

## 17. A Pair of Stucco Figures

Male: height: 64.2 cm. (25 3/8 in.)

Female: height: 66.7 cm. (26 1/4 in.)

Yuan dynasty

Late 13th century

Each figure is modeled in standing posture with head turned, the arms held in front with the female turning slightly and lifting a box draped in cloth, the male holding a small covered vessel. The robust and portly bodies are emphasized by sensitive sculpting of the heavy, enveloping drapery, which at the same time looks to be soft and pliant. The long robes drape in heavy folds down the fronts of the figures and are hiked and cinched at the waists while they flow straight and smoothly down the backs. The thigh-length jackets are full, gathered and belted at the waists, with hems undulating in a lively and stylish fashion. The figures comport themselves with dignity, with a self-confident, positive, yet amiable bearing, with welcoming gentle eyes and pleasant smiles. Both have handsome faces, firm and full, the skin tight and smooth and the features strongly modeled. The female's face is oval with full rounded cheeks while the male's face is somewhat more squarish in shape with a stronger chin and wider jowls. The long hair of the female figure is depicted in a series of deep parallel grooves, pulled back from the forehead and descending in thick strands over the ears, where one earring peeks through. A scarf is tied round the crown of the head and is partially wrapped around the hair over the neck. The male wears a hat, pulled across the forehead and standing high, draping a scarf behind. The material has the consistency of sun-baked clay and retains traces of traces of white, green, and red pigment.



The figures strike dramatic poses, much like actors, and carry with good humor the necessities or frivolities of their master, perhaps pleasant incense stored in the small covered vessel and some trinkets or tasty treats carried in the box. The stalwart bearing of these figures and subtle dynamism of their postures have much in common with a number of images dating to the 13th century, while their mode of dress and hair styles also conform to their time and their station, seen in other painted and sculpted images of the day. A male and female pair of servants illustrated here (fig. 1) are one of four such pairs painted on the walls on the side of the entrance to the tomb chamber in an early Yuan period tomb at Jiaozuo, Henan province. The figures are similar in their handsome bulk, belted garb, and postures—especially the male figure who turns rather gracefully and naturally. The demeanor, physique, and facial types, as well as such details as the hair and, importantly, the sculptural qualities of the present figures are similar to those characterizing the lively ceramic entertainers for which the tomb at Jiaozuo is most famous (figs. 2-3).<sup>1</sup>

Figures depicted in the Yuan dynasty wall paintings at Yonglegong in Shanxi province, dedicated to the Daoist immortal Lu Dongbin, are dressed in clothing similar to the figures here (fig. 4) and all are related to styles present in Buddhist sculpture also of the early Yuan period, as exemplified in the figure of Guanyin dated to A.D. 1282 in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 5). Also interesting is a group of earthenware figures from the tomb of Hong Zicheng (A.D. 1186-1264) and his wife discovered in the Lake Boyang area of Jiangxi province (figs. 6-9). Hong was an official, descendent of the very important scholar Hong Mai, and while his burial was not lavish, it is believed that the

ceramic figures are some indication of his love for drama, a favorite pastime of classes high and low as manifested in the great number of Song and later tombs with images of actors depicted in both painting and sculpture.<sup>2</sup> The figures from Hong's tomb, dating from the end of the Southern Song period, have many of the qualities of the present figures, including the engaging smiles and even the large ears which are evident too on a number of the figures illustrated above.

1. For the placement of the four pairs of male and female servants in the tomb see the drawing in *Wenwu*, 1979:8, fig. 7, p. 5. See pls. I:1-2 and 11:2 for the other pairs. The tomb is sometimes dated to the Yuan period but also to the Jin and even Song dynasty. In George Kuwayama, ed., *The Quest for Eternity*, Los Angeles, 1987, p. 145 and 148, the tomb is referred to as Song in date and it is noted that Yang Baoshun in *Henan wenbo tongshun*, 1979, dates it to the late Jin, as he and his team do in the excavation report in *Wenwu*, 1979:8, whereas in *Chugoku no Hakubutsukan*, vol. 7: Henan Provincial Museum, Tokyo, 1983, in *Zhongguo meishu quanji, diaosubian*, vol. 6, *Yuan Ming Qing diaosu*, Beijing, 1988, and in Sherman Lee, et.al., *China 5000 Years*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1998, the tomb is dated to the Yuan period. The painting style appears to support the later date as do a group of additional figures in the tomb which are stiffer and more staid, features not uncommon in Yuan sculpture, and their proportions less naturalistic than either our figures here or those depicted in the painting (see *Wenwu*, 1979:8, pl. III:1-4). At the same time the ewer held by one of the characters (fig. 3 here) has a true Song flavor.

2. The figures are also discussed by Danielle and Vadime Elisseff who note that they provide evidence of the development of the theatre (*zaju* and *xiju*) in the north and south prior to the Yuan dynasty in *New Discoveries in China*, Fribourg, 1983, p. 202.



Fig. 1: Wall painting, late 13th century A.D., from a tomb in Jiaozuo, Henan province, after *Wenwu*, 1979:8, p. II:I.



Fig. 2: An actor, ceramic, late 13th century A.D., from a tomb in Jiaozuo, Henan province, after *Zhongguo meishu quanji, diaosubian* 6, *Yuan Ming Qing diaosu*, Beijing 1988, fig 58.



Fig. 3: An actor, ceramic, late 13th century A.D., from a tomb in Jiaozuo, Henan province, after *ibid.*, fig. 59.



Fig. 4: Detail from a wall painting, 13th-14th century A.D., from the Yonglegong, Shanxi province, after *The Yongle Palace Murals*, Beijing, 1985, p. 103.



Fig. 5: Guanyin, wood, Yuan dynasty, dated A.D. 1282, after Sherman Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, Cleveland, 1968, no. 3, p. 116.



Fig. 6: Figure, ceramic, late Southern Song, from a tomb dated A.D. 1264, Jiangxi province, after *Wenwu*, 1979:4, pl. III:l.



Fig. 7: Figure, ceramic, late Southern Song, from a tomb dated A.D. 1264, Jiangxi province, after *Wenwu*, 1979:4, pl. IV:4.



Fig. 8: Figure, ceramic, late Southern Song, from a tomb dated A.D. 1264, Jiangxi province, after *Wenwu*, 1979:4, fig. 7, p. 8.



Fig. 9: Figure, ceramic, late Southern Song, from a tomb dated A.D. 1264, Jiangxi province, after *Wenwu*, 1979:4, fig. 12, p. 9.