

Taiyuan Tombs

1235 / 1271-1379 CE



THE EXHIBITION

What they share in common is that all have six/seven/eight panels around the funerary bed depicting scenes with 'men under trees'. It is possible to date six of the tombs and these all stem from the years 696–736CE. Although all the scenes are of the same genre, all are different – the number of men (one or two), whether they are the same in all scenes, the activities in which they are engaged. However, one or two scenes do recur – a snake offering a pearl, a man carrying wood, a man pointing at a tree. This all suggests a community with shared funeral practice and with shared beliefs, but what exactly these were remains a puzzle.

Taiyuan is the capital city of Shanxi Province, China. Like most Chinese cities it has witnessed a rapid expansion requiring new buildings and new infrastructure. All this construction work has revealed new tombs, dating from the early Tang Dynasty.

One was discovered in August 2018 by workmen constructing a new ring road; another a year later during the building of a primary school. Both sites have been excavated and subsequently backfilled to prevent damage.

Aside from the archaeologists and a few officials, no one has seen inside. These two tombs form the basis for exhibitions in Rooms One and Two.

Taiyuan is about 500kms northeast of Xi'an, the site of the former capital of the Tang Dynasty. About twenty similar tombs have been discovered.

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FEATURED IN THE EXHIBITION



ROOM ONE

A man with an axe carrying wood of his back from the tomb of Zhen Fan who died in 736CE at the age of sixty-three, and who may have owned a dumpling or noodle shop.

ROOM TWO

A man with a cup in his right hand, pointing to a tree with his left, with vapour appearing to come from his hand. This image is from the tomb of Guo Xing who had enjoyed a military career before being appointed governor of Hengzhou. He died in 700CE at the age of ninety-two.



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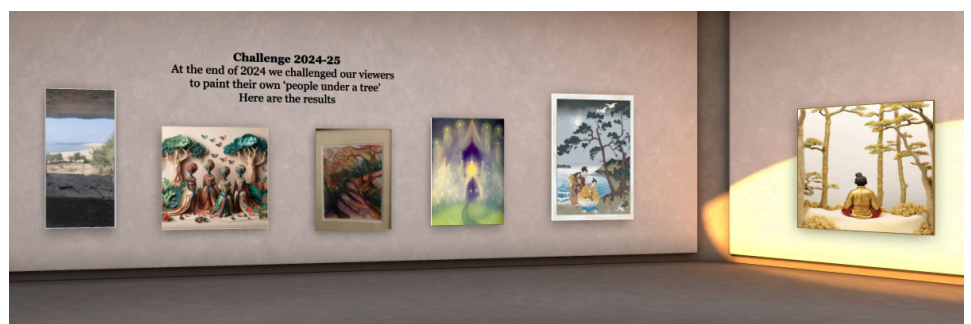
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ROOM THREE

A snake with a pearl in its mouth offering it to a man. This panel is from the tomb of Halienshan who died in 716 CE at the age of eighty-two who had chosen to live a quiet life after a brave military career.

Take a look at the challenge in Room three where people were challenged to paint their own version of Under the Tree.



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