

Analysis of "Dance Patterns" on Painted Pottery of Majiayao Culture

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Abstract—The dance pattern pot of Majiayao culture should be used for witchcraft activities. The dance patterns on the pot are the true reflection of prehistoric witchcraft dance. A series of painted pottery unearthed in the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River with figurative dancing figure pattern proves that the prehistoric human witchcraft dance in Majiayao period has been quite developed. Through physical research, we can know that there were "god-man grain seed dances" for a good harvest and "reproductive dances" for praying for the prosperity of tribal people and "disease-removing dances" for eliminating diseases and disasters.

Keywords—symbol; Banshan; evocation by dancing; reproductive worship; eliminating disease and disaster

I. INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 1973, a graveyard of Majiayao type was excavated at Shangsunjiazhai cemetery in Datong County, Qinghai Province. A pot with dance pattern, an art treasure depicting prehistoric music and dance life, was unearthed ("Fig. 1"). After a preliminary study, the archaeological team of Qinghai Cultural Relics Administration, the excavation unit, gave a detailed introduction with the title of "Painted Pottery Pot with Dance Pattern unearthed from Shangsunjiazhai, Datong County, Qinghai Province" in the third issue of Cultural Relics in 1978. The article described that "the theme pattern is dance pattern. Five people in a group, hand in hand, facing same direction, with a short line on one side of their heads. In each group, the outside arms of the two people on both sides were drawn by two lines. It seems to reflect large and frequent movement of two arms. The lower body of them was drawn by three lines. The two lines approaching the ground are legs. The line under belly seems to be decoration" [1]⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹. It is further reflected that "our ancestors were dancing and singing happily hand in hand under big trees, by small lakes or on grasslands during their spare time of work" [1]⁴⁹. It leaves us a deep impression.

The publication of materials has aroused tremendous repercussions. On the basis of the first interpretation by the archaeological team of Qinghai Cultural Relics Administration Department, many research articles have been published to restore the dance culture of Majiayao period. At present, the popular explanations are summarized as follows: first, it is the theory of harmonious music and dance. Taking Zhang Pengchuan as the representative, they think that "the figure

pattern of Majiayao type on painted pottery pays attention to the expression of real life. The most impressive point is the figure dance pattern, which makes people feel the wonderful mood of clan people dancing by the water spring" [2]¹¹⁵. Second, it is the theory of collective harvest celebration. Taking Wang Kelin and Wang Zhen as representatives, they hold that "there are five to eight arc lines among the three groups of dancing people. Between the opposite two groups of arc lines, there is a broad-band oblique willow-leaf pattern, which symbolizes the stems and leaves of plants... It reflects the dances of women in Majiayao period who celebrated or hoped for a bumper harvest in agriculture collectively" [3]¹³⁻¹⁶. Third, it is the theory of witchcraft and entertaining gods. Represented by Li Zehou and Dai Chunyang, it is believed that the religious sacrificial activities of prehistoric human beings could not be separated from dancing. "The dance pattern pot shows the witchcraft scene of prehistoric ancestors when they entertained the gods" [4]. Fourth, it is the theory of hunting dance. Taking Jin Weinuo and Tang Chi as representatives, it is believed that the dance pattern pot represents the prehistoric ancestors who decorated themselves with prey's fur after harvest and performed the hunting dance of "hitting and rolling stones, dancing with animals at a rate" [6]⁴⁹⁻⁵¹. Fifth, it is the theory of reproductive worship. Taking Li Jinshan as the representative, they hold that "the dancers on the pot were naked men, and the protruding thing between the crotches should be the erection of the penis. The dance content seems to be related to the prayer and reproduction ceremony. [6]³¹⁻³⁹. Sixth, it is the theory of collecting utensils. Others believe that the value of the dance pattern pot lies in the appreciation, which should be similar to the collection of beautiful utensils today. It is the collection of utensils by tribal leaders or witches. All the above theories are based on one another. This paper intended to interpret and define them in more detail by investigating new materials.



Fig. 1. Majiayao-type dance pattern pot unearthed from Shangsunjiashai, Datong.



Fig. 2. Majiayao-type dance pattern pot unearthed from Mozuizi, Wuwei.

II. SEVERAL NEWLY DISCOVERED DANCE PATTERN POTS

Over the years, the study of dance pattern pots is mostly based on the excavation of Shangsunjiashai in Datong County. Along with the new archaeological excavation, several other pottery pots of Majiayao culture with dance patterns have been unearthed, which are described below.

A. Wuwei Mozuizi Dance Pattern Pot

In 1991, archaeologists collected dance pattern pot remnants very similar to those of Datong Shangsunjiashai at Mozuizi Site, Xinhua Township, Wuwei City, Gansu Province. After recovery, the pot was 14 cm high, 29.5 cm in diameter of opening, with a convergent mouth, a drum belly, an adduction of the lower abdomen and a flat bottom. Although the diameter of opening is slightly larger than that of the dance pattern pot unearthed in Shangsunjiashai, the range of lower abdominal adduction is also larger than that of the former, so the two volumes are similar. Its inner wall is painted with two groups of nine hand-in-hand collective dance decorations. The dancers' head and abdomen are represented by dots, and the lower limbs are painted with three vertical lines. (As shown in "Fig. 2" [7])

B. The Dance Pattern Pots from Niumen Cave in Huining and Collected in Japan

In May 1994, another dance pattern pot was unearthed at the Majiayao Culture Site of Niumen Cave in Touzhai

Township, Huining County, Gansu Province. The pot is 13 centimeters high and 33 centimeters in diameter of opening. There are three groups of dancing figures, five in a group, hand in hand, on the inner wall. The head is represented by dot, and the upper body of the figures is in an inverted trapezoidal shape. The three groups of characters are separated by arc lines and willow-leaf broadband patterns. The center of the pot bottom was painted with dots about 4cm in diameter and the outer wall was painted with wavy lines. In addition, Li Shuicheng introduced a dance pattern pot of Majiayao culture [9]¹⁰⁻¹⁵ collected in Japan in his article "Figure Dance Pattern Pot · Guozhuang Dance and Others". The paintings on the pot are basically the same as those unearthed from Niumen Cave in Huining. But the size is slightly different, so they can be combined into a group. (As shown in "Fig. 3" and "Fig. 4" [8]³³⁻³⁴)

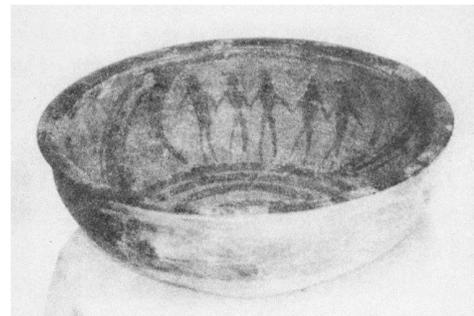


Fig. 3. Majiayao-type dance pattern pot unearthed from Niumen Cave in Huining.

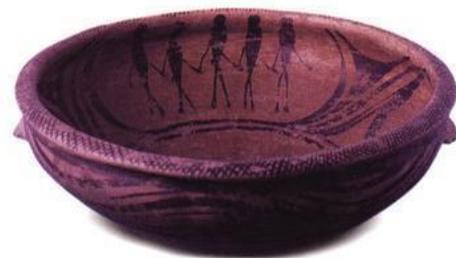


Fig. 4. Majiayao-type dance pattern pot collected in Japan.

C. Tongde Zongri Dance Pattern Pot

In 1996, a beautiful dance pattern pot was found at Tomb 157 of Zongri Site, Tuanjie Village, Bagou Township, Tongde County, Qinghai Province. The pot has a large mouth and curly lip and a small flat bottom. It is eleven centimeters high and 24.5 centimeters in diameter of opening. The inner wall of the pot is composed of eleven and thirteen dancers, hand in hand, dancing collectively. The head, waist and buttocks are all represented by dots. The lower limbs of four limbs are represented by two vertical lines, and those of the rest are represented by one vertical line. There are no tail decoration and headdresses. The dancers in the two groups were separated by arc lines, willow-shaped broadband patterns and dots. (As shown in "Fig. 5" [10])

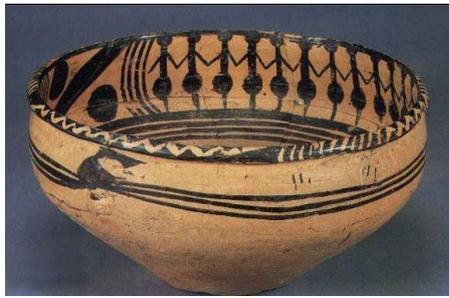


Fig. 5. Majiayao-type dance pattern pot unearthed from Tongde Zongri.

III. THE THEME EXPLANATION OF DANCE PATTERN POTS IN A BROAD SENSE

Although the shape and decoration of the above pottery pots are highly similar, careful analysis will reveal that the information they reflect is still different. A comprehensive discussion of four groups and five pieces of dance pattern pots can obviously provide more abundant information, mainly in the following aspects.

A. Inexistence of Men and Women Dance Together

Li Jinshan regards the prominence under waist of dancers on pot from Shangsunjiazhai as the feature of man, so the dancers were male. Some scholars also believe that the prominence of the dancer's head in Shangsunjiazhai dance pattern pot is braid and the prominence under the hip is not penis but tail decoration, so the dancers were female. Judging from the dancer's gender only by the character image, the most distinctive is the one unearthed from Niumen Cave in Huining. Among the three groups of fifteen figures, the head is represented by dots, without braids, and the upper body is shown as an inverted trapezoid. The buttocks are narrow, the legs and body are strong. The overall image is male. From the pattern on the pot collected in Japan, we can clearly observe that five of the hand-in-hand figures in one group have different degrees of cross-legs, indicating that the dancer's body-leaning degree is different. The middle dancer in this group has the highest cross-legs, the largest distance between feet, and three-quarters of the body-leaning degree. The prominence of the upper part of the cross-legs should be penis, which is more evident that all dancers are male. There are 18 dancers in the two groups of patterns on Wuwei Mozuizi dance pattern pot. Their head and buttocks are expressed by dots and buttock dots are significantly larger than the head dots. Under the buttocks are three vertical lines, like a long skirt. Although there is no braid behind the head, the dancers are graceful and lightweight. They are the images of woman with a slender waist and abundant buttocks. The two groups of figures on the Tongde Zongri dance pattern pot do not have tail ornaments or headdresses. The buttocks are also represented by large dots. They are all female figures with slender waist and abundant buttocks.

Among the five dance pattern pots, the figures on the two pots from Niumen Cave in Huining and collected in Japan are all male; the figures on the two pots from Mozuizi, Wuwei and Tongde Zongri are all female. The gender features of figures on the pot excavated at Shangsunjiazhai cemetery in Datong

County, Qinghai Province are vague, but the three groups of figures have almost identical physical characteristics, which should be regarded as uniform gender, or all male or all female. That is to say, the gender of the figures in the five dance pattern pots is unified, and there is no phenomenon of coexistence between men and women.

B. Singular Character Grouping

There are four groups and five pottery pots totally. The figures on the pot from Shangsunjiazhai was divided into three groups and five dancers in a groups; the figures on the pot from Mozuizi into two groups and nine in a group; the figures on the pots from Niumen Cave in Huining and collected in Japan into three groups and five dancers in a group; the figures on the pot from Zongri into two groups, respectively 11 and 13 dancers in each group. That is to say, there are thirteen groups of dancers and the number of every group of dancers is singular, and they are respectively 5, 5 and 5; 9 and 9; 5, 5 and 5; 11 and 13. All the numbers of groups are singular, which cannot be regarded as coincidence, but should be deliberately arranged.

C. Stable Cultural Meaning

The most important element in the five dance pattern pots is that the dancer's drawing method is not different, the arrangement is the same, and they are singular. The difference between the composition and the accompanying patterns is also very small, reflecting the stable cultural meaning. Four groups and five painted pottery dance pattern pots, except one of them collected in Japan where the site was unexplained, the other four have identified the unearthed sites, namely Dingxi, Wuwei, Datong and Tongde. Except for the close distance between Datong and Tongde, the rest are nearly thousands of miles apart, spatially very far apart¹. In addition, traffic was very inconvenient in prehistoric times. The way of expression, combination and accompanying decoration of dancing figures are highly similar. The skeleton rules of figures are basically the same. The figures are arranged hand in hand, which should be regarded as a highly ritualized expression to prove that the figures themselves have stable cultural meanings. Therefore, the theme and use of the five dance pattern pots are broadly consistent.

D. Simple or Complicated Costumes of Dancers

From the dress point of view, there are braids or decorations behind the head of the dancers on the Shangsunjiazhai dance pattern pot. Dancers on the two dance pattern pots from Niumen Cave in Huining and collected in Japan, who have no redundant decorations except their bodies, as if they are naked. The round dots between the waist and

¹ In 1985, a diamond-shaped pottery piece was unearthed from the Shixia Site of Maba in Qujiang, Guangdong Province. There are five figures, hand in hand, dancing. Four of them are relatively clear and nude. It only remains the jaw and neck of the one on the right side. From the formal point of view, it is very similar to the dance pattern on the pot unearthed in Datong County, Qinghai Province, and should be of the same origin. The discovery of "dance pattern pottery piece" in Shixia not only enlarges the distribution scope of dance pattern, but also brings some more definite factors for the study of dance pattern.

buttocks of dancers on the dance pattern pot of Tongde Zongri are very large, which should be the portrait of short skirts on the lower body. Under the dots of dancers' buttocks on Wuwei Mozuizi dance pattern pot are three lines which should be the long skirt. That is to say, there are obvious differences in the dresses of dancers on the dance pattern pots. Among the four groups and five dance pattern pots, the dancers on one pot have headdress and tail ornaments; the dancers on two pots are naked; the dancers on one pot is wearing a closing-fitting skirt; the dancers on one pot is wearing a floor-lengthened dress. It can be inferred that the frequency of prehistoric dance patterns appears to be relatively dense from the simple changes of dancers' attire, and their specific themes could be subdivided under the premise that the broad themes are consistent.

Based on the above four points, it can be inferred that the dance pattern reflects the scene when the prehistoric ancestors held witchcraft evocation activities and the dance pattern is the reflection of witchcraft dance. During the period of Majiayao culture, because of cognitive reasons, human beings did not understand many natural phenomena and the natural laws of birth, old age, illness and death. On the basis of the idea of animism, through simple abstraction and concentration, they thought that there was a unified God in every kind of creature and every kind of thing, and it represents the biological population or thing itself. As Fraser pointed out, they believed that "the world is largely dominated by supernatural forces, which come from deities with human nature. Like himself, they act on impulse and personal will, and are as easily moved by people's prayers for pity and expressions of hope and fear. In a world so imagined, the power of civilized people to influence natural processes for their own benefit is infinite. By praying, promising or threatening, they thought they could get good climate and abundant grain from the gods"[11]²⁴. Therefore, prehistoric witchcraft activities were not only frequent, but also covered all aspects of human life. Witchcraft was required for spring planting, autumn harvest, marriage and mating, evading evil spirits and dispelling calamities, removing sickness and curing illness, sweeping the sky and stopping rain, rejuvenating souls and celebrating life and death. In addition, according to archaeological data, "Five divination bones with indentation marks were found in Fujiamen's house and cellar in Wushan. There are not only burning marks but also simple indentation marks on them" [12]⁷⁷. This shows that the magic divination of Majiayao period and Shang Dynasty had basically the same manifestation.

Frequent witchcraft activities must be accompanied by dance to complete the task of "entertaining gods" or "exorcising evil spirits". In prehistoric times, "witch" and "dance" were closely linked, and they probably came from the same source, and then gradually diverted. "Witch" is interpreted in Cihai as "a person who can bring down gods by dance" in ancient times. It can be seen that "witch is the medium between human beings and gods, and dance is a language of communication between human beings and gods" [13]⁶⁴⁻⁶⁵. However, on the four groups and five dance pattern pots, they are all hand-in-hand dances. But the dresses of the characters in the decorations are different, and the beat and rhythm of the dance are also different. That "the dance pattern pots should be the scene when the prehistoric ancestors held

witchcraft evocation activities, and the dance patterns are the reflection of witchcraft dance" is just a broad interpretation of the theme. Obviously, they are both "witchcraft dances" and may reflect different themes. However, only from the above information we cannot confirm the specific content of "witchcraft dance" on each dance pattern pot. To draw a more in-depth conclusion, we have to introduce two types of painted pottery, Banshan and Machang of Majiayao Culture, to supplement the textual research.

IV. THE SPECULATION OF THE MEANINGS OF DANCING-LIKE FIGURE PATTERNS ON BANSHAN AND MACHANG PAINTED POTTERY

Generally speaking, Majiayao culture is divided into four types: Shilingxia, Majiayao, Banshan and Machang, and they are inherited from one to the other. As the development and continuation of the Majiayao type, there are many dancing-like figures on the painted pottery of Banshan and Machang. They mostly appear as single figures, often combined with the "+" or "卍" symbols. Some of the images are highly realistic, the identity characteristics are more obvious, and the information reflected is more specific. Some of them can even be interpreted more definitively. Now the typical ones are introduced as follows.

A. *Banshan Painted Pottery Pot with Dancing-like God-man Pattern*

In recent years, unearthed in Gansu Province, the two sides of the abdomen of the painted pottery are painted with a figure. The figure is decorated with ornaments on its head, its upper limbs are raised upwards, and it is wearing a loose robe. The robe is decorated with dense diagonal lines. The figure is surrounded by "+" pattern (As shown in "Fig. 6"). It should be pointed out that symbol "+" and "卍" are common in the two types of painted pottery of Banshan and Machang Majiayao Culture. As auxiliary decorations, they often appear around the God-man pattern. Some scholars believe that symbol "+" and "卍" originated from the primitive witchcraft, expressing the mysterious gods of human and totem and natural objects, with their own supernatural power of mutual transformation" [14]⁶⁵⁻⁸¹. It can be seen that they are specific symbols representing the evocation activity of witchcraft and have the function of strengthening the effect of witchcraft. The figure in the painted pottery has a solemn manner and the whole picture is full of mysterious atmosphere, which further proves that they are the true portrayal of the solemn ceremony of witch divination held by prehistoric wizards. So what is the content of the activity? Another Banshan painted pottery pot may provide specific answers. It is collected in the Museum of Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province, and is recorded in Mr. Zhang Pengchuan's 719 Picture of Colored Pottery ("Fig. 7"). Its abdomen is painted with several dance-like God-man patterns. The god-man patterns are basically the same, but the upper limbs are quite different. The hands of one figure are exaggerated, and the god-man pattern is decorated with circles with dots in the center (it is generally interpreted as grain seeds). Therefore, this decorative pattern of painted pottery can be interpreted as the pattern of "god-man grain seed". From the character's hands up, body slightly S-shaped

bending, leisurely showing a dance-liking or highly ritualized gesture can confirm that the pattern of god-man grain seed is a dancing wizard, not a real sower.



Fig. 6. Banshan dance-liking god-man pattern pottery pot.



Fig. 7. Banshan pottery pot with god-man grain seed pattern.

In Majiayao culture, god-man pattern is an important decoration, which has a complete sequence from concrete to abstract development². There are many patterns associated with god-man pattern. The most common ones are the circle or concentric circle representing "the sun", willow-leaf shape or willow-leaf shape with midline decoration representing "crops", and the large circle series of decoration patterns representing "fields". "The sun", "crops" and "fields" are closely related to agricultural production. These ornaments should all originate from the witchcraft theme of praying for a good harvest of crops. However, their continued evolution also represents the further decomposition of the witchcraft theme of "god-man grain seed dance".

² In the development process of the abstraction of god-man pattern, firstly, the head is abstracted into a geometric pattern surrounded by a circle (they may also be a vivid portrayal of the image of a witch wearing a mask on the face). Secondly, the head is removed and the body is only left; or the lower limbs are removed and only left with the head and upper limbs. Thirdly, the patterns to express limbs are further simplified and transformed into claw pattern and broken lines, and they become a pure abstract picture. They have become the main patterns of Machang type.

B. Similar Pottery Pots Unearthed in Gansu and Qinghai

In recent years, there are many pottery pots unearthed in Gansu and Qinghai, whose patterns are similar to the god-man dance patterns. The following two examples are highly similar ("Fig. 9" and "Fig. 10")³. The painted pottery patterns of these two pots are basically the same. The face of the god-man pattern is delicate. Three dots represent the five senses. The body is thicker, and it plumps up in the middle showing an oval shape. Many oblique lines were drawn downward and arranged symmetrically on both sides of the body, representing the special clothes of the wizard. The upper limbs bended and raised, and the lower limbs bended to the same direction with the upper limbs. The three elliptical circles were drawn in the middle of the lower limbs, and the inner and outer layers of the circles were drawn with dense serrated patterns for decoration, like vertical shells. This pattern is actually an exaggeration of the vulva. Dancing god-man is surrounded by "卐" symbols. As mentioned earlier, symbol "卐" has been the specific symbol of witchcraft in the Banshan period. It has the significance of enhancing the effect of witchcraft. For this figurative god-man pattern, some people regard it as the female worship of matriarchal clan society; others regard it as the sexual dance during group marriage; but neither explanation is divorced from the category of reproductive worship. By specific analysis, such god-man pattern has gorgeous clothing, vigorous movements, full of mystery, especially surrounded by symbol "卐", so they should be the graphical reproduction of witchcraft activity hosted by wizards to pray for the prosperity of the tribal population.



Fig. 8. Banshan painted pottery pot 1 with reproductive witchcraft dance pattern.

³ These two painted pottery were not excavated by formal archaeological excavation, so there is no exact site unearthed, and they are private collections. But they are Banshan type of Majiayao culture. These two points are quite certain.

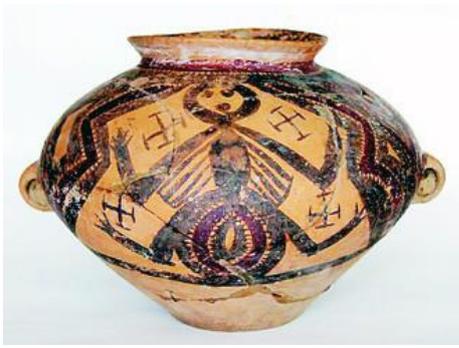


Fig. 9. Banshan painted pottery pot 2 with reproductive witchcraft dance pattern.

Because of the low productivity of prehistoric society, the culture of food production was its foundation. At that time, production itself included two aspects, "the means of livelihood, namely necessary tools for clothing, food and housing for this purpose, and the production of human beings, that is, the reproduction of species" [15] ¹⁸. In prehistoric society with low production and labor level, it is very important for people to spread and increase themselves, because people are not only consumers, but also producers. Increasing population is the premise of powerful tribes. The strong desire for human production will naturally evolve into worship of reproduction and its knowable physical organ characteristics.

From the specific and exaggerated graphical expression analysis of above two painted pottery, their central purpose must be to pray for the prosperity of tribal people. Because of the simple and superficial understanding, reproductive worship was very intuitive at that time, with female external genitals as the core. They intuitively worshiped the external characteristics of the organ creating life, and held grand witchcraft ceremonies for this purpose, and recorded this activity on the specific pot. Therefore, the dance-like god-man pattern on these two painted pottery shows the wizard in the reproductive worship activity which can be called "reproductive dance".

C. The Banshan Pottery Bowl Collected by Andersson

In the 1920s, Andersson collected a very special Banshan pottery bowl ("Fig. 11") in Wagan Village, Guanghe⁴. The inner wall of the bowl is painted with a whole body portrait. The head is represented by a circle, but the five senses are not painted on it. The upper limbs stretch at the level, but elbow joints bend downward. The left and right sides of the abdomen are painted with five ribs. The lower limbs are thin and short and crouching. This picture seems to show the skeleton of the human body intentionally, like the skeleton perspective of modern medicine. There are dazzling parallel lines around the portrait. The whole image is like the remains of a chaotic grave and the mysterious dance of ghosts. A more special pottery pot with figure pattern was unearthed at the Zhaocun site of Tianshui City ("Fig. 12"). The upper abdomen of one side of

⁴ This painted pottery bowl is now collected in the Far East Museum in Stockholm, Sweden.[17][18]

the pot was stacked to form a human face, and the whole body portrait is displayed in combination with the painting around it. The abdomen of the portrait is in the shape of vertical apricot leaf. "丰" with a long vertical line and three horizontal lines was drawn as ribs. The legs are separated. The arms lift forward in the shape of a half-moon. On both sides of the head, there are large half-moon ornaments. On the left side of the theme figure, there are triangular patterns. On the right side, there are cross patterns representing witchcraft activities. Both the decoration and the posture of the portrait show an astonishing side. The whole image semantics is very mysterious. In fact, this perspective image of human bones is not unique in painted pottery, but the general motif of prehistoric art. Some scholars believe that "X-ray or skeleton-like painting is a special expression of Shamanism in ethnology" [16] ¹³⁸. Specifically, the skeleton portraits on the two painted pottery above may reflect the theme of witchcraft to drive away death or disaster, which was used for "eliminating disease and disaster". It should be pointed out here that although the purpose of witchcraft is psychic, prehistoric witchcraft "treats gods in exactly the same way as it treats inanimate beings, that is to say, forcing or suppressing these gods rather than pleasing and flattering them like religion." [12] ⁹³



Fig. 10. The skeleton-type painted pottery pot with God-man pattern collected by Andersson.



Fig. 11. The Majiayao floating-sculpture painted pottery pot with god-man pattern unearthed in Zhaocun Village, Tianshui City.

From the folklore data, the witch doctor activity has not been extinct up to now, especially in the northwest area which coincides with the distribution of Majiayao culture. The simple belief of "eliminating disease and disaster" is prevalent in Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province. When the child is sick or mentally depressed and cannot find the cause, the mother of the child or other women will hold a red, yellow, blue, black and purple five-color paper, light it and circle around the patient's head. At the same time, they need to read expelling words. After that, the remaining burning paper, together with water and food, will be sprinkled at the outdoor crossroads. It means to send ghosts away and eliminate the disaster and diseases. In southern Ningxia, if the above methods of exorcising evil spirits and diseases are ineffective, professional wizards called "Yin-Yang Man" by local people will be invited to exorcise evil spirits and treat diseases for patients, and "Yin-Yang Man" will calculate the child's doomed disasters according to the eight characters of the child's birth. Then, foreign surnames will be invited to become "nominal father" of the child, and let him read "Sui Classic", to achieve the purpose of removing disasters and curing diseases. The most exaggerated is that there are so many elderly women in Northwest China who are known as "Dingshende" or "Jiaozi". They represent man to communicate with gods. They use the way of spirit possession to remove people's long-lasting illnesses or successive disasters. When bringing gods down, they act like dancer, murmur in their mouth like chanting scriptures, and give "gods' words" to alleviate disasters. And people acting in accordance with "gods' words" can eliminate the illness and resolve the evil. In addition, the custom of using paper-cut "hand-in-hand dolls" as props to dispel evil spirits and diseases prevails in eastern Gansu Province. This kind of "hand-in-hand dolls" is the same as those patterns on the pots. They may be left over from another form of witchcraft dance pattern to dispel evil spirits and diseases.

The closed terrain of the Loess Plateau has special conditions for preserving ancient cultures. Therefore, the above-mentioned folk customs are all the relics of ancient witchcraft. Their origins can be traced back to Majiayao or earlier prehistoric periods. Referring to the simple belief of "eliminating diseases and disasters" prevailing in this area, such dance-like patterns should be "disease-eliminating dance".

V. CONCLUSION

Ethnologist Enkel said, "All the barbarian dances had a profound meaning. It was not a simple entertainment, but a ritual. Through textual research on the figurative dance patterns and dancing figures on the painted pottery of Majiayao culture, we can know that the dance derived from the prehistoric human witchcraft activities has been quite developed, including "God-and-man grain seed dance" for harvest, "reproductive dance" for the prosperity of tribal people, and "disease-eliminating dance" for removing illness and avoiding disaster.

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