

# Analysis on the Research Methods of Murals in the Tombs of the Han Dynasty

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## ABSTRACT

The tomb murals are artistic treasures left by the ancients. They carry rich information of the times and also contain the mainstream aesthetics and cultural customs of the times. As one of the typical image documents of the Han Dynasty, the tomb murals of the Han Dynasty have a complete set of representation system. Like the text documents of the Han Dynasty, they have important documentary value. Therefore, the study of tomb murals in Han Dynasty should not only focus on the image itself, but also review the tomb murals from a three-dimensional and multi-dimensional perspective in conjunction with relevant historical records, and examine the retained Han people's artistic thinking, cultural concepts, and aesthetic tastes. On the basis of sorting out the previous research results, this paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of the methods involved in the study of tomb murals in Han Dynasty, in order to explore a more practical and effective research path, better interpret the tomb murals, and further explore the cultural connotation.

**Keywords:** Han tomb murals, Iconography, Philology, Fine arts, Methodology.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tomb murals in Han Dynasty are an important part of tomb art. Broadly speaking, they can be included in the category of Han portraits [1]. The research method is basically the same as the traditional research method of Han portrait brick and stone. By sorting out the research results of the Han tomb murals in the past century, it can be found that the predecessors comprehensively sorted out the chronology, stage, form, and themes of the Han tomb murals from the historical and archeological research perspectives, or made system analysis of the origin, background, artistic style, layout and color of the murals from the perspectives of art and archaeology. Yang Hong's "Mural Tombs in the Han Dynasty" [2], Xing Yitian's "Development of Murals in the Han Dynasty and Mural Tombs" [3] and other articles, He Xilin's "Ancient Tomb Paintings — Discovery and Research of Murals in Han Tombs" [4], Huang Peixian's "Study on Mural Paintings in Tombs of the Han Dynasty" [5] and other works have certain representative significance. In addition, some scholars have combined the research methods of art, cultural history, and sociology to conduct

comprehensive research on the murals of Han tombs from the two aspects of material and spirit.

On the whole, relevant research has achieved more remarkable results. However, in specific practice, pure image analysis or image-text mutual verification is still the mainstay. The relevant researches are often scattered and flat, not fully considering Han tomb murals in the field of time and space. The research on the combination of "image-text" still needs to be in depth.

What needs to be pointed out is that image and text have always been complementary to each other, and the combination of the two for mutual reference and comparison is an important method of ancient scholars. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, Wang Chong's "Lun Heng · Bie Tong" has stated that "when people look at the picture, what on the paintings are the ancient people... Ancient sage articles are recorded clearly in bamboo silk. How the portrait on the wall can be comparable?" [6] Lu Ji of the Western Jin Dynasty also put forward the view that "an object is better than words, and the form is better than a picture", which shows that images and words have the same important status. Zhang Yanyuan in the Tang Dynasty wrote in "the

famous paintings in the past dynasties" that "the biography can record its matter, cannot carry its capacity, describe its beauty, cannot perform its image. However, the paintings can show all the aspects. Therefore, the advantage of images being better than text can be shown. Zheng Qiao in Song Dynasty wrote in "Tongzhi · Graph" that "drawing is on the left; text is on the right; people can seek the figure and the text." [7] The specific method of "image-text" is revealed. Since then, the use of figure and text has become the conventional thinking of traditional scholarship.

In modern times, since Chen Yinke advocated the use of "new materials" and Wang Guowei proposed the "double evidence methods", a large number of unearthed documents and empirical materials have become important supporting evidence for the research of handed-down documents. As an important pictorial document of the Han Dynasty, the Han tomb murals have also been highly concerned by scholars of the previous generations. With the development of The Times, new materials emerge one after another, bringing more abundant literature resources for research. The rapid development of photography, computer graphics and Internet technology also accelerates the arrival of the era of image. Interdisciplinary comprehensive research with empirical literature and images as important references has become the general trend.

However, compared with the research methods of ancient people, the current research on mutual interpretation and mutual verification of Han tomb murals as image documents assisted by text documents is often just a simple comparison. Especially in actual practice, it often refers to the specific images in the Han tomb murals according to the picture in the text documents, or use some content of the Han tomb murals as a reference when researching handed-down documents. This kind of scattered research pays more attention to the common problems of "image-text", but it is easy to ignore the differences. Therefore, it is necessary to face up to the value and role of images, examine the Han tomb murals from a cross-domain perspective, break the "barriers" of disciplines, and obtain the "breakthrough" effect of at the cross perspective, so as to re-obtain the opportunity to reflect and examine the problems that are difficult to solve or easy to misunderstand only relying on handed-down literature. [8] Based on the previous research methods and experience of Han tomb murals, combined with personal practice, this paper tries to sum up three basic research methods.

## 2. IMAGE RESTORATION METHOD

Close reading of images is the first and most critical step in image research. The correctness of the interpretation results directly determines the objectivity, credibility and accuracy of the views obtained on this basis. However, due to the long history of Han tomb murals, they are often unclear, incomplete or even damaged. Therefore, how to restore the mural content is a difficult problem. Secondly, each tomb mural is not a simple, flat or two-dimensional image. As an important part of the tomb, it is also an important part of the whole tomb space narrative. Therefore, when restoring the image, it is required to consider it at the multi-dimensional and three-dimensional levels. In addition, the tomb mural is different from the temple mural. It does not take the responsibility of enlightenment and helping human relations. Its audience is not human being, but the deceased tomb owner and other invisible forces. From this point of view, Han tomb murals are not only used to record the life of the tomb owner, reflect his aesthetic interest, but also have the use of etiquette, bearing the important content of funeral culture. Therefore, in the interpretation of images, it is not segregated from the original situation, otherwise it is inevitable to produce different degrees of subjective conjecture.

For example, there is a group of characters on the upper part of the north wall of the foreroom of the mural tomb M1 of the Eastern Han Dynasty in barisong Guaobao, Ordos, Inner Mongolia (Figure 1 and Figure 2). There are ten characters in the picture, including two men, five women and three children from left to right (a child is next to the fourth woman). The two groups of photos take the same mural. However, the middle mural of the first group has been missing, and the picture is divided into two sections, with the remaining seven characters. Archaeologists believe that Figure 1 describes a historical story. The two short men on the left show the fact that "Confucius sees Laozi", and the two children on the right "bend their arms and open their mouths, as if singing praises". However, there is no explanation for the missing picture between the three women and the two children [9]. The picture in Figure 2 is complete. It can be seen that the missing part in Figure 1 includes two women and a child, and the content expressed seems to be seeing them off [10]. This picture is located at the junction of the front chamber and the back chamber of the tomb. The lower door leads to the back chamber. The figures

stand on the imitation wood grain door frame outlined by ochre. In the tombs of the Han Dynasty, the back room is usually the place where the tomb owner puts his coffin. Once in this place, the tomb owner will say goodbye to the living and live forever in the underground world prepared for him by his family. Combined with the image of the woman hiding her face, the woman kneeling on her knees and the boy opening his mouth, it is a scene of family seeing off the tomb owner.

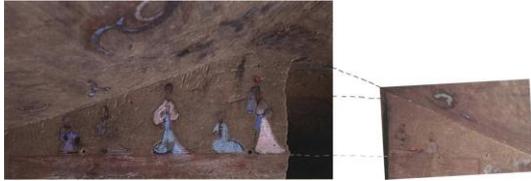


Figure 1 The archaeological clean-up bulletin published in 2019 (the two pictures are put together by the author).



Figure 2 The unearthed mural catalogue published in 2011.

The tomb was found during the cultural relics survey in 1987. In the early years, only a small amount of artifacts were left. A rescue excavation was carried out in the Ordos Museum at the end of 2000. In 2015, the local Institute of Archaeology and the Cultural Relics Management Institute jointly cleaned up the tomb. Combined with the publication time of the photos, it is speculated that the mural damage was caused by unknown reasons between several operations. Due to this limitation, it is difficult for the author to interpret the theme of the picture, which also directly affects the judgment of the readers. Ancient tomb paintings are painted in a closed and complete space, which is prepared for the tomb owner to enter another world. It reflects the living people's imagination of different space, and sometimes even a representation of the real world after optimization, with multiple attributes. At present, most of the Han tomb mural materials people can see are scattered and unsystematic, and the pictures on the book or

network have been intercepted and processed. Because of the damage caused by natural or human factors such as long time, improper protection, the image itself has lost part of its original information. Therefore, in addition to the interpretation from the perspective of image or literature, it should also be combined with field investigation, put it back into the original environment of the tomb, and then take the class, shape, ceremony, region and other factors as an important basis to restore the image.

Wu Hong thinks that a single narrative picture in tomb art has two levels of meaning, namely, literary meaning and ceremonial or symbolic meaning. He points out that it needs to be interpreted from two levels: internal analysis (style, iconography analysis) and external research (social, political and religious background of painting). Therefore, in addition to the description and analysis of the content of the picture and the critical interpretation of the original knowledge, it is necessary to restore it to the whole picture and the whole tomb to analyze the ritual and symbolic connotation conveyed by the pattern here. In his article "reflection on the art of East Asian tombs", he proposed a specific method to study the art of tombs by restoring images from three perspectives of space, material and time [11]. Besides the factors of time and space, it is also required to pay attention to the objective material content of the tomb, such as the architectural specifications, the shape of burial utensils, the decorative materials, sizes, colors and so on. These theories can be used for reference to restore the original style of Han tomb murals.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD OF "IMAGE — TEXT"

Image and text comparison and image and image comparison are two basic methods in iconology. Compared with the comparison between images, there are some difficulties in the comparison between images and texts. However, as mentioned above, mutual reference between images and texts is the tradition of ancient scholars. For example, Zheng Qiao thinks that the "essence" of academic research is to read pictures and books at the same time, and advocates that image data should be included in the framework of historical research. This shows that the cross study of "image and text" is not only of great significance, but also has a practical basis. On this basis, Jao Tsung-yi, a modern man, pointed out that "in ancient records, words and pictures can coexist at the same time.

Although the figures and texts are two groups, the meanings may can be used for each other." [12] However, it is not as simple as human beings think to implement it. The effective use of this method is based on the full collection and excavation of text and image data.

The relationship between images and texts in Han tomb murals can be roughly divided into three types. One is the mural with a list title, such as the mural tomb in Horing, Inner Mongolia [13], No. 1 mural tomb in Wangdu, Hebei [14], mural tomb of Eastern Han Dynasty in Baizi village, Xunyi County, Shaanxi Province [15]. There are inscriptions beside scenes and characters, and the reading of pictures can be directly combined with the text. Although there is no text on the second type of map, the arrangement and combination of images has been relatively stylized and standardized, and there are relatively complete records and descriptions in the literature, such as the historical themes of Confucius learning from Laozi and Ertao killing three scholars, and the legendary themes of Fu Hsi, Nügua, sun and moon, four gods, Queen Mother of the West, etc. The third refers to the fact that the unearthed samples are limited, and it is difficult to find the records completely corresponding to the image content in the handed-down literature. Therefore, people can only search for the expressions similar to the individual images in the scene depicted from the text between the lines, and then put together the found literature to gradually establish the connection. Because most of the images in the Han tomb murals are archaeological materials with missing documents, many of the contents need to be re-researched. This kind of situation requires researchers to have a higher ability of reading and interpreting pictures. They need to have a solid foundation of philology, patiently sort out relevant materials, boldly ask questions and carefully verify.

No. 61 mural tomb of the Western Han Dynasty, Shaogou, Luoyang, Henan, excavated in the 1950s, caused great repercussions at that time. Scholars have studied the contents of the mural images in combination with literature. One of them is located in the middle of the forehead gable on the tomb door in front of the main chamber (Figure 3, Figure 4). In the upper part of the picture, there is an embossed sheep's head. On the left, there is a tree with sparse branches and leaves. Under the tree, there is a woman with purple skin and bare breast. Her hair is wrapped around the tree. Beside the woman, there is a tiger with wings on her shoulders. Her right forepaw is pressed on her head and her

mouth is open for food. Guo Moruo thinks that "tyranny is fiercer than tiger" [16], while Sun Zuoyun thinks that "tiger eats legendary demon" [17]. There was such a huge deviation in the interpretation of the same picture because of the limited conditions and the lack of other reference image materials at that time. And then, human beings can only search for its source in the text literature. However, there is no direct record of this scene in the literature, which makes it difficult to interpret the image.

Looking at this picture, the two horned sheep's head protruding above the image symbolizes auspiciousness. Combined with the ancient people's view that "tiger is a male object and the strength of a hundred animals, and can attack prey, and it usually eats the demon... Painting tiger in the door is to prevent from the ghosts" (History of the later Han Dynasty · etiquette annals). And "if people paint tiger in the door, ghosts dare not enter" (General Customs · sacrificial ceremony). It can be inferred that the tiger in the image should eat the evil. According to the book of miracles quoted from Volume 18 of "Mao Shi Zheng Yi", "there are people in the South who are two or three feet tall, naked. But the eyes are on the top and he walks like the wind. It is called a legendary evil. Human beings can see that there is a great drought in the country [18]. It is pointed out that "魅" (legendary evil) who is a naked woman, which will bring drought to the places through. There are many different versions of the description of "魅" (legendary evil), but its image is basically a woman, so most scholars agree with sun Zuoyun's view that the God tiger eat "魅" (legendary evil).

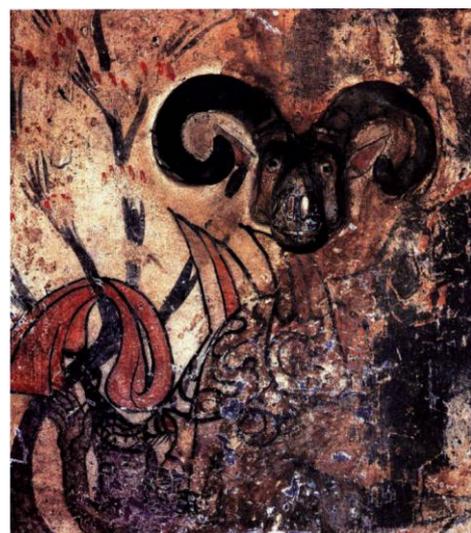


Figure 3 Tiger eats legendary demon.

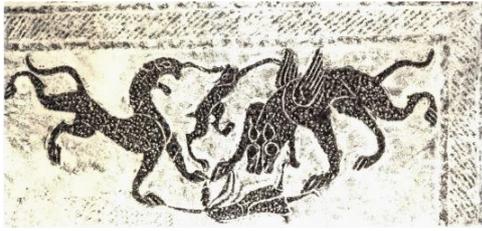


Figure 4 Tiger eats legendary demon.



Figure 5 Portrayal of Tiger eating a legendary female evil in Eastern Han stone tomb unearthed from Tanghe Knitting Factory in Nanyang, Henan Province.

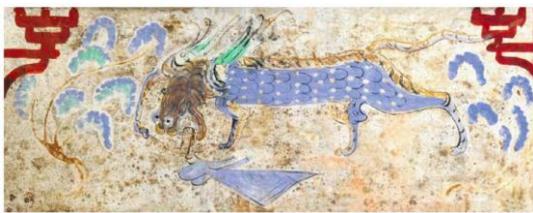


Figure 6 Portrayal of Tiger eating a legendary female evil on the back of the fourth floor of the pottery storehouse unearthed from the Han Dynasty Tomb M121 in Baizhuang, Jiaozuo, Henan Province.

It is worth noting that the composition of the theme of the tiger eating legendary evil is generally similar. Through the comparison of Figure 3, Figure 5 and Figure 6, it is not difficult to find that there are many conventional parts. For example, the women are all bare chested, with their head left and foot right at the bottom of the picture. The tiger shoulders are winged, their eyes are round, and their forepaws are pressed on the women, with a mouth opening to gnaw. However, the way to get rid of drought in ancient books and records is to throw it into the water. For example, Zhang Heng wrote in "Nandu Fu": "when imprisoning father in Qingling, it is necessary to throw "魅" (legendary

evil) in Shenhuang."There is also saying in "Shenyijing" that "if people meet "魅" (legendary evil) and get it, it should throw it in the rain, and the drought will disappear" [20]. There is no record of tigers eating "魅" (legendary evil) to eliminate drought. After careful analysis of Figure 5, people can find that there are two tigers in the picture, except for the tiger which eats the wings of "魅" (legendary evil), there is another tiger. The intention of drawing the two tigers is not clear, which inevitably leads to doubts. Looking at the ancient books, the winged tiger should be regarded as Qiongqi<sup>1</sup>. In the "history of the later han dynasty · book of rites", it is recorded that the Nuo of the Han Dynasty chased the epidemic. Fang Xiangsh has "golden four eyes, bear skin" and twelve beasts, and "chased the evil spirits in the prohibition" [19]. And the saying of "Qiongqi eating a legendary venomous insect" shows the fact that Qiongqi has the ability to expel ghosts and pestilence. Therefore, the winged tiger shown in Figure 5 should be Qiongqi, and the bear is "Fang Xiangshi". Therefore, the tiger is actually Qiongqi. This image should be a combination of cultural symbols. The female "魅" (legendary evil) refers to the ghost of drought, which symbolizes drought and bad luck. Qiongqi eating "魅" (legendary evil) means driving away evil spirits and diseases to overcome drought. During the Han Dynasty, people lived by farming, and drought had a great impact on it. Therefore, driving away the ghost of drought was people's strong desire for good weather. According to the inscription on the building of the Dragon King Temple by later generations, "the rain goes with the wind, there will never be drought, people are well-off and rich in natural resources, and they often enjoy the year of greatness", it can be proved. People directly connect the fact of eliminating drought and praying for people's wealth, so Qiongqi eating "魅" (legendary evil) undoubtedly expresses the cultural connotation of expelling drought ghosts for rain. From this point of view, the combination of the images of the sheep head and Qiongqi in the Han Tombs symbolizes good luck.

Han Dynasty is the period of Chinese cultural reconstruction, and literature and art works often present the characteristics of the times of cultural integration and combination. This requires that when human beings read pictures, it must start from the source of culture, find the original cultural

1. "The Classic of Mountains and Rivers • Haineibeijing". "Qiong Qi looks like a tiger, with wings. And it eats people from the head." Guo Pu. "Tuzan", "Qiong Qi is very ugly, expelling the evils.

meaning of the elements in the image, and then explore the connotation of the story to be expressed after its combination. Only on the basis of understanding the content can people find its artistic beauty. However, it should be noted that in this process, human beings should also have a good sense of propriety. It should not "overemphasize the role of literature and historical materials", otherwise "it is easy to ignore the organic connection between portraits, leading to far fetched interpretation of image content" [21]. Similarly, some scholars put forward the confusion and trap of "image proving history", First of all, art historians must have the ability to "decipher" the image style and form code. Otherwise, they can only "look at the image to create meaning", misinterpret it at will, and fall into many misunderstandings of image proving history.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. SCHEMA ANALYSIS

Image forms include modeling style, image program, layout, material technology, color decoration, etc., carrying the main idea of image content. Therefore, image content and form should be closely combined, and the two are inseparable. Specifically in the Han tomb murals, the murals are all inclusive, covering almost all aspects of nature, secular life, gods and ghosts. Different themes often have their own appropriate forms of presentation. In the concrete presentation, the painter transforms abstract theme into image programs. Combined them with different forms, a complete content can be formed, which is not only a part of form, but also an element of the subject content. The interpretation of this form is also an important way for human beings to understand the "beauty" of Han tomb mural images.

As the British aesthetician Clive Bell said, "beauty" is "meaningful form". This is an aesthetic concept that emphasizes the pure "form" of visual art. The location, arrangement and function of murals in Han tombs are "meaningful forms", as are the arrangement of different color blocks and the combination of long and short lines. "Meaning" is expressed through the symbolic meaning of form, which can reflect the ideas and aesthetic ideals of people in Han Dynasty to a certain extent.

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2. The confusion and trap of the so-called "image evidence history" refers to the fact that "the visibility of images makes it more direct, vivid, and more true to reflect the original appearance of history than language. Cao Yiqiang. The falsification ability of images is far better than that of words", "Visibility and Invisibility-On the Validity and Misunderstanding of History of Image Verification", "New Art", 2004.

Therefore, in the specific analysis, the image should be deconstructed from the form angle, and each single element contained in it should be analyzed. Then, the connotation of the image can be explored by combining the whole composition form.

For example, the theme of "Confucius seeing Laozi" is a classic theme of tomb murals in Han Dynasty, and there are many such contents in paintings of Han Dynasty. At present, the murals found in the Han tombs include the the mural of No. 61 mural tomb of the Western Han Dynasty in Shaogou, Luoyang, Henan Province (Figure 8), the mural of Xinmang tomb at Qushuhao, Yangqiaopan, Jingbian County, Shaanxi Province (Figure 9), the mural of the Eastern Han Dynasty in Yangqiaopan, Jingbian, Shaanxi Province (Figure 10), the mural of M42 mural tomb of Laofenliang, Yangqiaopan, Jingbian County, Shaanxi Province (Figure 11), and the mural of the Eastern Han Dynasty in Horinger, Inner Mongolia (Figure 12). The Han portraits are mainly concentrated in Shandong, and the most famous portrait stone is the mural of "Confucius seeing Laozi" (Figure 7), with the title of "Laozi" and "Confucius" unearthed in Qishan.

Through the comparison, human beings can see that the images of "Confucius seeing Laozi" are similar in form, which are mostly composed of two adults (Laozi, Confucius) and one child (Xiang Tuo). In these schemata, the number of followers and the order of disciples of Lao Zi and Confucius changed greatly, but as the core of the schemata, the image configuration of Confucius bowing to the left, Xiang Tuo holding the toy car, Lao Zi holding the stick and standing calmly is basically fixed. The two ends of the three characters are high, and the middle is low, forming an inverted mountain shape with both symmetry and subtle changes. However, there is no record of this scene in the handed down literature. According to the above analysis, it should be a schema evolved from multiple story combinations. In the performance of this composite theme, painters in the Han Dynasty all chose to arrange Laozi, Xiang Tuo and Confucius from left to right, and the layout was in line with the traditional Chinese culture of respecting the left, showing the ideological connotation of respecting teachers and esteem truth. This coincided with the records of "Xiang Tuo and Confucius all learning from Laozi" (Biography of Gaoshi by Ji Kang), "Confucius learning from Laozi and Xiang Tuo"<sup>3</sup>.

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3. The records of Laozi can be found in "Zhuangzi•Tianyun", "Book of Rites • Zeng Ziwen", "Mister Lv's Spring and Autumn Annals•Dangran", "Historical



Figure 7 The stone portraits of "Confucius seeing Laozi" unearthed in Qishan.



Figure 8 No. 61 mural tomb of the Western Han Dynasty in Shaogou, Luoyang, Henan Province (the upper left section of the partition beam of the front hall).

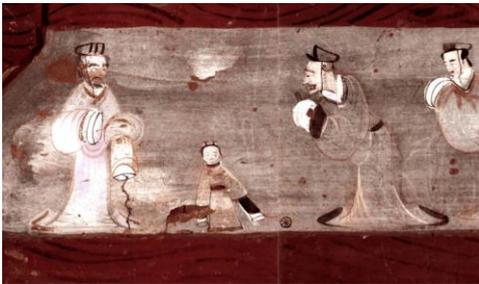


Figure 9 Xinmang tomb at Qushuhao, Yangqiaopan, Jingbian County, Shaanxi Province (west upper segment of chamber).



Figure 10 Mural tomb of the Eastern Han Dynasty in Yangqiaopan, Jingbian, Shaanxi Province (middle section of the mural on the east wall of the former chamber).



Figure 11 M42 mural tomb of Laofenliang, Yangqiaopan, Jingbian County, Shaanxi Province (Middle part of east wall of the former chamber).



Figure 12 (Copy) Mural tomb of Eastern Han Dynasty in Horing, Inner Mongolia (north upper part of the west wall of the middle chamber).

From the perspective of these murals and portraits in Han Dynasty, human beings can see that the creation period spanned the Han Dynasty, covering Henan, Shaanxi, Inner Mongolia, Shandong, Jiangsu, Sichuan and other provinces, indicating that this theme was widely spread at that time. To be sure, at least in the middle and late Western Han Dynasty, there was a powder version with a certain schema and it was widely spread, which made the cultural concept that Confucianism and Taoism were equally valued, and even the concept that Taoism respected Confucianism was handed down from generation to generation with the schema of Confucius learning from Laozi.

In the picture, the techniques of portraying the characters are basically the same, all of which are

Records•Laozi and Han Fei Biography", "Historical Records • Confucius Family", "Historical Records • Biography of Confucius' Disciples", "Baihutong • Piyong", etc.; the records of Xiang Tuo can be found in "Strategies of the Warring States • Qin Strategies", "Historical Records • Ganmao Biography", "Huainanzi • Xiuwuxun", "Huainanzi • Shuolinxun", "Lun Heng • Zhi Shi", etc.

achieved by line drawing and a large area of flat painting and dyeing, superimposed multi-color layers. The pleats and some facial gullies are dyed in a small area, and then the ink line or ochre red line is used for re-drawing. The lines are elegant and powerful. They can adjust the length, thickness, curvature, density and lightness of the lines according to the texture of different objects. The colors are simple and harmonious without losing details. According to the image characters of the two old people and children, the appropriate color matching is selected, and the large and small color blocks connect naturally, showing vivid shape, simple background and prominent theme. In different versions of murals, there are some differences in the expressions, movements, facial orientations, colors and styles of costumes, and the gathering and scattering relationship between the characters. These differences are the appropriate adjustments or partial changes made by the painters according to the mural painting environment, painting conditions, and even the local folk customs. Of course, they also include the painter's own personality, painting style, aesthetic and painting skills, and so on, reflecting their unique ingenuity.

According to Panofsky's point of view, the purpose of iconography research is to reveal its traditional meaning by studying the artistic expression of visual images and combining with references. The purpose of iconological interpretation is to explore the symbolic meaning of specific themes, images and stories. However, many people who study images often ignore that images are "pictures". They convert images into content and content into text narration. They often talk by looking at images and regard image data as auxiliary explanatory data of text data. Therefore, it is far from enough to interpret images as words. Human beings should study images from the perspective of culture and ideology. It is necessary to pay special attention to what the images show that the words do not have, such as color, composition, layout and position, deformation, etc. At the same time, people should also pay attention to the general and universal concepts behind the mediocre and repetitive images. Finally, human beings should pay attention to the actual conversion between text and image in history. [22]

## 5. CONCLUSION

In short, the Han tomb murals are visual works. In order to understand the deep connotation of the transmission, it needs to first solve the problem of

interpretation of images. From the perspective of iconography and iconology, the subject matter and significance of a picture can be divided into three levels, corresponding to the corresponding research methods: "pre-iconography description" (Interpretation is based on practical experience, interpretation and revision is based on style history), "iconography analysis" (interpretation is based on classical knowledge, revision and interpretation is based on type history), "iconological interpretation" (interpretation is based on comprehensive intuition and the general sense of cultural symbols or "symbolic" history) [23]. As a tool, research methods should be selected and used flexibly. While a single method provides researchers with a special angle of exploration, it often becomes a constraint. Therefore, in the specific research process, human beings should sort out combining with the actual situation, select the matching mural samples in different research stages, and select the composite method for research.

In addition, interdisciplinary has become a trend of development. On the basis of the combination of art archaeology, philology, iconography and iconology, image narratology, fine arts and other interdisciplinary research, behavioral sciences such as anthropology, religion, psychology and sociology are introduced, and the comprehensive analysis of big data is used to actively learn from the relevant research results and research methods of other disciplines. At the same time, it is required to pay attention to multi-perspective research and case analysis, and study some typical images. On the basis of a large number of research materials, quantitative description should be carried out as scientifically as possible to avoid the misunderstanding of mutual evidence between pictures and history and the over interpretation caused by excessive force. With the use of comprehensive intuition, it is required to grasp the ideological characteristics and aesthetic taste of Han people of different classes, different regions and different beliefs. In the similar background of the times, different expressions of the same theme, as well as the differences in style and composition methods bring about the deviation of connotation communication. It is necessary to select representative samples, carefully distinguish the critical point between staying in the same old groove and bringing forth the new, in order to avoid misunderstanding caused by improper reading from the standpoint of contemporary people. It should be noted that the murals of Han tombs are not only image documents as archaeological materials, but

also have high artistic and cultural value. And no matter how hard people try to trace the source, it is inevitable to study from their own thinking habits and behavioral preferences, and never be able to achieve 100% reduction of understanding. Therefore, human beings should try the best to study the ancient people's thoughts and should also stand at the present. Through the analysis of "beauty form", it is required to capture the inspiration of different thoughts and inspiration from each cross-temporal collision.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

This paper is independently completed by Bingyu Wu.

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