Yangzhou Latin Tombstones: A Christian Mirror of Yuan China Society

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Yangzhou Latin Tombstones: A Christian Mirror of Yuan China Society

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Honors in Art History
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Introduction

In 1952, two fourteenth-century tombstones with Latin inscriptions were excavated near the demolished south gate of Yangzhou, one of the most culturally diverse cities throughout the history of China.¹ The Latin inscriptions written in Gothic letter provide the name of the deceased, the name of their father and the year they died. One tombstone commemorates Katerina Yilionis, the daughter of Dominicus Ylionis, a member from a fourteenth century Genoese merchant family, and the other tombstone is for Antonius, the son of the same Dominicus.² Katerina died in 1342 and Antonius 1344. Both tombstones share the similar shape and size. The oblong Antonius stone with a cusped head is 23.5 inches long and 14.8 inches wide. While the top of the Katerina tombstone is fragmentary, it can be inferred from the remaining that its form is identical to that of the Antonius stone, 5 inches wider. Both tombstones have a continuous, vegetal decorative pattern on the periphery.

The Katerina tombstone features the Madonna Enthroned on top and the martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria, including the episodes recounted in the *Golden Legend*: St. Catherine tortured by wheels, beheaded by an executioner and carried to and entombed in Mount Sinai by angels (fig.1). The scenes are narrated from left to right, consistent with the direction of the Latin. In the slaying of St. Catherine, the half-naked female saint kneels and prays; the executioner wears a Mongol wind hat, a belted nomadic robe and a pair of long boots. Next to them is a robed kneeling man with an infant.


² The identity of the patron family is well discussed in Luciano Petech, “Yangzhou ladingwen mubei kaozheng,” Translated by Xia Nai. *Kaogu* 7 (1983), 672.
On the Antonius stone, the major scene is the Last Judgement with Christ in Majesty flanked by a standing winged, haloed figure who holds the instruments of the Passion and a haloed, wingless figure who holds a processional cross (fig.2). In the scene of resurrection, three dead come out of tombs and six figures kneel and pray. Besides this narrative, there is a seated St. Antony the Abbot in meditation, identified by his Tau cross and the little demon at his feet. Next to the saint, similar to the composition of the Katerina stone, is a kneeling woman with head covered holding an infant.

Non-western details such as Chinese chairs, the Mongol garments and graves used in Yangzhou Muslim funerary context mesh with western Christian iconography. What I mean by “non-western details” is motifs present in Yuan visual culture but generally absent in late medieval Europe. The hybrid visual program on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones subsequently stirs up a series of questions: why would the Yangzhou Latin tombstones present a mixture of different cultures? Who was responsible for the design and the manufacture? The lack of the written evidence directly related to the tombstones like commission contracts and the scarcity of other material evidence of Christianity in medieval China forestall further fathoming of the tombstones.

In the previous publications on these two tombstones, the archaeologists delineated the framework of the tombstones and strived to identify the preexisting images which the artisans of the tombstones referred to when they manufactured the steles. They favor etymological iconography, that is

“the history of a visual motif from its earliest recorded occurrence in the artistic tradition where it is found, as it is reconstructed by tracing its transmission from one artistic tradition to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other artistic traditions, or by tracing its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral artistic tradition”

Art historians such as Jennifer Purtle and Lauren Arnold further investigated these tombstones in light of the exchange between the Italian Franciscan community and local “Chinese” culture. Their contribution is significant for they draw evidence from Chinese arts that are visually related to the elements on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. However, their research method is somewhat static: it renders the motifs on the tombstones as “pristinely” Italian or Chinese while ignores the impacts that the composite society of Yuan China and of fourteenth-century mercantile Genoa can exert on their local material culture. Moreover, these scholars come to a standstill after matching the motifs on the tombstones to the prototype and do not fathom the function of these motifs in claiming the identity of the patron family in a new cultural setting.

What’s more, authors of archaeological reports and art historical examinations seem disinterested in the making of the tombstones, for they consider that the appearance of oriental details such as the Asian physiognomy and Chinese furniture in western Christian narrative automatically identifies the craftsmen as local Chinese artisans, who were more familiar with carving Asian figures. This identification of the craftsmen immediately explains the mesh of western iconography and non-western details on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, so they never touch the question that why non-Western details are adopted for certain motifs. Their conclusion that the craftsmen were local Chinese artisans is very likely, but the visual language of the tombstones itself can speak more about the making of the tombstones. These two tombstones are well defined in their archaeological context, but textual records of these tombstones, except for the Latin inscriptions they bear, are so far completely absent. I would

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like to take an approach that valorizes the pictorial language of the tombstones and to test the potential of visual evidence in locating the objects among a “messy” cultural climate.

The approach I am going to take in my thesis is also different from the previous studies on these two tombstones, which put too much emphases on paring the motifs on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones to a single example of Christian iconography made in medieval Europe that fortuitously shares some visual similarities with the scene on the tombstone. A heightened craving for the comparison between two alike objects from two destinations is productive and reductive at the same time. It is rewarding because it immediately illustrates a decent degree of association between two places - especially for my case, two remote termini even according to the modern sense of travelling. However, such juxtaposition oversimplifies the cultural context, ignoring complicated interactions between various social groups. I do not expect to find the so-called prototype of the motifs, for they may take other forms rather than pictures from Italy, such as the verbal description given by the patron and the sketch done by the Franciscan missionaries. Moreover, I will avoid using “prototype” but “counterpart”, because the noun “prototype” automatically hints the prerogative of the originality of motifs, which is not necessarily conductive to my research. The thread underlying my method is to value difference between images equally with similarity between images. Difference is as exciting, if not more, as similarity, for it poses questions related very closely to the specific context of the object. In my sifting and analysis of the tradition of representing the Last Judgment and St. Catherine’s martyrdom in medieval Italy, I will assume a degree of consistency shared by images. I hope that my approach could reconstruct the visual context of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. By “visual context”, I mean visual culture that breeds a visual understanding of motifs.5

5 “Visual understanding” is the understanding of the meaning of a motif based on its visual qualities, which can vary between each beholder who has different backgrounds. This concept is borrowed from Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1987), 5.
There are several articles on cross cultural studies of artefacts and on the meaning of motifs in pluralistic cultural climate inspiring me in the research and writing process.\(^6\) Professor Cheng’s investigation focuses on the visual program on the sixth-century Sogdian tombs. She defies the myth of culture being unitary and emphasizes instead the fluidity of art in a messy period. Moreover, Cheng’s article reminds me to mind the polyvalence of motifs and to treat the association with an ethnic identity borne by a motif very cautiously. Similar to the sixth century, when many cultural groups came into China and interacted, the Yuan dynasty is another diverse period. Professor Walker’s essays on the new life of a middle Byzantine rosette casket in the Islamic context and on the migration of Fenghuang from China into Byzantium bring to my mind the idea of the receptivity of motifs based on the understanding of their visual languages in different cultures. Francisco Prado-Vilar’s reading on several caliphal ivory caskets from tenth-century Andalusia offers a unique interpretation of the visual program on the royal caskets and discusses the Christian reception of Spanish Islamic objects in light of Grabar’s term “visual understanding”. His article is helpful because it introduces and elaborates the concept of “etymological iconography” and more precise terminologies like “semantic charge embedded in motifs” into my writing. My investigation on these two tombstones captures a very singular moment in the history of interactions between the West and the East.

In my thesis, I will also attest the ability of the visual language on the tombstones in articulating the pluralistic society where they were created and in revealing the confluence of different cultures. Moreover, I am going to contemplate on the making of the tombstones: were there any images shown to the artisans by the patron family? Was the design given to the artisans in a verbal instruction from the patron? I propose that the iconographies of the

Last Judgment and the Virgin and child existed in Yuan China before the erection of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, while the depiction of St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Antony the Abbot were made ad hoc for the tombstones. There is a two-year time gap between the erection of the Katerina tombstone and that of the Antonius tombstone; the reliefs on both gravestones share some similar visual qualities in physiognomies of figures; the shape and the periphery carved with continuous vegetation pattern of the tombstones are also alike. Therefore, the Genoese patron should commission the same local artisan or local stone workshop to manufacture the tombstones. In my thesis, I will give an overview of Yuan China social history and discuss the iconographies appearing on the tombstones. By such discussion, I will test my hypothesis on the making of the tombstones. Finally I will weave these threads together to reveal the dynamic interactions between different cultural groups witnessed by the visual language of the tombstones.

Chapter 1 Social Interrelationships in Yuan China and Their Material Manifestations

1.1 Social Interrelationships in Yuan China

Since the late thirteenth century after the Mongols had swooped over Asia and the Empire’s military force had almost extended to Eastern Europe, commercial and cultural contacts between distant regions and different ethnic groups burgeoned. Yuan China was a melting pot of different cultures. The Mongol Empire conquered China as one of its four khanates and brought a massive influx of “westerners” into China. In the writings of Yuan China, the historical definition of the “western regions” denotes the territories occupied by the other three Mongol khanates, ranging from the northwest border of Yuan China to Eastern Europe (fig.3). Then the term “westerners” is used to designate mainly residents of
the “western regions”. However, this term alone cannot fully demonstrate the diversity of ethnic groups, which mainly include Tibetians, Ongud, Alans, Persians, Turks, Jewish and minor groups from even further Europe. Along with the flood of various ethnic groups was the introduction of different religions into medieval China, in which Nestorianism and Islam were the major force. Diverse religious and ethnic identities coexisted and created an unprecedentedly multicultural climate in medieval China. In the following, I will explicate the diverse culture in the Yuan dynasty and the complicated interactions between different groups in Yuan China with a focus on funerary practices and daily life. Hopefully by giving a comparatively comprehensive account on local culture in Yuan China, I can situate the Yangzhou Latin tombstones in their local context and see how the pictorial language on the tombstones negotiates the tension generated by the collision and by the infusion of different cultures.

Before getting into local culture in Yuan China, it is important to give a brief overview on the history of the Yuan dynasty. Although from a retrospective view, the Mongol taking over of the previous reign in China seems like an abrupt event in history, actually it was a gradual process. The preceding Song dynasty’s (960-1279) northern frontier was harassed by Jurchens and since 1115 the north was lost to the Jin dynasty (1115-1234). The Song emperors retreated to Hangzhou and re-established their reign there; the period from Song dynasty’s re-centering to its fall to the Mongols is called the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). Beginning in 1200s, the Mongols defeated Western Xia and the Jin dynasty, from which they obtained the northern part of China, while the Southern Song

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7 Chen Yuan, introduction to Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols: their transformation into Chinese (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica, 1966), 1. Although Chen’s investigation mainly focuses on one direction of transformation and cultural exchange, later publications by other scholars study the other directions in cultural exchange.

officially ended in 1279. Mongols dictated the social hierarchy as the Mongols taking up the highest social status among all groups, the westerners who were called the Semu (色目, people of colored eyes) enjoying the second stratum, then Han Chinese residing in north China who were exposed to non-Han Chinese kingship for a longer time and finally manzi, residents in the territory of the former Southern Song dynasty. Chen defines that the term “Han Chinese” refers to Han Chinese and people of some nomadic groups that had already been assimilated into Han Chinese during the previous dynasties. I would like to add that the term “Han Chinese” is very ambiguous and that it is almost impossible to single out a group of people as quintessentially Han Chinese. Therefore, I must limit the signified of the term “Han Chinese” in my thesis as people living in the territory of the early Song dynasty before the invasion of the Jin and their descendants. In the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, most of the official posts in the imperial court were taken up by the Mongols. Since the Semu offered military service to the Mongols in their journey of conquering, the Semu were also privileged. The supremacy of the Mongols led to the popularity of Mongol customs among aspirational people who sought official positions in the Mongol court. It was the coexistence of many ethnic groups and cultures that stimulated cultural interactions of multi-directions and provided the circumstance where objects like the Yangzhou Latin tombstones could be produced. The cultural interactions between each group in Yuan China could be detected in many aspects of daily life. For example, some Mongols adopted Chinese names, while at the same time Chinese people also considered the Mongol names bestowed by the court as an honor.

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9 McCausland, 9.
10 Chen, 1-2.
11 I define “Han Chinese” in such way for the sake of my thesis, because these people would be more familiar with the artistic tradition existing in China before the Mongols’ military success.
12 Pan Qing, Yuan dai jiangnan minzu wenhua chongzu yu wenhua jiaorong (Nanjing: Fenghuang Chubanshe, 2006), 104-105.
Yangzhou is located along the borderline between the South and North; it is close to Hangzhou, the capital of the Southern Song dynasty and simultaneously near to the territory of the Jin dynasty. This particular location between the north and the south allows its residents to get in touch with different social customs. Moreover, Yangzhou was one of the last cities being seized by the Mongols and fell in 1275. Therefore, its local population was mostly comprised of manzi; after it became part of the larger Mongol Empire, Mongol and the Semu officials came to administer Yangzhou and Jiangnan. Yangzhou’s lucrative location adjacent to the Yangtze River made it a prosperous economic center of Yuan China. The canal was built to connect Jiangnan, the area in eastern China to the south of the Yangtze River, and Dadu and to facilitate the transportation of grains from the more fertile south to the political center of the Yuan dynasty. Moreover, the canal enabled Yangzhou to be accessed through waterway; thusly, many itinerant merchants and travelers from Central Asia and Europe were attracted to the city. In the mid-1320s, Friar Odoric recorded that there was also a Franciscan house at Yangzhou.\textsuperscript{14} The influx of foreign merchants and missionaries further complicates the already diverse composition of population in Yangzhou. It is the pluralistic local culture that allows hybrid artefacts such as the Yangzhou Latin tombstones to be created. In the following, I am going to delineate the funerary visual culture in Yuan China and the tension between different locations and various groups manifested by art of death, which is more apposite to the discussion of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones.

1.2 Visual Cultures of Death in Yuan China

Based on archaeological samples of tombs dated to the Yuan dynasty, it seems that subterranean tombs including murals and funerary objects are the most prominent form.

\textsuperscript{14} Henry Yule, \textit{Cathy and the Way Thither}, vol.2, series II, vol 33 in Jeremy Clarke, \textit{Chinese Christian Art During the Pre-modern Period} (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 19
According to a brief note on the Mongols conducted by two ambassadors of the Southern Song dynasty, the Mongol funerary customs were “they do not have any marks; after the dead is buried underground, horses stamp on the ground so that it looks flat again.”¹⁵ However, what they observed was the funerary rite of the imperial family, while the burial practices for the commoner remained unrecorded. Some subterranean burial sites filled with rich visual program are excavated in north China, where the Mongols took over from the Jin dynasty, and their art is investigated in detail by Steinhardt in her discussion of the representation of identities in Yuan period tombs with wall paintings.¹⁶ In the article, Steinhardt draws the archaeological evidence from Shaanxi, Xi’an, Hebei, and Shandong.

Steinhardt notes that some tomb images such as the formation of male and female occupants with accompanying details of attendants and inscriptions are traceable to Northern Song sources. It is hard to secure the ethnic identity of the occupant based on the portrait of the occupant on the wall and other objects in the tomb, for sometimes these materials cannot indicate a consistent identity of a Han Chinese or a Mongol. Instead, Steinhardt proposes that tomb inscriptions are most suggestive of occupant ethnicity.¹⁷ Overall, there is a conflation of different ethnicities rendered by the visual program in Yuan period tombs from north China, which demonstrates the willingness of affiliating oneself to each other’s culture from both sides.

In south China, funerary practices did not change significantly from the preceding Southern Song dynasty, during which tomb murals were not largely popular.¹⁸ The archaeological sampling of Yuan tombs with murals excavated in the south is small.

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¹⁷ Steinhardt, 164.
¹⁸ Wu Jing, Nanfang diqu songdai muzang yanjiu (Beijing: Shehui wenxian kexue chubanshe, 2015), 266-267.
a Yuan burial with wall paintings in Jiangle County, Fujian. Its abundant visual program includes animal and celestial motifs, a procession in wagon, figures in the Mongol garments leading a saddled horse, attendants, domestic settings, and folkloric deities in charge of wealth, luck and longevity. The portrait of occupants that are frequent in northern tombs is absent. The exact date and the occupants of this tomb remain unknown. Nevertheless at least it speaks to the visibility of the Mongol costumes in south China.

Notwithstanding the incomplete archaeological excavation for Yuan material culture, the different sampling size of painted tombs between the north and the south can still somehow reflect the varying degree of the popularity of subterranean murals in different regions. Details suggestive of the Mongol influence are more visible in northern China than southern China, as a result of the longer occupation of the Mongols in the north. The occupant portraits discussed by Steinhardt demonstrate the mutual influence between the Mongols and Han Chinese and reveal the complicated relation between ethnicities and political aspiration. A tomb is a conclusion encapsulating the deceased’s idealized self-identification. Yuan period tombs found in China manifest the dynamic and fluid social interactions between different ethnic groups and illustrate the regional difference. Rather to say that Mongol clothing demarcate ethnicity, it is more about the difference of social status and geological location.

In Yangzhou, besides the Christian tombstones, tombstones of other religions are excavated as well. Islamic missionaries arrived at Yangzhou as early as the seventh century and based on the literary evidence, the population of the Muslims was quite considerable in Yangzhou back then; however, later due to national strife and dynastic change, the number of the Muslims decreased staggeringly. The Yuan dynasty was the period when Islam developed in China and when the ethnic group Hui (回族) was formulated. In the process of the

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Mongols annexing China with other territories in Central Asia, many Arabic, Persian and Central Asian Muslims were conscripted into the army and battled for the Mongols. Then in post-war China ruled by the Mongols they enjoyed high social status and took up official post due to their contribution in the campaign. Besides, Yuan China had uninterrupted overland routes and waterways to Central and Western Asia; the convenient transportation encouraged many Muslim merchants and artisans to come and settle in China, gradually increasing the number of Muslims in China and leading to the diaspora of Muslims. Yangzhou was an important city, as a trading and administrative center, in southeastern China during the Yuan dynasty, and therefore were many Muslims residing here.

Yangzhou has been a culturally diverse city since the Tang dynasty. The archaeological evidence of its cultural heterogeneity is concrete but scarce. Besides the Yangzhou Latin tombstones which attest to the existence of western Christianity in medieval Yangzhou, there is a fourteenth-century trilingual Nestorian tombstone and several contemporary Islamic gravestones excavated in Yangzhou. These funerary monuments together preserve the multitude of cultural groups during the fourteenth century. In this section, I will introduce these tombstones into the discourse of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, for they will supplement to the visual context from which the Latin tombstones were produced and they could offer insights into how the funerary monuments reflect the self-perception of the Christians among numerous religious groups.

The Nestorian tombstone was excavated in 1981 in Yangzhou (fig. 4). The stele is composed of a semicircular headstone where a pair of flying angels flanking a cross above a lotus. Below on the rectangular body are several vertical lines of inscriptions in three languages: Chinese, Syriac and ancient Ugihur, which are read from right to left. The

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inscriptions commemorate Elizabeth, the wife of a Semu whose exact identity is unknown. The Chinese inscription is not a precise translation of the non-Chinese contents: lines written in Chinese record the date of Elizabeth’s death in 1317 (in Chinese calendar), her age and her identity as the wife of Xindu. The Syriac and Uighur inscriptions, besides documenting the same information, evoke more Nestorian doctrine. Moreover, the date in these non-Chinese inscriptions is calculated based on Turkic calendar. The appearance of three different languages and two dating systems speak to the multicultural composition of its intended audience, while the absence of an explicit religious message in the Chinese inscription suggests that this Nestorian funerary monument does not aim to advocate its religion to local Chinese.

Two groups of Islamic tombstones were excavated near the South Gate in Yangzhou during the 1920s. The exact total number is not concluded in archeological reports. The contour of these tombstones displays a range of diversity: some of them have the cusped headstone, some less wavy. The Islamic tombstones discovered in Yangzhou are devoid of figural motifs. One of these tombstone, the tombstone of Nie-gu-bai tong-yi, is bilingual, one side inscribed with vertical Chinese inscription, the other lateral Arabic inscription (fig. 5). The Chinese lines only note the name and the official position of the deceased, while the Arabic lines offer a longer Muslim prayer and record the date of death in Islamic calendar. The other Islamic tombstones excavated in Yangzhou are inscribed only with Arabic. A preliminary conclusion about the Islamic tombstones and the Nestorian tombstone found in Yangzhou can be made that the patrons preferred to have a prayer in the original language of the doctrine on their funerary monuments to display their faithfulness. However, in

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22 Some scholars note that Xindu is a common name for the Yuan dynasty Mongols, while there is also a hypothesis that it belongs to a Turkic family.

Quanzhou, a southern port city enjoying the same importance in international trade with Yangzhou, three monolingual Nestorian tombstones inscribed in Chinese were excavated and their inscriptions evoke devotional messages. Therefore, the use of specific languages in inscriptions on funerary monuments is quite diverse in Yuan China.

While the Yangzhou Nestorian tombstone does not intend to use Chinese language as a vehicle to declare their religious identities to the potential Chinese viewer, the visual program of their funerary monuments probably bears the role to vocalize such information. The trilingual Nestorian tombstone excavated in Yangzhou has a cross on the headstone. It is worth noting that in the official decree of the Yuan and the History of the Yuan dynasty, the term “ye li ke wen (也里可温)” is used to describe all sects of Christianity, including Roman Catholics and Nestorianism. Moreover, local historians recorded the ecclesiastical architecture as “temples with a cross (十字寺)”, which refers to both Franciscan churches and Nestorian churches. Therefore, the cross depicted on the Nestorian stele suffices to declare its affinity with eastern Christianity (Nestorianism) or western Christianity. At least for local historians, devotees of Nestorianism and western Christianity were not inherently different so that scribes did not feel compelled to name them distinctively. However, the Franciscan missionaries in Yuan China were clearly conscious of the hostile rivalry between themselves and Nestorians. In John of Montecorvino’s correspondence with the Roman Church, Archbishop of Khanbaliq (now Beijing) recounted numerous assaults from Nestorians and how his mission was hampered by them. On the Nestorian tombstones excavated in Yangzhou and Quanzhou, motifs such as flying angels, lotus and the Cross can be found, but there is not a single Nestorian stele that has images as narrative and picturesque

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24 Yuan Dianzhang (Statues of the Yuan Dynasty) (Rpt Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), vol.36.

as images on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones or depicts Christian figures. For the Yangzhou local Nestorians and Franciscans, the distinctive visual language and the inscriptions in various languages could indicate the patrons’ different religious beliefs.

Chapter 2 Iconography of St. Catherine of Alexandria and the Last Judgment

The mentioning of Italian iconography in this chapter is not to identify the exact source of images on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, but to offer an insight into the visual culture from which the Franciscan missionaries and the Genoese patron family came and how would the visual culture that they might be more familiar with affect their perception of the visual language on the Latin tombstones.

2.1 The Scene on the Katerina Tombstone

The Katerina tombstone mainly features the Virgin Mary and the martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria (fig.6). The Katerina tombstone bears three moments of St. Catherine’s life: the torture, the execution and the entombment. The episode of the female saint is narrated counterclockwise. From the left, the first scene is St. Catherine tortured in wheels but rescued by the intervention of divinity. The half-naked saint kneels between two spiked wheels surrounding her are two half-naked corpses of pagan bystanders.; two angels hover above. The second scene is St. Catherine beheaded by an executioner under the command of the pagan Roman Emperor Maxentius. Next to this scene, a kneeling man holds an infant towards the female martyr. Above this scene is the entombment of St. Catherine that she is carried to the Mount of Sinai by two angels. There is no demarcation between each scene, and the legibility of the representation relies on the audience’s knowledge of Christian hagiography.
The account of Catherine’s passion can be found in many early manuscripts. She appears in two important tenth-century versions. The first was written by the Byzantine hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes; the second was the *Menology of Basil* for Byzantine Emperor Basil II. Both cover her dispute and her martyrdom. The story of St. Catherine was recounted in detail in the *Golden Legend* and became popular during the Middle Ages. St. Catherine of Alexandria is an early-fourth-century Christian martyr, who dies in the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Maxentius. After winning the debate with 50 pagan philosophers and moving some of them to convert to Christianity, she is scourged and imprisoned, but she receives divine help while be incarcerated. Upon the failure to subdue her by torture, the emperor attempted to win over Catherine by marriage. However, she rejects the proposal and claims that she devotes her virginity to Jesus Christ. Later the outraged emperor sentenced Catherine to death on spiked wheels. Once she is set in the instrument, the angel of God breaks the wheels, which then kill the pagan spectators. Subsequently, Maxentius commanded the virgin to be decapitated and this time his attempt is successful. From her wound oozes out milk rather than blood. Finally, angels take the body and bears it unto Mount Sinai. During the late thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century, the new legend of Catherine’s conversion and mystic marriage transpired. The new account involves how the young Catherine was represented with an icon of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ and her vision at night. This theme became popular in the western church during the fourteenth century. Although the major scene on the tombstone is the passion and the martyrdom of St. Catherine, the Virgin and child on the top can be

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28 Stollhands, 53-54.
understood as a part of the narrative of Catherine. If the patron family would have known the account St. Catherine’s mystic marriage circulating in the western church, then the visual program on the Katerina tombstone can potentially be understood as a conflation of Catherine’s passion and her mystic marriage.

According to Kaftal’s iconographical study of saints in Italian art, it seems that in Ligurian area the cycle of St. Catherine of Alexandria has been translated into images since the late fourteenth century. That is to say, I am curious that whether the Genoese patron family could have actually seen an illustrative version of Catherine’s account. Based on Kaftal’s enumeration of themes and motifs related to St. Catherine of Alexandria, her dispute with pagan philosophers and her passion are most represented. In the depiction of the moment of her martyrdom, wheels, an executioner and angels translating her corpse on Mount Sinai almost continuously appear. In the following, I am going to give several representation of St. Catherine’s martyrdom to prove this observation.

The search result from the Index of Medieval Art shows that fresco is the most frequent medium of Catherine’s episode during the fourteenth century. The fresco (fig.7) is from the Church of San. Chiara in Montefalco, dated around 1333. It depicts crowned St. Catherine of Alexandria kneeling on the ground and praying to the nimbed angel who is descending toward her. On her right is a bearded executioner with headgear holding a sword; on her left is crowned Maxentius with arms crossed. Besides these major figures, there are also groups of helmeted soldiers and spectators and several veiled women. In the background is a city scene. The fresco (fig.8) is from the Chapel of San. Giorgio in Padua dated from 1375 to 1399. The background is a mixture of urban vista and rocky landscape. In front of city gate is a group of armored soldiers, among which Maxentius wears a helmet and is

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indicating by a scepter the executioner to slaughter the female saint. The executioner has headgear in a turban shape. Nimbed St. Catherine kneels and prays to the other side. In mid-air, two haloed angels carry the winged and haloed soul of Catherine in cloth. At the top of the mountain, two angels place the lid on a sarcophagus. On the 1340s fresco (fig.9) in Church of San. Procolo in Naturno, St. Catherine of Alexandria’s torture and martyrdom are featured. From left to right, the first scene is angel breaking wheel before kneeling and crowned Catherine. The second scene is fragmentary, but the incarceration of the saint can be vaguely seen. The next episode is the decapitation: headless body kneels and a male executioner wearing a hat sheathes sword above; the saint’s head cut down is at his feet. Above is a flying angel holding cloth in which is the soul of Catherine represented as a nude infant with halo and crown. The final is haloed, crowned St. Catherine of Alexandria holding the instruments of her martyrdom, a wheel and a sword. Besides frescoes, there is one panel by Donato d’ Arezzo circa 1330 delineating St. Catherine of Alexandria and twelve scenes from her life (fig.10). The gridded panel could narrate more moments of Catherine’s life given its composition. The female saint is featured at the center, flanked by six grids on both side, each of which illustrates a moment of her life, including the torment and the decapitation. In both scenes, the executioner wears a hat; the angels are not haloed, and St. Catherine is not crowned. In the final scene, the female saint is represented twice. On the ground she is decapitated and at the top of the mountain she is carried onto a rectangular coffin by three angels.

Grouping the Italian St. Catherine together provides a pictorial context from which late medieval Italian conventions in portraying the female martyr can be deduced and the Katerina tombstone’s visual association with its Italian counterpart emerges. From the Italian portrayals I have concluded, there are several coherent features in the narrative scene: 1) the executioner always wears a hat 2) angels are winged 3) St. Catherine kneels and is fully
dressed and nimbed. At the same time there are some inconsistent elements: 1) St. Catherine does not always have a crown 2) Sometimes Maxentius is absent 3) Angels can be represented without haloes 4) the indication of landscape. The St. Catherine cycle on the Katerina stele features winged angels without halo, crowned, nimbed but half-naked kneeling saint, an executioner wearing a non-western style hat, and a sarcophagus of multi-piece construction. The motifs on the Katerina stele are normal for the story of St. Catherine, but the morphological details somewhat vary from their Italian counterparts.

In the previous paragraph, I describe the sequence of the stele’s narrative as counterclockwise, because the final scene—the entombment—is placed above the execution scene, as if an artisan started carving from the left, then proceeded to the right, and finished up by moving the scene upwards, probably due to the limitation of space. However, the elevated placement of the entombment scene might not be a result of its closing role in the narrative sequence as much as of an indication of space which demonstrates the locale of the event on elevated Mount Sinai. If the representation of landscape were to be removed from the entombment of St. Catherine of Alexander in the Italian art that I have listed above, what would be left is that the burial scene is directly above the execution scene,. Although the Katerina tombstone does not render any architectural or natural space as the backdrop of the Christian account, the final scene, which is visually atop of the martyrdom scene, is indeed arranged in that way to illustrate the spatial relationship between the execution and the burying as recounted in the *Golden Legend* and portrayed in the Italian counterparts.

2.2 The Scene on the Antonius Tombstone

The Antonius tombstone primarily features the scene the Last Judgment and Saint Antony the Abbot with a little demon (fig. 11). On the top of the stele, Christ sits on a rectangular seat at the center displaying his wounds and flanked by two haloed figures
holding instruments of the Passion and a processional cross. The standing winged figure on the right holds a lance and a crown of thorns; the standing wingless figure on the left holds a processional cross. Below is a symmetrically arranged pair of flying angels sounding trumpets. Right under Christ are two groups of three kneeling people praying, which face each other. The symmetrical composition is interrupted by the figure of St. Antony the Abbot and a kneeling woman holding a child; the scene on the right side is the resurrection of the dead from their tombs, a crucial component in the scenario of the Last Judgment. The space between one of the three kneeling praying figures and the kneeling female figure with a child is crushed: the feet of the praying figures seem directly step on the woman’s head. Moreover, the triangle positioning of the three prayers on the right is substituted by a linear layout so that there would be enough space to settle the kneeling woman. Although there is not an explicate demarcation between the Last Judgment and the figures on the bottom left, the representation of the St. Antony the Abbot and the kneeling woman figure do not together participate in the narrative of that biblical scene. St. Antony the Abbot sits on a bench, holding a Tau cross in a pose of meditation. A small demon is at his feet. St. Antony the Abbot and the demon retreat into the left corner, where an angel sounding a trumpet hovers above. The propensity for a symmetrical composition that is conspicuous in the positioning of Christ and other figures is obstructed by the insertion of St. Antony the Abbot and the kneeling woman at the left corner. The whole visual program looks like a mechanical assembly of two different Christian iconographies.

Based on Schiller’s study on Christian iconography, from the eleventh century onwards, the Arma Christi often appears in the eastern image of the Last Judgment in this form, flanked by angels or intercessors.30 Instruments of the Passion held by angels and

enthroned Christ constitute the standard representation of the Last Judgment. The common gesture is that both hands are raised—or just occasionally lowered—with the wounds turned towards a spectator looking up at the judge. Christ’s mantle is drawn back on the right-hand side to reveal the wound in his side.\textsuperscript{31} Schiller’s general observation can be attested by visual evidence from late medieval Italian Christian art. The leaf (fig.12) was originally folio 3 from an antiphonary in Pistoia, church of the convent of San Francesco al Prato. The illumination was created in Italy. In the Last Judgment, Christ sits on a backless seat at the center of the top register exposing his wounds and flanked by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. Archangels stand aside the Virgin Mary and the saint, holding instruments of the Passion. In the middle tier are twelve apostles and in the bottom section are the clergy and the lay people. Below, the dead arise from their graves, mustered up by two trumpeting angels. The leaf (fig.13) is from a thirteenth-century Gregorian chant book. The Last Judgment scene is imbedded in a capital letter A in the incipit of “Ad te levavi animam meam.” Christ sits inside a mandorla which comprises several shaded leaves sprouting behind Christ, displaying his wounds and attended by groups of figures, among which two angels hold instruments of his Passion. Below an angel, blasting two trumpets with both hands, floats above the dead who come out from their graves. In the manuscript called the \textit{Supplicationes Variae} made in 1293 for use in Genoa by a certain patron who must be deeply affected by Franciscan spirituality, several pages depict the Last Judgment (fig.14).\textsuperscript{32} On the left, Christ is situated inside a mandorla, accompanied by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist and groups of devotees. Below, two angels stand on the same horizontal with the dead who just resurrect from their tombs. In the fresco from San. Lorenzo in Genoa, Christ extends his arms to show

\textsuperscript{31} Schiller, 188.

his wounds on a backless throne and surrounded by two kneeling angels who present instruments of the Passion (fig.15). Several saints and the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist at the center occupy the lunette above the apse. An angel blasts a trumpet toward the center at each end of the lunette.

According to the images that I list, a uniformity of composition can be discerned. In the fourteenth-century Italian representations, 1) Christ is always at the center, sitting on the backless seat/throne or in a mandorla and flanked by angels or other biblical figures. 2) sometimes there are two angels blasting trumpets, sometimes one, but all demonstrating a preference for a symmetrical visual scheme: in the antiphonary, though there is only one angel below Christ, the positioning of the angel to the central axis of the whole illustration and two horizontally arrayed trumpets maintain the symmetry which can be discerned from the upper scene. 3) in some cases, instruments of the Passion are absent; but when they are present, it is always angels who hold them. 4) although the resurrection of the deceased from their graves is a crucial scenario in the Last Judgment, it is not inextricable from the iconography. 5) kneeling people who pray toward Christ are not inextricable as well. For instance, the Genoese fresco does not include the resurrection scene, probably due to the limited space over the entrance door. Therefore, there is not an immobile set of visual elements that must be included into the Last Judgment, but rather a repository of common motifs from which painters could select based on the specific factors in working circumstances, such as sponsorship and space available.

The mural of the Bardi di Vernio Chapel demonstrates how iconography of the Last Judgment was deployed in a personal funerary context in medieval Italy (fig.16). During the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, private burial chapels for lay people became common

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in the Mendicant churches of central Italy. Burial was often beneath the pavement, either within the chapel precinct, in front of it, or elsewhere. Less common was a grave monument or burial niche built into the chapel wall.\textsuperscript{34} Sometimes the recumbent tomb effigies were also employed. In the Bardi di Vernio Chapel, Santa Croce Florence, a Franciscan church, there was a fresco over the large tomb executed by Maso di Banco around 1330s.\textsuperscript{35} The whole scene is set up in a wild, rocky landscape. Up in the air, a mandorla encloses Christ and Christ is sitting on a platform placed inside. Surrounding him is a group of four winged, haloed angels holding instruments of the Passion. Below is a pair of winged, haloed angels sounding trumpet. The trumpeting angels emerge from clouds and therefore their lower bodies are invisible. Below is the landscape where a half-length figure is praying to Christ. In the actual physical space of the niche, below this figure is a sarcophagus. The way in which the painted wall surface and the corporeal funerary object contact adds a dual role to the figure. On the pictorial level, he is the person in prayer. Considering the architectural space as an entity, since only the upper body of the figure is depicted, it seems that he is arising directly out of the tomb. Therefore, he is also the resurrected in the narrative of the Last Judgment. Two roles conflate into one body. The preference for a symmetrical composition is preserved in the upper part of the fresco, while in the lower part, it is compromised for the peculiar figure rising out of the sarcophagus. Although the Gregorian chant-book was also manufactured in Florence, the illuminated Last Judgment and the Last Judgment fresco are not visually identical. It is the display of intimate personhood required by the Bardi di Vernio Chapel that prompts an adjustment to the conventional composition of the Last Judgment. Therefore, each representation of the Last Judgment entertains private significance to its

\textsuperscript{34} Eve Borsook, \textit{The mural painters of Tuscany: from Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 39.

Here in the fresco from the chapel, such private significance is about putting the deceased into a more direct and particular contact with Christ and rendering the lay patron’s charity.

Similarly, a symmetrical composition is not accomplished in the Last Judgment on the Antonius tombstone. St. Antony the Abbot and the little demon at his feet and the kneeling woman next to him together impede the formation of a symmetrical composition for the Last Judgment scene (Fig. 11). At first, I would like to isolate the Last Judgment from the saint and the anonymous woman for a while, and to study this Christian narrative depicted on the Antonius tombstone in relation to its Italian counterparts. The Last Judgment on the Antonius tombstone consists of conventional Italian motifs, such as Christ at the center on a backless seat, instruments of the Passion, trumpeting angels, kneeling people at prayer and the dead rising from their graves, except for the uncanny wingless, haloed figure holding a cross on Christ’s right (fig. 17). This figure does not bear a resemblance to angels; the other three angels on this stele all have wings. The question that is this figure an angel or a saint is critical, because it determines whether there is an iconographic change to the Last Judgment on the Antonius stele. A comparison between the figures on both sides of Christ reveals that they are very alike in terms of their postures and garments, except the absence of wings of the figure on the left. Moreover, they are arranged symmetrically, revolving around Christ at the center. Considering these pictorial details and the visual elements in the Italian Last Judgment, the two figures on the Antonius tombstone should have the same identification—angels. Then I would like to return to a panoramic view of the scene on the Antonius stele. With the addition of the group of figures on the left, the symmetrical composition is interrupted. Both the Antonius tombstone and the fresco in the Bardi di Vernio chapel are

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36 The concept of Private significance is borrowed from Grabar, 66.
37 Virginia Brilliant, “Envisaging the Particular Judgment in Late-Medieval Italy,” Speculum 84 (2009): 345
commissioned funerary objects, and therefore their designs are subject to the special instruction from patrons. The Yangzhou Last Judgment and the Bardi di Vernio Last Judgment share common motifs like Christ attended by figures holding instruments of the Passion and trumpeting angels. It is the part that directly relates to the identity and the demand of patrons that gets customized. For example, in the fresco of the Bardi di Vernio, the lower part enjoying spatial proximity with the sarcophagus is exploited to render the special message from the lay patron onto a religious institution. St. Antony the Abbot is the name patron saint for the deceased son, Antonius who was commemorated by his father Dominicus. Therefore, the introduction of St. Antony the Abbot in contemplation into the Last Judgment is tailored for the commemorated Antonius by the request of the patron family.

The Mysterious Kneeling Figures with an Infant on Both Tombstones

Both of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones have a kneeling figure holding an infant. The kneeling robed woman holding an infant right next to St. Antony the Abbot takes more efforts to decipher (Fig.18). She is put adjacent to St. Antony the Abbot. Jennifer Purtle and Lauren Arnold identify this figure with an infant as the Virgin Mary and Child, subsequently interpreting the saintly figure as a conflation of St. Antony the Abbot, who is tempted by a demon, and St. Antony of Padua, who has a vision of the Virgin and Child. However, this visual reading of the scene is not secured, because 1) there is no halo around her and the baby’s heads 2) the woman kneels on the ground 3) the woman extends her arms out, presenting the baby, instead of embracing the infant to her chest. Therefore, this rather mysterious kneeling woman requires a different understanding.

There is a parallel kneeling man who holds an infant on the Katerina tombstone (Fig.19). Rouleau explains that it is a commonplace religious image, that an innocent, naked
infant symbolizes the immortal soul of the deceased being offered back to its Creator and the kneeling man is a local Franciscan friar. Another possible reading of the male kneeling figure is that he is the bereaved father of Katerina and is presenting his daughter who died in her infancy, but Rouleau does not specify the source of this interpretation and simply denies it.\textsuperscript{38} Ostensibly, Rouleau’s argument makes perfect sense, for one of the original medieval creations was to envisage the soul that has just left the body in the shape of a new born baby. Such a figure is frequently seen in death scenes where the soul leaving the body is being received by an angel. In the beginning, this visual representation is limited in the motif of the Death of the Virgin, or of a particularly venerated soul, but gradually the soul of every mortal human being could be depicted as an infant. The image of the newborn does not stand for somebody who has died prematurely\textsuperscript{39}. When Rouleau offered this iconographic reading, he was not aware of the existence of the Antonius tombstone, which was excavated years later than the Katerina tombstone. Both tombstones share similar visual scheme; they have stock Christian iconography, the name patron saint of the commemorated and a kneeling figure with an infant. Therefore, the meaning of the kneeling figure and the infant in relation to the pictorial language should be consistent on both tombstones. Subsequently, if I were to apply Rouleau’s explanation of the kneeling figure with a baby to both of the tombstones, it needs some revisions, for the kneeling female figure on the Antonius tombstone could not be a Yangzhou local Franciscan friar. I propose instead that the kneeling woman and the kneeling man on the steles are the parents of the dead son and daughter, and the infant is the soul of the deceased. They are lifting the soul to the patron saints to seek their protection. The question that why the gender of the kneeling figure switches between two tombstone is hard to answer, and one of the most feasible explanations is that the design is based on the request

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\textsuperscript{38} Rouleau, 356.
\textsuperscript{39} Moshe Barasch, “The Departing Soul. The Long Life of a Medieval Creation,” \textit{Artibus Historiae} 26 (2005), 17.
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of the patron family, rendering private significance. The visualization of the particular judgment was diverse during the late Middle Ages because of the broad range of patrons and artisans. Hence, the mysterious kneeling figures on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones are open to multifarious interpretations.

Chapter 3: Twists on the Yangzhou Latin Tombstones

The graves, the garments of the executioner, angels without visible feet and furniture represented on the tombstones somehow deviate from their Italian counterparts. These non-western details do not make the Christian scenes unidentifiable, but they might carry special semantic charge that can bring new visual understanding to Christian iconography. The graves out of which the resurrected rise depicted on the Antonius tombstone are used by other religious groups in coastal cities including Yangzhou during the Yuan dynasty, and therefore religious significance, if internalized in the specific type of grave, might instill a new layer of meaning to the visual language on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. The nomadic garments of the executioner on the Katerina tombstone are introduced to Yuan China by the Mongol invaders, and they might function as a very exclusive identification for the Mongol ethnicity. Chinese chairs can gesture different social strata of seaters; the three types of seats delineated on the tombstones could potentially carry a hierarchical or gender connotation and then impact on the visual understanding of the figures sitting on these seats. In this chapter, I am going to investigate the situational meaning of these non-western motifs and explicate their role as pictorial components on the two tombstones. The “meaning” is not intrinsic to a certain element but susceptible to its circumstances, such as where it appears and how it is paired with other elements. What I term here as the “situational meaning” is the meaning of a
motif in an individual context, in my thesis, in the visual language of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. The situational meaning is more conducive to cross-cultural art historical studies, because the understanding of material transmitting between different cultural groups certainly alter due to the viewers’ various backgrounds, and to assume that there is a definite meaning lodged in a motif would greatly reduce the subtlety and complexity of cross-cultural artistic exchanges.

3.1 The “Islamic/Nestorian” Graves

On both the Antonius and Katerina tombstones, the graves of the resurrected and of St. Catherine are of three-layer construction: the rectangular base at the bottom is the largest, then the slightly smaller second layer of the same shape, and on top is a semi-cylinder lid (Fig. 20). The graves appearing in the contemporary Italian manuscript and panel painting comprise rectangular chests and quadrilateral lids (Fig. 21). Therefore, the sarcophagi depicted on the Antonius and Katerina stele depart from their Italian counterparts to a considerable extent. Cremation and inhumation coexisted in Yuan China and both Han Chinese and the Mongols exercised these burial practices. Furthermore, based on the archaeological evidence, the Yuan dynasty residents who observed Chinese funerary rites were either interred inside a chamber or burnt to ashes which were collected in an urn in their subterranean tombs. Hence, the visual inspiration for the multilayered tombs represented on the Yangzhou Latin tombstone comes from neither local Chinese tradition nor sarcophagi depicted on late medieval Italian manuscripts but from other materials.

Indeed, the formal similarity between the graves represented on the Latin tombstone and these deployed by Muslims and Nestorians during the Yuan dynasty is undeniable.

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During the Yuan dynasty, Muslims comprised part of the inhabitants in Yangzhou. There are several Yuan Muslim funerary monuments excavated in Yangzhou; besides the tombstones I briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, a few grave-markers of stepped construction (Fig.22) which visually resemble the tombs portrayed on the Latin steles are discovered and now accommodated in the cemetery of Buhading, one of the thirteenth-century missionaries. They look like an abbreviated version of the five-layer stony monument of Buhading, which Nancy Steinhardt comments as a standard shape for Chinese Muslims (fig. 23). In another coastal city Quanzhou, which played an important role in international trading between Yuan China and other continents and attracted many foreigners, approximately 174 fourteenth-century tombstones of Nestorianism, Islam, Christianity, Manicheism and India Buddhism from the Yuan dynasty are found. Grave-markers and sarcophagi of comparable multi-pieced shape appear among Nestorian and Muslim funerary objects as well (fig. 24). It seems that the shared design of grave-markers and sarcophagi does not bear a strong and exclusive religious significance that presides over other elements in the identity of the occupant which the visual language can signal, such as ethnicity and social status. I propose that the grave-marker of stepped design witnesses the foreignness (compared to Han Chinese) of the occupant instead of declaring their religious belief; the fact that it is used by both Muslims and Nestorians speaks to its incapability of bearing religious uniqueness. Li mentioned in his study on the Nestorian funerary monuments from Yangzhou and Quanzhou that both the Nestorians and the Muslims in Quanzhou were intimately connected with the Ugihur people. This specific shape of graves could be introduced into Yuan China by people from Central Asia; along

42 The diverse cultural climate in Yuan Quanzhou can be well attested in The Travels of Marco Polo. I get the approximate number of the religious tombstones from Wu Wenliang, Quanzhou zongjiao shike, ed. Wu Youxiong (Beijing: kexue chubanshe, 2005).
44 Niu, 79.
with the diaspora of people of Central Asia and their adoption of different religions, this design was gradually acculturated into Islam and Nestorianism.

Beyond appearing in coastal cities, remains of stepped-shape Nestorian funerary monuments from the Yuan dynasty are found in modern Inner Mongolia, Mongolia and northwest China, because several major Turkic, or Turkic-speaking, peoples who resided in the confederation of tribes in north China during the Yuan dynasty were Nestorians. Moreover, the intermarriage between ethnic groups facilitated the popularity of Nestorianism among different ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{45} Given the abundance and the expansive geological span of these archaeological findings, the prevalence of Nestorian graves in late medieval China can be imagined. The Nestorian legacy comprised numerous gravestones in remote areas of the Chinese periphery. In contrast, the Franciscans were unable to win many Turkish, Mongolian and Chinese souls while in China.\textsuperscript{46} Latin writers often held a polemic tone against Nestorians. In John of Montecorvino’s correspondence, Nestorians were vilified as a major impediment of the spread of Western Christianity in China; William of Rubruck described Nestorians as living a shameless life.\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, these two Christian denominations became allies, bound by their religious belief and at variance with other religions. They supported each other in terms of ceremonies when priests of the other sect were not available. They shared the few available church rooms and celebrated liturgical feasts such as Easter and Pentecost together. William of Rubruck used to comment that Nestorians and western Christians had a common cause, “in honor of the cross”.\textsuperscript{48} The somehow paradoxical and

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strangled interrelationship between the Christians and the Nestorians in late medieval China is reflected in the historical writings of the Yuan dynasty. As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, the contemporary sources referred to both groups by the same name “yeli kewen” and recorded some liturgical performances in the temple of the cross. It is safe to assume that the temple of the cross was a communal religious space for Nestorians and Christians and also a meeting point of visual cultures of the two Christian sects. Although I mention the “origin” of stepped-graves here, I aim to explain how such visual element could come onto the Latin tombstones and how it obtains new meanings in the continuous adaption. The mapping of this process also offers insights into the social interactions between diverse cultural groups during the Yuan dynasty.

The Italian patron family could have seen graves of such multi-layered construction in some areas shared by the Nestorians and the Franciscans in Yangzhou and therefore accepted these graves to be represented on their tombstones. Even the graves of the Dominicus family, though unknown, could be of the same shape. If the Genoese patron family did employ the tiered-shape graves for their dead children, then the Last Judgment on the Antonius tombstone could acquire a new layer of meaning. It not only depicts a judgment for the human world, but more significantly, a particular judgment for Antonius and Katerina, who just resurrect from their graves, just as the particular judgment in the mural of the Bardi di Vernio Chapel.

In pluralistic Yuan China, tiered-shape graves no longer exclusively belonged to a single group and resisted to be oversimplified as either characteristic of a religious group such as “Muslim” and “Nestorian” or typical of an ethnicity such as “Turkic” and “Mongol”.

Tiered-shape graves became appropriate for both Muslims and Nestorians by their common ethnic identity; then such graves became suitable for western Christians because of the religious bond between Nestorians and western Christians. As I pointed out above, burial for Yuan dynasty Han Chinese were mostly subterranean, and therefore tiered-shape graves might be the only visible form above the ground in the Yuan dynasty visual culture. Moreover, they were excavated in several places from north China to south China. The appearance of tiered-shape graves on the Christian tombstones locates the Last Judgment on the land of Yuan China, signaling the universality of the Last Judgment and of Christianity.

3.2 Angels with feet not visible:

The angels on the Katerina tombstone are represented without feet visible (Fig. 25). In Italian images, angels are depicted in ways either in which their feet are covered by the robe and therefore undetectable or in which only their upper bodies are shown from nebulas (Fig. 26). There is an argument that the absence of feet adds a spiritual touch to figures, and the fourteenth-century Italian artists learnt this strategy of representation from imported oriental silk.49 However, to find which side was the first to employ this mode of representation is not of my primary concern in this thesis. The fact that in both fourteenth-century Italian and Chinese visual cultures flying figures without visible feet existed suffices to situate the flying angels on the Katerina tombstone in their own artistic context. If there is an image of flying angels from an Italian portrait of St. Catherine shown to local artisans, they would not feel strange to delineate flying figures in such way based on their own visual understanding of the motif; vice versa, if local artisans based the flying angels on the stele upon the flying figures that they knew in China, the Italian patron family would not regard angels with pointed-ribbon legs and feet concealed as too astray from the western ones. Moreover, on the

Yangzhou Nestorian tombstone, the angels also have the lower body of which the feet are not visible. It would appear that this particular feature traversed denominational boundaries, because it appears on winged angels in Persian manuscripts from the Ilkhanid period, including a painting of the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad (Fig. 27). The common origin of this detail has not been identified.50 I do not try to answer the question which culture owns the origin of such representation of angels. It is the visual affinity this type shares with the existing images in various cultures during the Middle Ages that gives it mobility to travel between audience of different cultural backgrounds.

3.3 The Mongol Garments of the Executioner

On the Katerina tombstone, in the scene where St. Catherine of Alexandria is beheaded, the garments of the executioner deserve special attention (Fig. 28). The executioner wears a hat with a top bun and an ear-shaped piece of cloth flipping backwards, rendering a sense of momentum. The knee-high robe has a round collar and a belt around the waist. The executioner wraps cloth around his shins and wears a pair of boots covering up to the ankles. The folds on the right sleeve and the detail on the left arm suggest that there might be a mid or short sleeved outwear, or the executioner is represented as pulling the sleeve up so that it is easier for him to wield the sword to St. Catherine. During the Yuan dynasty, there was a type of men’s robe with long sleeves featuring an opening on the seam that joins the sleeve to the body of the robe so that the arm can be slipped out of sleeve. This design is visible in the robes worn by some of the hunters in Khbulai Khan Hunting, which offers them greater range of movement (Fig. 29).51 The detail on the archer’s arm is comparable to that

on the executioner’s. The similar type of garments can be found in the Yuan woodprint of the *Collection of Historical Stories* (全相五种平话) manufactured in south China circa 1320s.\(^{52}\)

The figure labeled as an attendant excerpted from that woodprint does share some similarities with the executioner represented on the Katerina tombstone (Fig. 30). Their robes have the identical type of round collar and have the same length. Both of them wear belts with a round buckle in the middle around their waists. The attendants represented in *Shilin Guangji* published 1330s, an encyclopedic illustrated book first published during the late South Song and then reprinted during the Yuan, also share the similar kind of robe with round collar and belt (Fig. 31) With regards to headgear, a similar type of headwear is represented on the mural from a Yuan subterranean tomb in Chifeng, Inner Mongolia. In the scene that depicts the master coming back after hunting, he is followed by two mounted attendants, one carrying his quiver, the other holding a falcon (Fig. 32).\(^{53}\) The man who takes care of the falcon wears a hat visually assembling the hat worn by the executioner on the Katerina tombstone (Fig. 28). Archaeologists have regarded the visual program in this burial site as important visual evidence that sheds light into the daily life of the Mongol noble men. Therefore, the garments of the executioner on the Katerina tombstone are most often visible in figures who are present with the Mongols.

During the Yuan Dynasty, the adoption of different cultures went in both directions. The Mongols were influenced by Han Chinese culture and the latter was equally exposed to nomadic culture. One of the most obvious aspects in the adoption of Mongol culture by Han Chinese is the change of garments. One tomb mural dated 1269 from Dongercun, Shaanxi Province, represented a couple dressed in quintessentially “Mongol” garments: the husband wears the robe with a wide waistband, the wife has a tall headdress (Fig. 33). The ethnicity of

\(^{52}\) Shen Congwen, *Zhongguo gudai fushi yanjiu* (Beijing: Beijing wenyi chubanshe, 2002), 415

the couple is debated. However, they came from northern China that had not been part of China’s Song Dynasty for generations. At the beginning of the Mongol rule, many northerners—Jurchens, Khitans, Han Chinese—adopted Mongol customs rather readily. In the southern area, where majority of the population still remained Han Chinese, the adoption of the nomadic fashion was widespread according to contemporary writings. There were many contemporary accounts describing the social phenomenon that in the Jiangnan area, including Yangzhou City, Han Chinese wore and even preferred the nomadic garment, for the Mongols and the Semu enjoyed a higher social status than Han Chinese and therefore the nomadic hairstyle and manners of dressing became a contemporary trend and even connoted a noble social identity. In the contemporary writings, the Han literati always used a lamenting tone when they described how local Han Chinese forgot their own cultural root and embraced a very barbaric custom. Even in the writings from Ming Dynasty, the native Han Chinese dynasty succeeding the Yuan Dynasty, there were still records of how Han Chinese retained “barbaric clothing”. However, Denney notes that Mongol garment types were not commonly seen in the south, based on a comparison of articles of women’s dress from a Southern Song tomb in Fuzhou and a late-Yuan site in Suzhou, which is geographically very close to Yangzhou. Denney qualifies this statement by adding the fact that the sample is small. Indeed, as I have mentioned in Chapter 1, in the Jiangle mural tomb, the Mongol garments are present but they do not directly relate to the identity of the occupant. To sum up, Mongol customs including garments have different receptions between north China and south China. While Mongol clothing became a fashion in trend and a symbol indicative of the dressers’ high social status in north China, people from south China demonstrated a more restrained attitude toward Mongol customs. Marco Polo described local attitude toward the

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54 Denney, 82.
55 Pan, 105-106.
56 Denney, 82.
Mongols when he was in Hangzhou, the capital of the Southern Song dynasty that is geologically close to Yangzhou, “they dislike the sight of soldiery, not excepting the guards of the grand khan, as they preserve the recollection that by them they were deprived of the government of their native kings and rulers.” He also noted that not all soldiers were Tartars, but also natives of China who were enlisted.

In the fourteenth-century writings of Han Chinese and of the contemporary Europeans, the overall reception of the Mongols was negative. It is worth noting that the attitude of Han Chinese toward the Mongols recorded in the historical writings since the Song Dynasty is carefully constructed; when the Song Empire shared a common enemy, the Jin dynasty, with the Mongols, the Mongols were conceived as a northern people worthy of admiration; nevertheless, later when the Mongols began targeting territories of Han Chinese, they were recognized as peoples no different from peoples of the previously loathed Jin dynasty. In the European discourse, the Mongols were at first characterized as some horrendous beasts by the Europeans after the former’s attacks on Russia and Eastern Europe in 1237-1242. The Emperor Frederick II described the Tartars as the instruments of God’s wrath carrying the order of a divine judgment in a letter dated July 3, 1241. Moreover, it seemed that the Mongols themselves were conscious of the “purgative” aspect of their military mission. In the letter brought by John of Plano Carpini to the Pope from the Great Khan Guyuk, it is said, “Because they did not obey the word of God and the command of Chingis Chan and the Chan…therefore God ordered us to destroy them and gave them up into our hand. For otherwise if God had not done this, what could man do to man?”

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58 Polo, 221.
Actually, the Mongols were also visible in contemporary Italy, and they made appearance on manuscript illustrations and fresco. The early 1330s fresco *Martyrdom of the Franciscans* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in San Francesco, Siena, depicted that four Franciscans were beheaded in front of a Mongol royal figure, wearing a hat rising in high pointed cones, a coat with mandarin collars, and a pair of pointed shoes (Fig. 34). Some scholars observed that the figural types in the fresco were those of Asiatic Mongols or Tartars, and Lorenzetti may have been inspired by the Mongol slaves present in Tuscany. Steinhardt mentions this fresco as well, noting that hats serve as an identifier of Mongol ethnicity in the same way in which they are employed in the Chinese murals. Moreover, in the fourteenth-century Genoese manuscript *Tractatus de septem vitis*, there is a portrait of a Mongol khan in Gluttony (Fig. 35).

However, under the overarching theme of militarism in fourteenth-century Han Chinese and the European discourse about the Mongols, slightly more positive comments existed. Gradually when the Mongols who lived in South China assimilated themselves into local literati culture, some Han Chinese expressed their appreciation for the artistic performance of the Mongols and bewailed for their Mongol friends when they passed away. In Europe, it was not until the arrival of the Franciscan missionary letters from East Asia that the Mongols were humanized. The Franciscans, who were known for their mendicant activities, acknowledged and praised the simplicity of the Mongol life for its plain lifestyle.

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64 Pan, 74-75.
65 Dewesse, 55.
To sum up, although represented in the Mongol garments, the ethnicity of the executioner cannot be secured. Nevertheless, the local artisans carving the Katerina tombstone intend to associate this figure, who bears the role of a villain to Christianity in the original narrative of St. Catherine of Alexandria, more with a Mongol identity. From a very generalized perspective, the belligerent impression that local residents in Yangzhou had on the Mongol invaders coincides with the negative connotation that the Mongols could evoke in a Christian context. For the Franciscans in Yangzhou and the Genoese family, the executioner on the Katerina tombstone accords with the Mongols’ reputation as executioners of the Christians. Moreover, the executioner in the Mongol garments is the local artisans’ translation of the pagan executioner in the original narrative of Catherine into its new cultural setting, and the localization of the executioner is suggestive of the tensions between different social groups characteristic of Yuan China.

3.4 Chinese Furniture

The seats of the Virgin, Christ and St. Antony the Abbot represented on the Yangzhou Latin tombstone are worth investigating because 1) they are visible in Yuan material culture and generally absent in European Christian art 2) they are visually in an intimate relationship with these Christian figures so they might affect the visual understanding of these figures. On the Katerina tombstone, the Virgin and child are represented as sitting on a round chair (Fig. 36). The surface is oval with rings. The chair has legs with curvy, decorative pattern on the side. From the Yuan woodprint of the Collection of Historical Stories (全相五种全话) manufactured in south China circa 1320s, there is a male figure wearing the robe designed for the official sitting on a similar chair (Fig. 37). On the Antonius tombstone, Christ is depicted as sitting on a square chair (Fig. 38). The backless square chair of Christ on this stele might be a visual response to the backless throne of Christ in the fourteenth-century Italian
representations of the Last Judgment. Moreover, St. Antony the Abbot is portrayed as sitting on a long bench (Fig. 39). This type of long bench is represented in the Song dynasty painting Bullock carts travelling over rivers and mountains (Fig. 40). These three types of seats are inherited from the preceding Song dynasty. The square chair that Christ sits on resembles one of the funerary objects excavated from a Yuan subterranean tomb in north China (fig. 41). One author notes that in the funerary context, different pieces of furniture are always arranged in an orderly manner, emulating the interior that the occupant should have enjoyed in their lifetime. Therefore, furniture bears the role of reconstructing a life scene for the deceased in the funerary monuments in Yuan material culture.

As the stepped-shape graves represented on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, furniture depicted here could also be used by the Genoese patron family in their daily life. Thusly, these pieces of furniture immediately bring Christ, the Virgin and St. Antony the Abbot to a domestic setting very familiar to the patron family. Moreover, the Latin inscriptions record the name of the dead and the date of their death, while not mentioning the place of their death. The appearance of furniture visible in pluralistic Yuan China and unrepresented in late medieval Europe on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones solidly marks the special locale of the tombstones for the patron family and speaks to the Dominicus’ living experience in Yuan China.

Some publications about the Yuan-Dynasty furniture argue that the round chair had a notion of genders and social strata. On the subterranean tomb murals, usually women were portrayed as sitting on a round chair, while the paterfamilias on a folding chair. Moreover, sometimes people of lesser ranks were associated with round chairs. However, I am hesitant


to incorporate this interpretation into my discussion of the round chair represented on the Katerina tombstone, because in the illustration from the Yuan woodcut print that I just mentioned above, a male figure is depicted as sitting on a round chair. It is probable that during the Yuan dynasty, round chairs were associated with women, but such gender association was not absolute and allowed exception.

Chapter 4 The Making of the Tombstones

In the introduction, I proposed that visual components of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones are composed via different means. Iconographies of the Last Judgment and the Virgin and child probably existed in Yuan China before the erection of the tombstones, while images of St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Antony the Abbot and the Latin inscriptions were made ad hoc for the tombstones. The images on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones can be divided into two categories; one is the more general and popular icons such as the Virgin and child and Christ in the Last Judgment, the other is the depiction of more specific saints such as St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Anthony the Abbot, which carry private significance to the Genoese patron family. The Latin inscriptions record the name of the deceased: Katerina and Antonius. To have their dead children’s name patron saints depicted on their funerary monuments could be significant to the patron family; the images redouble the identity of the occupant and function as a visual commemoration of the dead children. In this chapter, I am going to prove my hypothesis on the making of the tombstones based on my discussion in previous chapters.

The Dominicus Ilonis family was not the first Italian Christian who arrived in Yuan China. A prominent figure, John of Montecorvino was accompanied to China in 1291 by a
merchant named Peter of Lucalongo, who is generally accepted to be of Genoese origin. During the Yuan dynasty, the Franciscans were placed under the special protection of the Khan by decrees which were renewed at intervals up to at least 1314 and their convents or simple residence spread along the trade routes into Central Asia and to China. The Franciscans were also art patrons. When John of Montecorvino was in Quanzhou in 1306, he wrote to report his missionary accomplishment, “Et primum est de persecutione nestorianum; secundum de ecclesia et domibus completis, sex picturas feci fieri veteris et novi Testamenti ad doctrinam rudium, scripta sunt licteris latinis, tursicis et persicis, ut omnes lingue legere valeant.” John of Montecorvino recorded that he asked six images from the Old and New Testament to be made to instruct the ignorant; also, he ordered the scripts to be written in Latin, Tartar and Persian, so that people speaking in different languages would understand the Christian text. Whether “tursicus” is Chinese or other languages spoken by the Mongols is debatable, and it is highly possible that Bishop specifically targeted to convert non-Chinese residents in Yuan China. Moreover, the exact scenes from the Old and New Testament that John commissioned and from which agency he wanted the images to be made remain unknown. It is reasonable to speculate that the Last Judgment and the Virgin and Child would be commissioned because of their importance in Christian doctrine, while the martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria less likely, for she was not recorded in either Old or New Testament. Only three letters of John of Montecorvino existed now, and he did not bring up topics about Christian images anywhere else in his epistolary. Although John mentioned his commission of Christian images only briefly, his attempt to produce images and multilingual

69 Phillips, 93.
71 Purtle, 190.
texts indicates that he regarded images as capable of facilitating the spread of western Christianity on this virgin land. Other Franciscans traveling into China might share the similar practice and ask images to be made as well.

Between the date when the letter of John of Montecorvino was written and the year when the Yangzhou Latin tombstones were manufactured, there was a time gap of almost forty years, which was enough for more Christian images to be created in Yuan China and for the scripture to be translated into more languages. By the time of 1340s, the Franciscans had already established in the Yuan dynasty for half a century. In his journal, Odoric of Pordenone noted the existence of a Franciscan convent in Yangzhou when he travelled to China in 1320s. Therefore, there are at least twenty-years between the early settlement of the Franciscans in Yangzhou and the production of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. Although the archaeological evidence of western Christianity’s presence in Yuan China is fragmentary and scarce, the degree of the success of fourteenth-century Franciscan missionaries and the influence of their religious activities might be surprisingly greater than what we can think of today. They might not be the first or the only Christian images in Yuan China, if the images commissioned by John of Montecorvino ever existed or there were other Franciscan artefacts which were demolished and disappeared throughout history. Therefore, there is a possibility that the precedents of the Last Judgment and the Virgin and child represented on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones are images firstly introduced into Yuan China by the Franciscan missionaries and gradually being localized.

It is true that iconographies of saints, the Virgin Mary and Christ are quintessentially Christian, but to what extent could the motifs on the Yangzhou Latin tombstones be simply called a combination of western iconography and non-western details? Details such as the graves, angels and the seats of Christ and the Virgin Mary find their ways into the visual domain of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones. They demonstrate a certain degree of deviation
from their Italian counterparts and an extent of visual affinity with Yuan visual culture, hinting the growing influence of Yuan material world and a willingness to introduce more visual elements visible in local Yuan society into the Christian visual language. As I mentioned above, the tiered-shape graves appearing in the Last Judgment on the Antonius tombstone bring a new layer of meaning to the Last Judgment. By representing graves which were visible in the vast territory of Yuan China as the graves from which the dead arise, this specific version immediately transports the geographical location of the Last Judgment to Yuan China and channels out a message that Christ, as a judge, is majestic on this eastern land as well. The seat of Christ and the Virgin Mary also localize these Christian figures. It is potentially the new significance these motifs can bring to Christian iconography that allows them to be represented in the Last Judgment and the Virgin and child. Moreover, in the Last Judgment on the Antonius tombstone, there is a wingless standing figure on Christ’s right (Fig.17), which deviates from late medieval Italian images where Christ is flanked by two winged angels. Probably this surprising figure was developed in representations of the Last Judgment that circulated in Yuan China after the first establishment of the Franciscan community, so the Genoese patron family would not feel super unfamiliar with it.

As I mentioned in the visual analysis in chapter 2, on each tombstone, iconographies are not organically incorporated onto a unified plane. It seems like that local artisans who made the Yangzhou Latin tombstones had the images of the Last Judgment and the Virgin and child beforehand, and they attempted to adjust these images that existed in their knowledge according to the verbal account of the Genoese patron family. The story of St. Catherine of Alexandria that is visually narrated from left to right indicates that the iconography could be recounted by the patron with or without the help of the local Franciscan convent, for the storyline of the martyrdom is suitable for narration. The tiered-shape grave appears again in the entombment of St. Catherine of Alexandria, probably because local
artisans consulted the representation of graves in the Last Judgment. The figure of St. Antony the Abbot with a little demon could be described to local artisans as well. The idea of a contemplating figure and the concept of demon were not foreign to Yuan dynasty artisans. The Arhat is sometimes depicted as sitting and contemplating in Yuan paintings; demons appear in Yuan art as well. Thusly, no matter whether Yuan local artisans completely understood the interaction between St. Antony the Abbot and a demon or not, they could refer to motifs existing in the visual culture that they were more familiar with and then could create a portrait of St. Antony the Abbot and a little demon. Moreover, St. Antony the Abbot is depicted as sitting on a Chinese bench, possibly because the artisans tried to maintain a consistence between Christ in majesty and the male saint in terms of seats while also to show a degree of variety.

**Conclusion**

My thesis offers a hypothesis on the making process of the Yangzhou Latin tombstones, which has been ignored for long in the previous scholarship on the tombstones. My deductive approach is to find the Genoese patron family’s potential familiarity with the images on the tombstones. By discussing iconography of St. Catherine of Alexandria and the Last Judgment in late medieval Italian art, I find that the scenes on the tombstones would be identifiable for the patron family from Genoa. In Chapter 4, I zoomed into the twists and pointed out their visibility in Yuan China; therefore, the patron family could have been familiar with these details and recognize these reference points in the context of Yuan material culture.
In the broader cultural framework, these details reflect the multicultural society in which such hybrid funerary monuments came into existence. Visual elements together speak to the unprecedentedly diverse cultural landscape in China, when the *Pax Mongolica* settled the majority of Eurasia within a comparatively unified political scheme. The Yangzhou Latin tombstones actively situate themselves in such a pluralistic and culturally dynamic epoch: their uniqueness signals their own identity, while revealing the cultural interactions between diverse groups. The tiered-shape graves appearing in Islamic, Nestorian and Christian funerary practices reflect the ethnic or religious association between each group. The executioner of St. Catherine of Alexandria in the Mongol garments may not be of a Mongol ethnicity, but his garments align him more with a Mongol identity. Therefore, the executioner demonstrates the Yangzhou local artisans’ somehow negative impression of the Mongols, which is different from the reception of Mongol culture in north China.

The Yangzhou Latin tombstones are significant in three scopes. At first, within the Genoese patron family, the pictorial language and the Latin inscriptions specifically preserve their memory for the dead children, and therefore they cement the familial bond within Dominicus Ylionis’ family. The second scope is that these tombstones, as the concrete archaeological evidence, supplement the written evidence of western Christian activities in fourteenth-century China. The third layer is that the visual program on the tombstones indeed manifests the social interrelations between different groups in Yuan China. The Yangzhou Latin tombstones are not only a landmark of medieval Christianity in China, but more importantly, a witness of the entangled social interrelationships in the Yuan dynasty.

I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this thesis.
Images Cited
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Fig. 2 The Antonius Tombstone, Yangzhou, 1344
Fig. 3 Map of The Mongol Empire, 1294

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
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2. Region What parts of Asia did the Mongols not control?
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Fig 41 square seat excavated from a subterranean Yuan burial in north China.
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