1226). For the excavation reports, see Chaoyang bowuguan 朝陽博物館, "Liaoning Chaoyangshi Jindai jinian muzang de fajue" 遼寧朝陽市金代紀年墓葬的發掘, *Kaogu* 2012.3, 51–58; Kang Xiaohong 康孝紅, "Shanxi Xiaoyishi faxian yizuo Jinmu" 山西孝義市發現一座金墓, *Kaogu* 2001.4, 94–95; Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan 陝西省考古研究院, "Shaanxi Xian Jindai Li Jurou mu fajue jianbao" 陝西西安金代李居柔墓發掘簡報, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2017.2, 40–49.

<sup>43</sup>Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan, "Shaanxi Xian Jindai Li Jurou mu," 40–49.

name, *yizhai* 頤齋, engraved underneath in seal script (Figure 3). The practice of burying writing implements with personal inscriptions in tombs seems to have emerged alongside the formation of the literati class during the Northern Song, as evidenced by examples found in a renowned scholar-official cemetery in Lantian, Shaanxi.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, some Song inkstones were engraved with their literati owners' epitaphs on the surface, seemingly becoming a personification of their owner.<sup>45</sup> Echoing this trend, this inscribed inkstone that accompanied scholar-official Li to the netherworld might have stood for his accomplishments as a literatus.

The only tomb with land deeds that bears clear traces of the *shi* was found in Datong 大同, Shanxi. The red writing on the brick land deed is illegible, but a piece of silk banner covering the coffin, with characters in white pigment, provides the tomb owner's identity. While the name has faded away, the epithet *chushi* 處士, meaning recluse scholar, discloses his *shi* identity. Covering the coffin with a silk banner was unusual in Liao, Song, and Jin tombs. However, it corroborates records in the *Yili* 儀禮 (*The Book of Etiquette*), the classic believed to have documented rites of the *shi* stratum in antiquity, from which Northern-Song scholar Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) derived his simplified version of the rites in the *Shuyi* 書儀 (*Family Rites*). This silk banner, called *mingjing* 銘旌 or inscription banner, presents the deceased's name and title during the funeral. Sima Guang provides a sample wording and stipulates its placement, all of which is closely followed in the Datong tomb.<sup>46</sup> The burial of this Confucian silk banner clearly showcases the deceased's *shi* identity.

Another way to identify the deceased's social status is by investigating the murals. During the Northern Song and Jin periods, tomb portraits depicting the deceased couple seated at a table facing each other became extremely popular among local elites in North China. This development might be related to the prevalence of the *yingtang* 影堂, or image hall, for ancestral worship since the late Northern Song.<sup>47</sup> Despite Sima Guang's harsh criticism of the use of portraits in funerals, tomb portraits were becoming increasingly popular in North China.<sup>48</sup> Because such portraits of the deceased almost never appeared in tombs with epitaphs belonging to scholar-officials, scholars agree that this practice attracted mostly non-literati elite users. Jeehee Hong

<sup>44</sup>Many writing implements were found in this cemetery. For inkstones with personal inscriptions, see Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan 陝西省考古研究院, et al., *Lantian Lüshi jiazhu muyuan* 藍田呂氏家族墓園 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2018), 343, 365, 941; for study of some of these cultural items, see Hsu Ya-hwei, "Songdai shidafu de jinshi shoucang yu liyi shijian," 131–64.

<sup>45</sup>Zhao Ronghua 趙榮華, "Keyou muzhiming de Beisong shiqu ziduanyan" 刻有墓誌銘的北宋石渠紫端硯, *Nanfang wenwu* 1996.3, 119–20; Guo Yuqiong 郭月瓊, "Nansong Jia Pi mu chutu chaoshouyan muzhi kaoshi" 南宋賈披墓出土抄手硯墓誌考釋, *Fujian wenbo* 2020.4, 39–43.

<sup>46</sup>Sima Guang 司馬光, *Wengong shuyi* 溫公書儀, Baibu congshu jicheng 百部叢書集成 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965–), 5.7b, 8.5a.

<sup>47</sup>For representative research, see Deng Fei 鄧菲, "Xiangji chu' yu 'chajiuwei': tan Song Jin Yuan zhuan-diao bihuamu zhong de liyi kongjian" 「香積廚」與「茶酒位」——談宋金元磚雕壁畫墓中的禮儀空間, *Yishushi yanjiu* 14 (2012), 465–97; Li Qingquan 李清泉, "Yitang jiaqing' de xinyixiang: Song Jin shiqi de muzhu fufuxiang yu Tang Song muzang fengqi zhibian" 「一堂家慶」的新意象：宋金時期的墓主夫婦像與唐宋墓葬風氣之變, in *Gudai muzang meishu yanjiu* 古代墓葬美術研究, vol. 2, edited by Wu Hung (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2013), 320–37; Hong Zhixi 洪知希 (Jeehee Hong), "Hengzai' zhongde zangyi: Song Yuan shiqi zhongyuan muzang de yili shijian" 「恒在」中的葬儀：宋元時期中原墓葬的儀禮時間, in *Gudai muzang meishu yanjiu* vol. 3, edited by Wu Hung (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2015), 196–226.

<sup>48</sup>Sima, *Wengong shuyi*, 5.8b–9a.

further argues that tomb portraits served as a means for affluent local families to display their elite identity.<sup>49</sup>

Among the thirty-six tombs with land deeds, at least twelve out of thirty-one tombs with legible mural paintings bear tomb portraits. These tomb portraits did not appear alone but were often surrounded by scenes of banquets and theater. Offered by pious sons and grandsons for the ancestors' otherworldly felicity, these scenes help create a tableau as if the deceased couple was immersed in various domestic comforts in their underground adobe.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the function and meaning of these domestic scenes, some scholars relate them to certain funerary rituals, while others view them as ideal representations of familial prosperity.<sup>51</sup> Both the tomb portraits and the accompanying domestic scenes would signify the tomb owners' non-literati elite status.

These popular motifs might have stood as an antithesis of the *shi* identity, as indicated in a tomb belonging to a ninth-rank military official, Chen Qing 陳慶 (1097–1157), and his wife in Datong, Shanxi.<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that Chen's epitaph openly describes him as "from childhood to adulthood, he did not care to learn reading and writing." Nonetheless, an epitaph was prepared for him, perhaps to conform to Chen's official status. The tomb lacks the couple's portraits, but scenes of banquets and musical entertainment adorn the walls. These visual representations of domestic comforts would have exhibited Chen's identity as a non-literati elite.

Amid the popularity of tomb portraits and scenes depicting domestic comforts, the tomb of Meng Xuan 孟選 and his wife, dated 1228 from Jinzhong 晉中, Shanxi, stands out.<sup>53</sup> The tomb chamber is named *youzhai* 幽齋, or serene adobe, and is adorned with two calligraphic works, painted as two mounted hanging scrolls hung on opposite walls (Figure 4). Both derive their contents from poems of the Tang, one by the renowned Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) and the other by an unknown poet. These poems might have been popular literature of the time.<sup>54</sup> Including calligraphic works of poems in one's resting place signifies a literary taste of the deceased or their family. Meng's tomb is not exceptional; a few other tombs in North China also feature calligraphy on the walls. The following sections will examine these literary expressions and their relationship with the *shi*.

### Burial Notes

Burial notes, often bearing the term *zangji*, typically record only the burial date and the individual(s) who dedicated the burial, usually the son(s). The dedicator seems to matter more than the dedicatee because the deceased's name is often omitted. Some burial notes were written with ink on the walls or carved on the exteriors of stone or pottery

<sup>49</sup>Hong, "Changing Roles of the Tomb Portrait," 203–64.

<sup>50</sup>The practice of creating a tableau with painted or sculpted figurines can be traced back to the Warring States period, see Wu Hung, "On Tomb Figurines: The Beginning of a Visual Tradition," in *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 13–47.

<sup>51</sup>For representing familial prosperity, see Li, "'Yitang jiaqing' de xinyixiang," 320–37; for the ritual associations and social significance, see Deng, "'Xiangji chu' yu 'chajiuwei,'" 465–97; Hong, "'Hengzai' zhongde zangyi," 196–226; Hong, *Theater of the Dead*.

<sup>52</sup>Datongshi bowuguan 大同市博物館, "Datongshi nanjiao Jindai bihamu" 大同市南郊金代壁畫墓, *Kaogu xuebao* 1992.4, 511–27.

<sup>53</sup>Wang Jun 王俊 and Yan Zhen 閔震, "Shanxi Jinzhong faxian Jindai Zhengda wunian mu" 山西晉中發現金代正大五年墓, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 2013.10, 6–8.

<sup>54</sup>For the origins of these two poems, see Hsu, "Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge," 22–23.





**Figure 4.** Mural painting of calligraphy of popular literature depicted as a hanging scroll. Tomb of Meng Xuan, dated 1228, excavated Jinzhong, Shanxi. After Wang Jun 王俊 and Yan Zhen 閔震, “Shanxi Jinzhong faxian Jindai Zhengda wunian mu” 山西晉中發現金代正大五年墓, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 2013.10, 7, Figure 3.

coffins without a material form. Others were engraved on a piece of brick or stone, like epitaphs or land deeds. A few Northern Song examples even bore the term *muzhi* 墓誌 in the heading, but they were often fashioned in a perfunctory manner.<sup>55</sup> Burial notes were already used in North China during the Liao and Northern Song and became even more prevalent during the Jin, particularly in southern Shanxi (see [Tables 3 and 4](#)), but they were largely unseen in the South.

The diversity of their material forms suggests that they were used by people from various backgrounds. Buddhist monks who practiced cremation were prominent

<sup>55</sup>For examples bearing “*muzhi*” in the headings, see Zhu Xiaofang 朱曉芳 and Wang Jinxian 王進先, “Shanxi Changzhi Guxiancun Songdai bihuamu” 山西長治故縣村宋代壁畫墓, *Wenwu* 2005.4, 51–61; Huang Minglan 黃明蘭 and Gong Dazhong 宮大中, “Luoyang Beisong Zhangjun mu huaxiang shiguan” 洛陽北宋張君墓畫像石棺, *Wenwu* 1984.7, 79–81.



**Figure 5.** Tracing of mural painting of the Yan family, with captions for each person. Tomb of the Yan family, dated 1168, excavated in Qinyuan, Shanxi. After Cui Yaozhong 崔耀忠 and An Ruijun 安瑞軍, “Shanxi Qinyuanxian Zhengzhongcun Jindai zhuanshimu bihua moubenkao” 山西沁源縣正中村金代磚室墓壁畫摹本考, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guan* 2020.8, 11, Figure 5.

users. On the exteriors of their ossuaries or burial caskets, often interred in groups, the monk’s name and burial date were engraved for identification.<sup>56</sup> Another group of users consisted of local non-literati elites who preferred elaborate tombs. These tombs typically lacked epitaphs, sometimes contained land deeds, and often featured burial notes written on the walls. Some burial notes were lengthy, especially for second burials where many ancestors’ remains were collected and reburied in a newly-built tomb chamber. In such cases, the names of the ancestors and those of the pious sons, grandsons, and wives were all listed.<sup>57</sup> Some of these tombs featured tomb portraits. A few extraordinary cases even depicted images of the entire family, both living and dead,

<sup>56</sup>For dated examples from the Jin, see Ning Lixin 寧立新 and Lei Yungui 雷云貴, “Shuozhoushi shuochengqu Jindai sengren congzangmu fajue jianbao” 朔州市朔城區金代僧人叢葬墓發掘簡報, *Shanxisheng kaogu xuehui lunwenji* 3 (2000), 138–45; Ren Xilai 任喜來 and Hu Lingui 呼林貴, “Shanxi Hancheng Jindai sengqunmu” 陝西韓城金代僧群墓, *Wenbo* 1988.1, 9–12.

<sup>57</sup>Here I only list a few typical Jin examples, see Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo Houma gongzuozhan 山西省考古研究所侯馬工作站, “Houma 102 hao Jinmu” 侯馬102號金墓, *Wenwu jikan* 1997.4, 28–40; Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan 山西省考古研究院, et al., “Shanxi Xianghuan Fucun Jindai zhuandiao bihuamu fajue jianbao” 山西襄垣付村金代磚雕壁畫墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu jikan* 2023.1, 29–47; Wang Yonggang 王勇剛, et al., “Shanxi Ganquan Jindai bihuamu” 陝西甘泉金代壁畫墓, *Wenwu* 2009.7, 26–42.

identified by captions of their names. This gives viewers the impression of a very prosperous extended family, as exemplified by the murals in the Yan 閻 family tomb in Qinyuan 沁源, Shanxi (Figure 5).<sup>58</sup>

Only three out of thirty-three users of burial notes held official titles, exemplified by the Ding 丁 family, whose graveyard was discovered in Zhoukou 周口, Henan.<sup>59</sup> According to the burial note from M2, dated 1180, one of the sons held a fifth-rank military title, the highest among users of the burial notes discovered so far. His elevated status is evident in the craftsmanship of the burial note, neatly written and carved on a small stone stele with floral patterns decorating the borders, and the stone animals and figures standing in the cemetery, which are still visible today. The other two official users of the burial notes, one found in Gansu, dated 1175, and the other in Shanxi, dated 1189, held only low-ranking titles.<sup>60</sup>

At first sight, most tombs with burial notes may not appear to contain immediate information about the *shi*. However, closer scrutiny of the materials suggests that some tombs with extraordinary literary expressions might provide indirect information about the *shi*. The tomb of Née Zhang 張, who died in 1182 and was reburied in 1200 in Houma 侯馬, Shanxi, is such an example.<sup>61</sup> The lengthy ink-written burial note emphasizes the considerable wealth accumulated by Zhang's husband, making clear the family's status as local economic elites. What is astonishing is that the interiors of Zhang's tomb were filled with blocks of ink writings without any pictorial images. In addition to the burial note, the contents included poems and lyrics of dramatic songs, known as *quci* 曲辭 (Figure 6).<sup>62</sup> These writings, depicted as freestanding screens, are remarkable because they consist of legible words left by someone who could read and write, rather than the illegible tracings done by painters commonly seen in Northern Song tombs.<sup>63</sup> We do not know whether Née Zhang's family was literate. Nonetheless, these writings demonstrate the family's love for popular drama and their preference for literary expression over the pictorial representations popular among their contemporaries. Including legible writings in the tomb would have allowed them to distinguish themselves from other local elites.

<sup>58</sup>Cui Yaozhong 崔躍忠 and An Ruijun 安瑞軍, "Shanxi Qinyuanxian Zhengzhongcun Jindai zhuan-shimu bihua moubenkao" 山西沁源縣正中村金代磚室墓壁畫摹本考, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guan-kan* 2020.8, 6–27; Hao Junjun 郝軍軍, "Qinyuan Zhengzhongcun Jinmu zhaji" 沁源正中村金墓札記, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guan-kan*, 2021.7, 82–97.

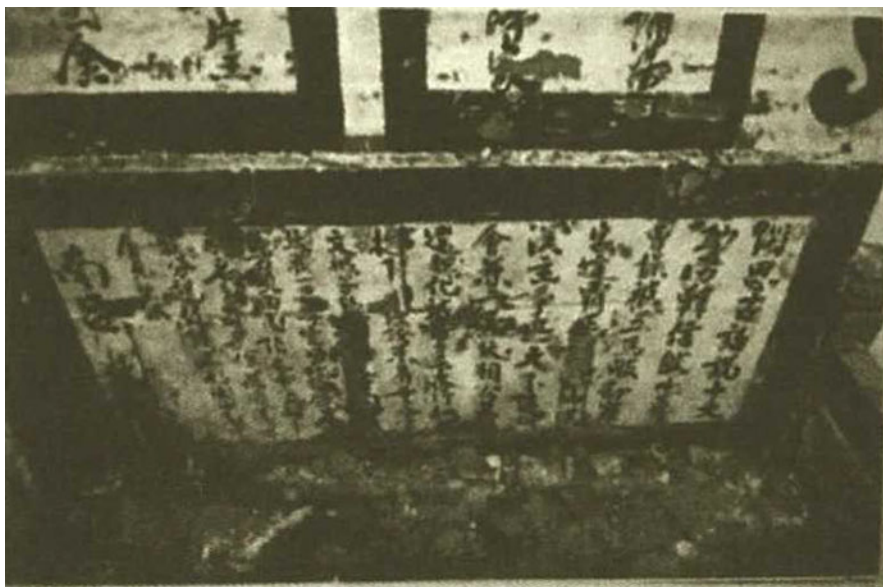
<sup>59</sup>Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所, "Henan Luyi Wohe chuanzha Jinmu fajue jianbao" 河南鹿邑渦河船閘金墓發掘簡報, *Huaxia kaogu* 1994.2, 46–49.

<sup>60</sup>Linxia Huizu zizhizhou bowuguan 臨夏回族自治州博物館, "Gansu Linxia Jindai zhuandiao mu" 甘肅臨夏金代磚雕墓, *Wenwu* 1994.12, 46–53; Wang Jinxian 王進先, "Shanxi Changzhishi Guzhang Jindai jinianmu" 山西長治市故漳金代紀年墓, *Kaogu* 1984.8, 737–43.

<sup>61</sup>Yang Jiyun 楊及耘 and Gao Qingshan 高青山, "Houma Ershui M4 faxian moubi tixie de muzhi han sanpian zhugongdiao ciqu" 侯馬二水M4發現墨筆題寫的墓志和三篇諸宮調詞曲, *Zhonghua xiqu* 2003.2, 1–5.

<sup>62</sup>For discussion of the significance of these writings in the history of theater, see Yan Baoquan 延保全, "Houma Ershui M4 sanzhi Jindai moushu xiqu shiyi" 侯馬二水M4三支金代墨書戲曲釋疑, *Zhonghua xiqu* 2003.2, 6–21; Liao Ben 廖奔, "Wudu de zhugongdiao zhongda faxian: Houma Ershui Jinmu qucijie" 誤讀的諸宮調「重大發現」——侯馬二水金墓曲辭解, *Xiqu yanjiu* 戲曲研究 2019.2, 185–206.

<sup>63</sup>Hsu, "Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge," 111–80.



**Figure 6.** Blocks of writing on the interior wall. Tomb of Née Zhang, reburied 1200, excavated Houma, Shanxi. After Liao Ben 廖奔, “Wudu de zhugongdiao zhongda faxian: Houma Ershui Jinmu qucijie” 誤讀的諸宮調「重大發現」——侯馬二水金墓曲辭解, *Xiqu yanjiu* 戲曲研究 2019.2, 186.

### Literary Expression and its Association with the *Shi*

Née Zhang’s tomb is intriguing because only ink writings adorned the walls. Other similar tombs often integrated writings of popular literature into pictorial representations. Ink writings of poems, prose poems (*ci* 詞), or lyrics of dramatic songs were often depicted as calligraphic works mounted as hanging scrolls on the walls or as freestanding screens behind the seated deceased couple. As many of these tombs lack inscriptions but bear portraits of the deceased, most of their owners must have been non-literati elites like Née Zhang. Such literary expressions were rare. They appeared in only around ten tombs, mostly from southern Shanxi.<sup>64</sup> As Wu Hung has pointed out, ancient Chinese screens often served as a means to express the inner self of the protagonist before them.<sup>65</sup> Viewed in this light, these rare cases of painted calligraphic screens or hanging scrolls of popular literature might have allowed the deceased or their family to articulate a self-image that emphasized their literary appreciation, thus showcasing their cultural capital.

Literary expression also appeared in the tomb of the *shi*, as evidenced by the tomb of Zhang Lun 張倫 from Zhidan 志丹, Shaanxi. The excavation report has not been published, so the discussion here is necessarily based on the incomplete information released online.<sup>66</sup> An undated gravestone has been discovered, which refers to Zhang

<sup>64</sup>For a list of these tombs, see Hsu, “Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge,” 111–80. The following tomb should be added to the list: Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiuyuan et al., “Shanxi Jinzhong Longbai Jinmu fajue jianbao” 山西晉中龍白金墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2019.11, 34–40.

<sup>65</sup>Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 134–99.

<sup>66</sup>Li Yifan 李一璠, “Shaanxi wancheng yizuo Jindai bihuamu baohu xiufu gongzuo” 陝西完成一座金代壁畫墓保護修復工作, *Zhongguo xinwenwang*: Shaanxi 中國新聞網: 陝西, November 17, 2022 [www.](http://www.)



Figure 7. Mural of alternating units of texts and images of filial piety stories, dated 1151, excavated Changzhi, Shanxi. After Changzhishi bowuguan 長治市博物館, “Shanxi Changzhishi Weicun Jindai jinian caihui zhuandiao mu” 山西長治市魏村金代紀年彩繪磚雕墓, *Kaogu* 2009.1, pl. 14.4.

as *xiucai* 秀才, a polite term for literati without a *jinshi* degree. According to the available information, aside from auspicious animals and flowers popular in Jin tombs, the tomb was also decorated with scenes of music-making and dancing, probably representing local festivals.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, passages from Tang and Song poems were found written in ink on the walls. Both the pictorial representations and ink writings of popular literature discovered in Zhang’s tomb are reminiscent of those found in tombs traditionally categorized as belonging to non-literati elites. Without the gravestone, it would be difficult to ascertain the owner’s *shi* affiliation. This conflation suggests that the line between the tomb of the *shi* and that of other elites at the local level could be ambiguous and hard to demarcate.

Long paragraphs of ink writings can also be found in filial piety motifs from southern Shanxi. While some of these tombs contained burial inscriptions of one form or another, many did not. The pious sons could be represented in mural paintings, stamped bricks in bas-relief, or three-dimensional sculptures. Captions written in ink were often added to identify the represented subjects. In some exceptional cases, blocks of lengthy texts were copied next to the images, such as the tomb from Weicun 魏村,

[shx.chinanews.com.cn/news/2022/1117/89604.html](http://shx.chinanews.com.cn/news/2022/1117/89604.html). The gravestone is reported in “800 duonian qian de Jindai muzangli faxian le Bai Juyi shike” 八百多年前的金代墓葬裡發現了白居易詩刻, *Zhongguo pinglun xinwenwang* 中國評論新聞網, November 21, 2022, <http://hk.crnrt.com/doc/1065/2/8/7/106528729.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=106528729>; accessed February 4, 2024. For discussion of the poems, see Huang Jinqian 黃錦前, “Shaanbei Jindai bihuamu tiji jiqi yiyi” 陝北金代壁畫墓題記及其意義, *Zhoughua wenshi luntan* 2023.3, 172–80.

<sup>67</sup>For a discussion of the auspicious motifs, see Ellen Johnston Laing, “Auspicious Motifs in Ninth- to Thirteenth-Century Chinese Tombs,” *Ars Orientalis* 33 (2003), 32–75.

Changzhi 長治, dating back to 1151 based on the inscription left by the artisans who built the tomb.<sup>68</sup> One of the written texts even lists the *Xihan shu* 西漢書 (*History of the Western Han*) as the reference (Figure 7). That particular passage, however, is not found in the extant version of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han*). An abridged version of the same texts has been found in a nearby tomb, suggesting that these written texts shared a common source, most likely a printed popular book.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, the specific combination of the twenty-four stories found in the tombs in southern Shanxi differs from all extant versions of such stories in China. However, it matches a fourteenth-century Koryo edition. Clearly, once popular in North China, the text was eventually lost in its homeland but found its way to Korea, where it has been preserved.<sup>70</sup>

The arrangement of the texts and images in the Weicun tomb also reveals the influence of printed illustrated books. Throughout the upper register of the entire burial chamber, units of texts and images alternate in a manner reminiscent of the format found in popular illustrated books of the time. These woodblock-printed books often feature rotating images and texts, positioned either with one on top and the other at the bottom or with one on the right and the other on the left.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, a title written in larger characters, “Inscriptions to pictures of the twenty-four filial piety stories” (*huaxiang ershisi xiao ming* 畫相二十四孝銘), precedes the register on the southern wall. This line is reminiscent of the title page of a printed book. A “postscript” comprising the artisans’ names and the completion date concludes the entire register on the northern wall. These visual traits suggest that the creators might have been inspired by popular illustrated printed books, borrowing both the layout of the representation and the textual contents.<sup>72</sup>

The Jin witnessed a significant rise in legible ink writings in tombs. Some were depicted as calligraphic works mounted as hanging scrolls and freestanding screens, while others were represented as alternating texts and images akin to popular illustrated books. These literary expressions signal the tomb owners’ preference for “genuine” writings over “imitated” ones and the elevation of the creator’s literary level. The increasing literary expression in Jin tombs suggests two possible scenarios. First, the artisans’ literary abilities were significantly enhanced during the Jin, enabling them to quote famous works and write them down. Second, it is possible that some local *shi* were involved in this endeavor. I have previously discussed the first scenario, attributing the elevated level of literary expression in Jin tombs to the skilled artists fleeing from the former capital, Kaifeng, after the fall of the Northern Song.<sup>73</sup> Here, I will address the second scenario.

The splendid brick-chambered tombs in southern Shanxi attest to a prosperous tomb construction industry during the Jin. They involved artisans excelling at

<sup>68</sup>Changzhishi bowuguan 長治市博物館, “Shanxi Changzhishi Weicun Jindai jinian caihui zhuan-diaomu” 山西長治市魏村金代紀年彩繪磚雕墓, *Kaogu* 2009.1, 59–64.

<sup>69</sup>Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo Jin dongnan gongzuozhan 山西省考古研究所晉東南工作站, “Shanxi Changzixian shizhe Jindai bihuamu” 山西長子縣石哲金代壁畫墓, *Wenwu* 1985.6, 45–54.

<sup>70</sup>Kin Bunkyo 金文京, “Luelun ershisi xiao yanbian jiqi dui Dongya zhi yingxiang” 略論《二十四孝》演變及其對東亞之影響, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu* 2019.2, 42–60; Kuroda, *Kōshiden no kenkyū*, 252–305.

<sup>71</sup>For discussion of popular illustrated books of this period, see Shih-Shan Susan Huang, “*Tianzhu Lingqian*: Divination Prints from a Buddhist Temple in Song Hangzhou,” *Artibus Asiae* 67.2 (2007), 243–96.

<sup>72</sup>Also see discussion in Hsu, “Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge,” 123–28.

<sup>73</sup>For the improved literary skills and elevated social status of the artists, see Hsu, “Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge,” 111–80.



**Figure 8.** Tracing of flower mural painting with colophon written by a certain Mi, dated 1168. Excavated in Qinyuan, Shanxi. After Cui Yaozhong 崔耀忠 and An Ruijun 安瑞軍, “Shanxi Qinyuanxian Zhengzhongcun Jindai zhuan-shimu bihua moubenkao” 山西沁源縣正中村金代磚室墓壁畫摹本考, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 2020.8, 24, Figure 1.

brickwork, carving, painting, and sometimes writing. These skilled artists, often self-addressed as masters (*boshi* 博士), sometimes left their “trademarks” at the doorways of the tombs, typically consisting of a line including the construction date and a list of their names.<sup>74</sup> Sometimes, a few words of self-promotion were added.<sup>75</sup> In one rare case, the artist even painted his bust portrait on one side of the doorway.<sup>76</sup> These examples suggest a flourishing tomb construction business, with skilled artists, optimistic and self-confident, appearing to enjoy elevated social status. In light of these new developments during the Jin, could any local *shi* be involved in the tomb business?

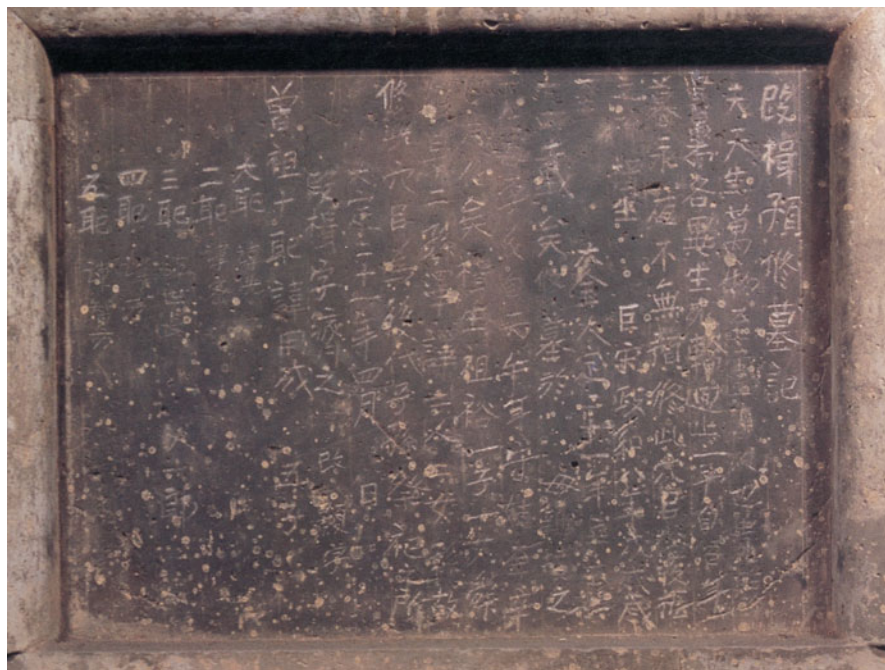
The exceptional tomb of the Yan family in Qinyuan, Shanxi, dated 1168, which has been discussed previously, provides crucial evidence.<sup>77</sup> The mural paintings of tomb portraits, banquets, and domestic working scenes would suggest the tomb owners’ non-literati identity. Panels of four colorful bird and flower paintings, arranged in two sets, decorate the burial chamber’s upper section. One carries a short colophon on the top left corner, making it reminiscent of a piece of portable artwork (Figure 8). The colophon was written by a certain Mi 米 from Taiyuan 太原, who lived in the village when creating this work. Intriguingly, he addressed himself as *moru* 末儒. Unseen in other tombs, this unusual term suggests his self-identification as a Confucian. At the same time, the modifier “*mo*”—generally meaning being late or the last—seems to convey his humbleness, a usage similar to the term *moxue* 末學, the late learner. Whether

<sup>74</sup>For examples of the tombs that bear artisans’ inscriptions self-addressed as *boshi*, see Changzhishi bowuguan, “Shanxi Changzhishi Weicun,” 59–64; Wang Jianhao 王建浩, “Jinan shiqu faxian Jinmu” 濟南市區發現金墓, *Kaogu* 1979.6, 507–9; Xibei daxue wenhua yichan xueyuan 西北大學文化遺產學院, et al., “Shaanxi Ganquan Liuhequwan Jindai bihuamu fajue jianbao” 陝西甘泉柳河渠灣金代壁畫墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 2016.11, 40–50.

<sup>75</sup>Yang Fudou 楊富斗, “Shanxi Houma Jinmu fajue jianbao” 山西侯馬金墓發掘簡報, *Kaogu* 1961.12, 681–83.

<sup>76</sup>Xibei daxue wenhua yichan xueyuan, et al., “Shaanxi Ganquan Liuhequwan,” 40–50.

<sup>77</sup>Cui and An, “Shanxi Qinyuanxian Zhengzhongcun,” 6–27; Hao, “Qinyuan Zhengzhongcun,” 82–97.



**Figure 9.** Burial inscription of Duan Ji, dated 1181. Excavated in Jishan, Shanxi. After *Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Pingyang Jinmu zhuandiao* 平陽金墓磚雕 (Beijing: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1999), 320, pl. 403.

Mi also painted the bird and flower paintings is unclear; nonetheless, this Confucian student was involved in the mural panel adorning the local elite's tomb.

The rare case of Mi suggests that when faced with trying circumstances, some *shi* turned to the tomb business, offering their literary abilities and calligraphic skills. At first glance, the involvement of *shi* in the tomb business may seem far-fetched. However, *shi* had always possessed knowledge of divination and geomancy, partly derived from their study of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Change*), and many practiced such prognostic skills personally.<sup>78</sup> Geomancy and divination were required in the tomb business, knowledge that many *shi* would have possessed. As early as the Northern Song, some Confucian scholars formed personal relationships with geomancers and studied burial treatises.<sup>79</sup> The influential geomantic book during the Jin, the *Dili xinshu*, was compiled by a scholar-official, Wang Zhu 王洙 (997–1057), during the Northern Song under government command. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that the flourishing tomb business would have presented opportunities for some *shi*, which, in turn, contributed to the advanced literary expression seen in Jin tombs.

<sup>78</sup>Hsien-Huei Liao, “Exploring Weal and Woe: The Song Elites’ Mantic Beliefs and Practices,” *T’oung Pao*, second series 91.4/5 (2005), 347–95; Liu Xiangguang 劉祥光, *Songdai richang shenghuo zhongde busuan yu guiguai* 宋代日常生活中的卜算與鬼怪 (Taipei: Zhengda chubanshe, 2013).

<sup>79</sup>Liao Hsien-Huei 廖咸惠, “Bosou to Fūsui: Sōdai ni okeru chirishi no shakaiteki ichi” 墓葬と風水：宋代における地理師の社会的地位, *Toshi bunka kenkyu* 都市文化研究 10 (2008), 96–115.





Figure 10. Mural of females appreciating a painting, dated 1189. Excavated in Ganquan, Shaanxi. After Wang Yonggang 王勇剛, et al., “Shaanxi Ganquan Jindai bihuamu” 陝西甘泉金代壁畫墓, *Wenwu* 2009.7, 39, Figure 36.

### Ambiguous Line between the *Shi* and Other Elites

The preceding discussion has primarily centered on tombs with burial inscriptions and ink writings, where the *shi*, known for their literary abilities, were most likely involved. However, an important question remains: are there traces of the *shi* in the tombs that lack the above-mentioned burial inscriptions or any form of writing? Two groups of tombs shed light on this question.

The first example is perhaps among the most elaborately furnished brick-chambered tombs in North China during the Jin: those of the Duan 段 family in Jishan 稷山, Shanxi.<sup>80</sup> These lavishly adorned tombs shared motifs with those traditionally categorized as belonging to non-literati local elites, including tomb portraits, theatrical scenes, and depictions of filial piety stories in high-relief carvings and three-dimensional sculptures. An epitaph-like burial inscription belonging to Duan Ji 段楫 (b. 1118) discovered in the cemetery informs us that Duan prepared his resting place and inscription in 1181 while still alive (Figure 9). Its less polished content and coarse calligraphy suggest Duan’s status as belonging to the non-literati elite. According to a brick inscription recently published, he may have been a doctor.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, in his study of the Jin dynasty *shi*, Tomoyasu

<sup>80</sup>Yang Fudou 楊富斗, “Shanxi Jishan Jinmu fajue jianbao” 山西稷山金墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1983.1, 45–63; Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo Houma gongzuozhan, “Shanxi Jishan Macun sihao Jinmu” 山西稷山馬村4號金墓, *Wenwu shijie* 1997.4, 41–51, 40. For figures of the sculptures from these tombs, see Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Pingyang Jinmu zhuandiao* 平陽金墓磚雕 (Beijing: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1999).

<sup>81</sup>Tian Jianwen 田建文 and Li Yongmin 李永敏, “Macun zhuandiao mu yu Duanshi kemingzhuanyan” 馬村磚雕墓與段氏刻銘磚, *Wenwu shijie* 2005.1, 12–19. The most remarkable doctor’s tomb has been found in Panle 盤樂, Shaanxi, featuring a tomb portrait and a painted screen with legible writings of poems. For an in-depth discussion of this tomb, see Jeehee Hong and T.J. Hinrichs, “Unwritten Life (and Death) of a ‘Pharmacist’ in Song China: Decoding Hancheng Tomb Murals,” *Cahiers*

Iiyama identified a renowned literati family in Jishan with the same surname, Duan, from steles recorded in local gazetteers.<sup>82</sup> Simultaneously active in the same village, the two Duan families must have been related but engaged in different business. The aboveground steles, erected later by the more illustrious branch and documented in local gazetteers, champion their socio-political status, while the elaborateness of the underground burials exhibits their wealth and local elite status. It is unclear how distinct the demarcation was between these different branches. Could any of the tombs belong to the more literate branch? The answer may be yes, but we will probably never find definitive evidence.

The tomb dated 1189 in Ganquan 甘泉, Shaanxi, presents another fascinating case that blurs the distinction between *shi* and non-*shi* in local society.<sup>83</sup> Although plundering has left nothing behind except for extraordinary murals, these paintings offer valuable insights. They depict cultured women engaging in the four arts of literati cultivation: zither playing, chess, painting viewing, and writing (Figure 10). These extraordinary paintings, depicting women as the protagonists rather than men, are perhaps the earliest surviving paintings of the four-arts motif. Three women are depicted in each activity, with consistent hairstyles and dress throughout, suggesting a recurrent theme or portrayal of the same individuals. The tomb owner may have been included in the scenes, as three of the four activities are depicted on the northern wall, typically reserved for portraits of the deceased. Additionally, two landscape paintings in the Northern Song style adorn the western and southern walls: one showing a traveler on a donkey moving toward a hut, and the other portraying misty mountains with trees on the top. The landscape paintings and depictions of cultured women do not form obvious tableaux serving the deceased; instead, they stand as independent works of art. According to the excavation report, these paintings were rendered on separate brick panels and then inserted into the walls.<sup>84</sup> With motifs rarely seen in other contemporary tombs and of higher quality, they seem to indicate the refined taste of the patron(s). No popular motifs such as tomb portraits, filial piety stories, banquets, and theatrical scenes appear in the burial, further suggesting an alienation from the fashion of non-literati elites. Would this tomb belong to a local *shi* or a non-literati elite with cultural capital?

Judging solely from these mural paintings, one would be inclined to attribute the tomb to a *shi* or a family of the *shi*. However, murals from two nearby tombs, which archaeologists believe came from the same family based on the tomb structure and the painting style of the murals, complicate the attribution. Although similar landscape paintings are depicted in them, popular motifs typically found in non-literati elites' tombs also appear on the walls, including portraits of deceased couples, banquet scenes, and filial piety stories. The hybridity of the Ganquan tombs defies a simple, clear-cut attribution between the *shi* and non-*shi*, perhaps reflecting the extent to which they intermingled in local society and within families during the Jin.

## Conclusion

On an embassy mission to the Jin, Southern Song scholar-official Lou Yao 樓鑰 (1137–1213) was surprised to see a *juren* 舉人—candidate who passed the prefectural

*d'Extrême-Asie* 24.1 (2015), 231–78. However, the Northern Song date provided by the excavation report must be re-examined, see Hsu, “Linglei shijiao de Song-Jin dingge,” 137–39.

<sup>82</sup>Iiyama, *Kin Gen jidai no Kahoku shakai to kakyō seido*, 348–52.

<sup>83</sup>Wang, et al., “Shaanxi Ganquan Jindai bihuamu,” 26–42.

<sup>84</sup>Wang, et al., “Shaanxi Ganquan Jindai bihuamu,” 34, 37.

exam—wearing the same clothes as clerks. This suggests that *juven* were supposed to wear distinct garments from other social groups in the South.<sup>85</sup> This seemingly trivial detail implies that the *shi* of Jin were mixed with other social groups, not just in everyday attire but also in their final resting places, as this study shows. They appear to be woven more tightly into the fabric of local society.

To search for traces of the *shi* in unearthened tombs, this study began with those containing burial inscriptions where the *shi* are most likely to be located, including epitaphs, land deeds, and burial notes. It then expanded the investigation to tombs with literary expressions, mainly those bearing ink writings of popular literature. Although mostly belonging to non-literati local elites, one of these tombs was owned by a local *shi*. Moreover, crucial evidence of the *shi*'s involvement in adorning the tomb with their literary abilities has been identified in an unusual tomb. These discoveries show the *shi* mingling with other elites at the local level, providing services such as composing epitaphs and writing calligraphy for tombs, thus blurring the demarcation between them. Finally, my exploration extended to the gray-zone tombs, where the hybridity of the mural motifs and painting styles makes it difficult to determine whether the tomb belonged to a *shi* or a non-literati elite with cultural capital. This, again, attests to the intermingling between them at the local level.

Four tombs belonging to the *shi* have been identified based on the records in epitaphs and other burial inscriptions. Among them, two held honorary titles and were buried with epitaphs, perhaps as status symbols. Both are praised in the epitaph for their Confucian learning and literary accomplishments. The other two *shi*, without official titles, were buried with simple burial inscriptions: one addressed as *xiucai* on his gravestone and the other as *chushi* on the silk banner covering his coffin. Each of these sporadically distributed tombs has its own characteristics, without sharing common traits or forming a distinct group.

Information about the *shi* can also be discerned in the paratext and calligraphy of epitaphs. The paratext, particularly the front matter that lists the names of the composer and writer, shows the involvement of the failed *jinsshi* candidates in composing and writing epitaphs for both officials and non-officials. Furthermore, the unusual antiquarian calligraphy style on a few epitaphs indicates the writers' *shi* cultivation despite their holding official titles in the military track. Identifying *shi* in Jin tombs is challenging, even when considering the murals and burial goods. Information about them is often scant and ambiguous.

The investigation suggests that the *shi* did not constitute a distinct group in the tombs as they did in transmitted texts or in tombs of the Southern Song. The *shi* of the Jin appeared to be more deeply embedded in local society. If the existence of empire-wide communication networks facilitated the *shi* to form a distinct collective identity in the Southern Song—despite the much-debated “local turn,” then the indistinctiveness of the *shi* in the Jin as revealed in this research would suggest a very different story.<sup>86</sup> Issues regarding the fate of the Chinese literati under Jurchen rule are old. However, expanding source materials to archaeological discoveries allows us to examine

<sup>85</sup>Lou Yao 樓鑰, *Beixing rilu* 北行日錄, Zhibuzu zhai congshu 知不足齋叢書, *Shang*.27a; Iiyama has discussed this case, see Iiyama, “Jindai keju zhidu,” 17.

<sup>86</sup>For the communication networks of the Southern Song, see Hilde De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 325–94.

the *shi*'s social standing against other local elites, enrich our understanding of their role within the broader society, and raise further questions.

**Supplementary Material.** For an appendix with the list of the Jin tombs accompanying this paper, visit DOI <https://doi.org/10.1017/jch.2024.18>.

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