

# *Chinese Cultural and Artistic Interaction Based on the Liao Tomb Murals*

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**Abstract:** The Chinese culture, with a long and illustrious history, is profound and diverse. It encapsulates the exceptional traditional virtues and qualities of the Chinese nation, nurturing the great spiritual and economic aspirations of the Chinese people across generations. This culture serves as the driving force for the sustained development and progress of the Chinese nation. In this paper, we delve into the cultural and artistic interactions within the diversified and integrated pattern of the Chinese nation, particularly through the lens of murals found in Liao tombs. The study and appreciation of such artworks offer an opportunity to promote and learn from the traditional, excellent culture. Doing so can enhance national cultural self-confidence and expedite the realization of the Chinese nation's grand aspirations. The murals in Liao tombs, with their intricate designs and vibrant colors, are a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the Chinese nation. They embody various themes, including folklore, history, and religion, reflecting the diverse cultural and artistic influences that shaped China over centuries. These tomb murals offer a unique perspective into the cultural and artistic interactions within the Chinese nation, highlighting the exchange and synthesis of different cultural elements. By exploring these interactions, we can gain a deeper understanding of our cultural heritage and its role in shaping the identity and aspirations of the Chinese people. This knowledge can foster a sense of pride and belonging, thereby enhancing national cultural self-confidence. Furthermore, it can inform strategies for cultural preservation, development, and promotion, ultimately hastening the realization of the Chinese nation's grand goals.

## **1. Introduction**

The value identity of the Chinese national community is essentially the value identity of the Chinese culture, and the emotions, cognition, will and behavior of the people of various nationalities have been blended and converged in the historical situation of time and time together, forming a multiregional, multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious and folkloric multifaceted and integrated cultural structure, and thus deriving a multiethnic, multistyled, multisubjective and multiaesthetic Chinese culture. The murals of Liao tombs not only reflect the aesthetic interests of the Liao Dynasty, but also carry the genes of Chinese culture, which is a vivid embodiment of the unity of the Chinese nation.

## 2. The pattern of pluralism and unity during the Tang Dynasty

The concept of "unity in diversity" is an innovative way for Chinese archaeology to interpret an important theory of the formation of Chinese civilization from the perspective of cultural communities, which not only strengthens our recognition of the unity of Chinese civilization, but also provides a clearer description of the formation of "civilized" states and the birth of the grand political ideal of "great unity" in the context of pluralistic interactions within a vast geographic space [1]. It can also provide a clearer description of the formation of "civilized" states and the birth of the grand political ideal of "great unification" through pluralistic interactions within a vast geographic space. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the multi-ethnic, unified and pluralistic state power developed rapidly. The Tang dynasty, because of the ethnic background of the ruling class, naturally held an open and close attitude towards the minorities, and Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty once said, "Since ancient times, all the people have been honored by China, and all the people have been honored by barbarians, but I love them as one, and therefore all of them are dependent on me as their parents", which shows the importance and tolerance of the Tang dynasty's ruling class towards the minorities[2~5]. During the Tang Dynasty, a large number of ethnic minorities migrated to the Central Plains; according to Wu Songdi's statistics, as many as one million ethnic minorities migrated to the Central Plains during the Zhenguan period. At the same time, foreign envoys and merchants had frequent and extensive exchanges with the Tang Dynasty. The migration and mobility of various ethnic groups promoted economic development and cultural prosperity. With the spirit of tolerance and openness to mutual trust, the Tang Dynasty won the support and aspiration of neighboring ethnic groups [6].

## 3. The pattern of pluralism and unity in the two Song periods

The spirit of tolerance, openness and trust of the Tang Dynasty gained the support and aspiration of the neighboring ethnic groups, and the system of standardized management such as mixed ethnic groups, intermarriage between Hu and Han, and the management of the prefectures and counties was further deepened, which made the ethnic relations of this period reach a deep integration. Ethnic relations during the two Song periods were even more complex, with the Song dynasty having clashed with minority regimes such as Northern Liao, Western Xia, and Mongolia, and the concept of governance of the Song dynasty's treatment of minorities changing many times, from pacifying and passive in the early Northern Song, to fiercely assertive in the mid-Northern Song, to permissive and weak in the Southern Song, and with the changes in the country's political environment triggering additional changes. In the complex environment of short-lived peace, relations among ethnic groups were intertwined and complicated, and ethnic relations were complicated by conflict, confrontation, and short-lived peace.

## 4. The Pluralistic and Integral Pattern of the Yuan Dynasty

During the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the cultures of the ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese influenced and penetrated each other, injecting new vitality into the culture of the multi-ethnic community [7].

In the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols established a unified regime in the Central Plains, but still adopted the Han rule of law and regarded themselves as the orthodox Central Plains regime, and the ruling class implemented multi-cultural policies such as the provincial system and the Tusi system, which were supplemented by the steppe culture and the Central Plains culture, and greatly strengthened the communication and exchanges among the ethnic groups. The Yuan Dynasty, founded by the Mongols, had an unprecedentedly vast territory that spanned across Asia and Europe.

This extensive territory provided the Han culture with an exceptional opportunity to engage in rich cultural exchanges and interactions with numerous ethnic groups. The Han culture, being the predominant culture in China, had a long history of interacting with various ethnic groups, but the Yuan Dynasty marked a significant milestone in this cultural exchange.

The Yuan Dynasty's vast territory truly was a mosaic of diverse cultures. As the Mongol Empire expanded, it bridged the distances between the Han culture and numerous ethnic groups, opening up a vibrant exchange of ideas and traditions. Central Asians, Turks, Persians, and even Europeans—all contributed to this rich cultural melting pot.

The contact between the Han culture and these ethnic groups was not limited to the upper echelons of society. In fact, it was the common people who truly embraced these new cultural influences. Whether it was the Turks' nomadic lifestyle, the Persians' love of intricate arts, or the Europeans' influence in trade and technology, the grassroots level of Chinese society was exposed to and adopted these practices.

The exchange of ideas during this period was not one-sided. While the Han culture had a significant impact on these ethnic groups, they also left their unique mark on Han culture. The influence of Central Asian nomadic cultures, for instance, is visible in the clothing and horse-riding techniques of the Han people. The Persians' love of arabesques and floral patterns also found its way into Han decorative arts.

However, this cultural exchange was not without its challenges. There were misunderstandings and tensions between the Han people and the ethnic minorities. Language barriers, cultural differences, and political machinations often created conflict. But over time, these differences were overcome through deeper understanding and respect for each other's ways of life.

The Yuan Dynasty's vast territory not only allowed for this mixing of cultures but also facilitated the spread of Chinese culture beyond China's borders. The influence of the Han culture was felt across Asia and even in parts of Europe. Chinese language and culture became more popular among local people, leading to a greater globalization of Chinese culture.

In conclusion, the Yuan Dynasty's vast territory truly allowed for an unprecedented mixing of different cultures. This cultural exchange not only enriched the Han culture but also opened up new opportunities for other cultures to flourish. It highlights the importance of cultural exchange in bridging divides and bringing people together in a shared cultural heritage.

The exchange of ideas and cultural practices between the Han culture and the various ethnic groups resulted in a remarkable blending of cultures. The Han culture, being the more dominant culture, influenced many of the minority cultures, while also borrowing elements from them. For instance, the Han people adopted elements of Islamic art, such as arabesques and floral patterns, into their decorative arts. Similarly, the influence of Central Asian nomadic cultures is visible in the clothing, music, and horse-riding techniques of the Han people.

The cultural exchange during the Yuan Dynasty was not without challenges and conflicts. There were tensions and misunderstandings between the Han people and the ethnic minorities, but ultimately, these differences were overcome through cultural exchange and understanding. This process was facilitated by the active trade routes that connected China with Central Asia, the Middle East, and even Europe.

The Yuan Dynasty's vast territory also allowed for the spread of Chinese culture beyond China's borders. The Han culture's influence was felt across Asia and even in parts of Europe. The Chinese language became more widely spoken in these regions, and Chinese art and culture became popular among local people. This process contributed to the globalization of Chinese culture and made it more accessible to people outside China.

In conclusion, the Yuan Dynasty's vast territory allowed for an unprecedented exchange and mingling of cultures between the Han culture and numerous ethnic groups. This cultural exchange

not only enriched the Han culture but also had a profound impact on other cultures. It demonstrated that culture is a dynamic force that thrives through interaction and exchange, transcending political boundaries and bringing people together in a shared cultural heritage.

## 5. The Pluralistic and Integral Pattern of the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The Ming Dynasty overthrew the Yuan Dynasty's steppe culture rule, but still insisted on the concept of "Chinese and barbarians as one family" in its ethnic policy. During the Qing Dynasty, the Manchus came to the Customs and gained state power, "forming an unprecedented unified country with more than 10 million square kilometers of land stretching from Sayan Ridge, the Erguna River, and the Outer Xing'an Ridge in the north to the islands in the South China Sea in the south, and from Lake Balkhash and the Pamir Plateau in the west to the Kuril Islands in the east." The ruling class successively put forward the ideas of "one nation under heaven" and "treating China and foreigners as one", and compiled the "Great Qing Unity", which included the history and culture of ethnic minorities and embodied the national will of "one nation under heaven"[8~10]. The sense of community among the Chinese nation has been systematized and developed in a comprehensive manner.

For example, on both sides of the top of the archway of the canal of Liao Tomb No. 1 in Bao Shan, Arukolqin Banner, Chifeng City, there is a group of scrolling clouds holding up a flaming pearl pattern painted in color. Archaeological data show that most of the Liao dynasty tomb murals using auxiliary class decoration based on cloud pattern, popular since the Tang dynasty cloud pattern for the skeleton is the main modeling, in order to form the scale and form a larger and more complex cloud pattern, often choose to increase the side attached to the cloud head or zigzag curve. Flaming pearl motifs were introduced to China with Buddhism, and after the Sui and Tang dynasties, they were adorned on the fronts or entrances and exits of burial chambers, funerary objects, and tombstones, symbolizing light.

The decorative patterns of the Liao Dynasty not only bear the distinctive characteristics of the era but also embody the essence of Chinese culture. They are a visual representation of the rich tapestry of cultural interactions and blending among various ethnic groups in China. The Liao Dynasty, which spanned the 10th to 12th centuries, was a period of great cultural and artistic ferment. As a result of migration and invasions, various ethnic groups, including Mongolians, Koreans, and even Central Asians, converged in the Liao territory, leading to a unique cultural fusion.

The decorative patterns of the Liao Dynasty reflect this diverse cultural heritage. They are a vibrant amalgamation of traditional Chinese motifs, such as clouds, dragons, and phoenixes, with those borrowed from other cultures. For instance, the use of animal motifs, particularly those of the horse and deer, reflect the influence of nomadic cultures. Similarly, the intricate floral patterns and arabesques Islamic art, introducing a new level of complexity and sophistication to Chinese decorative art.

This cultural mingling had a profound impact on the development of Chinese culture. It not only enriched the artistic vocabulary but also contributed to the creation of a truly unique cultural identity. The blending of different cultural elements gave rise to a vibrant tapestry of visual symbols that came to represent the Chinese nation.

The decorative patterns of the Liao Dynasty are a testament to the resilience and adaptability of Chinese culture. They demonstrate how various ethnic groups, despite their differences, were able to forge a common cultural identity through mutual exchange and influence. This process was not without challenges and conflicts but ultimately led to the creation of a culture that was both inclusive and vibrant.

In conclusion, the decorative patterns of the Liao Dynasty are not just beautiful examples of

cultural mingling; they are a powerful reminder of the rich tapestry of cultural interactions that have shaped Chinese culture over centuries. They remind us that culture is not static but dynamic, ever-evolving and growing through the exchange and synthesis of different influences. By studying these patterns, we can gain a deeper understanding of our cultural heritage and its role in shaping our identity as Chinese people. This knowledge can foster a sense of pride and belonging, thereby enhancing our national cultural self-confidence. It can also inform strategies for cultural preservation, development, and promotion, ultimately hastening the realization of our grand cultural goals as a nation.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, the interaction of ethnic cultures and arts in the pattern of pluralism and unity plays an irreplaceable role in the process of modern cultural development. This interaction not only promotes cultural heritage, social progress, and economic development, but also facilitates the development of the diversity of mass cultural construction activities. These activities are crucial for the inheritance of Chinese ethnic culture and arts, making them an indispensable part of modern cultural development. The ethnic cultures and arts of China are rich and diverse, with each region or ethnic group possessing unique cultural and artistic heritages. In today's globalized world, these heritages are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, with the acceleration of modernization and urbanization, traditional cultures and arts are increasingly being marginalized or even forgotten. On the other hand, the globalization of culture also provides opportunities for the promotion and development of ethnic cultures and arts. In this context, the interaction of ethnic cultures and arts in the pattern of pluralism and unity is particularly important. It not only helps to preserve and inherit traditional cultures and arts, but also promotes their innovation and development. Through this interaction, different cultures and arts can learn from each other, grow together, and create new forms and styles that are more in line with the times. This is conducive to promoting social progress and economic development, as well as enhancing the cultural soft power of China. Moreover, the development of mass cultural construction activities is also crucial for the promotion of ethnic cultures and arts. These activities provide platforms for the public to learn about and experience different cultures and arts, thus enhancing their understanding and appreciation of traditional culture and art. At the same time, these activities also help to promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding between different ethnic groups, facilitating social harmony and stability. In conclusion, the interaction of ethnic cultures and arts in the pattern of pluralism and unity is of great significance for promoting cultural heritage, social progress, economic development, and the diversity of mass cultural construction activities. It is a key factor in ensuring that Chinese ethnic cultures and arts are passed down to future generations and continue to flourish in today's globalized world. Therefore, we should attach great importance to this issue, promote cultural exchange and mutual learning between different cultures and arts, and create a more and harmonious cultural environment.

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