

Content and Composition of Woodcarvings of Immortals in Luoyang Folk Museum

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Abstract: The image of immortal woodcarvings in Luoyang Folk Museum refers to the data digitized from the physical collections housed in Luoyang Folk Museum, including: (1) a set of pictures of immortal woodcarvings, consisting of pictures of statues of 27 statues of Wealth God, 8 statues of Guan, Yu, 17 statues of Door God, 5 statues of Mountain God, 4 statues of Thunder God, 36 statues of Land God, 3 statues of Kitchen God, 3 statues of Lord Ma, 71 statues of Guanyin, 29 statues of Lao-tzu and 7 statues of Lu-tsu; (2) statistical table of immortal woodcarvings, covering name, filing code, size, texture, age, quantity and thumbnail, etc. The dataset is archived in .jpg and pdf in data formats, and consisted of 211 files with data size of 1.42 GB (compressed into 4 files, with 1.41 GB in size).

Keywords: woodcarving; portrait of characters; immortal

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Dataset Availability Statement:

The dataset supporting this paper was published and is accessible through the *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository* at: <https://doi.org/10.3974/geodb.2021.07.04.V1> or <https://cstr.escience.org.cn/CSTR:20146.11.2021.07.04.V1>.

1 Introduction

In order to build Luoyang Lao-tzu Memorial Hall, Luoyang Folk Museum began to collect cultural relics related to Lao-tzu from 2011 to 2013, and finally obtained more than 1,000 woodcarving statues of Buddhism, Taoism and Jiaxian and others. Most of these woodcarving statues are from private sources, represented by more than 200 Taoist statues.

In terms of the time of origination, these woodcarvings of immortal statues would be traced back as early as to Yuan dynasty, then developed from Ming dynasty to the era of the Republic of China. Especially in Qing dynasty, it saw a golden period of its development. Among the modes of the spread of Chinese deity and Buddha culture by writing, traditional opera singing, sculpture and grotto carving, and family's sacrifice offering, the way of offering is most popular in terms of worshipper quantity and scope, which is

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[2] He, T. T. Wood carving figures dataset of immortals and gods archived in Luoyang Folk Museum [J/DB/OL]. *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3974/geodb.2021.07.04.V1>. <https://cstr.escience.org.cn/CSTR:20146.11.2021.07.04.V1>.

unprecedentedly seen during the Ming and Qing Dynasties^[1]. From the matter of the subject, these statues are mostly woodcarvings of immortals relevant to Buddhism, Taoism, especially Taoism and others. For the intended meaning of the expressions, these statues of woodcarving statues are mostly made to convey the best wishes of the working people, such as bringing peace to the family, offering more sons and the more blessings, making a good fortune, living a long life and so on. With a sense of religious belief, they are a true portrayal of the people’s spiritual life at that time, useful for studying the folk life, religious belief and woodcarving art of that time.

2 Metadata of the Dataset

The metadata of Wood carving figures dataset of immortals and gods archived in Luoyang Folk Museum^[2] is summarized in Table 1. It includes the dataset full name, short name, author, year of the dataset, data format, data size, data publisher, and data sharing policy, etc.

Table 1 Metadata summary of Wood carving figures dataset of immortals and gods archived in Luoyang Folk Museum

Items	Description
Dataset full name	Wood carving figures dataset of immortals and gods archived in Luoyang Folk Museum
Dataset short name	WoodCarvingFigures_LYFM
Author	He, T. T., Luoyang Folk Museum,1004752190@qq.com.
Location	Shanxi, Henan
Year	Qing dynasty (1636–1912).
Data format	.jpg, .pdf
Data Siz	1.42 GB
Data publisher	Global Change Research Data Publishing & Repository, http://www.geodoi.ac.cn
Address	No. 11A, Datun Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100101, China
Data sharing policy	<i>Data</i> from the Global Change Research Data Publishing & Repository includes metadata, datasets (in the <i>Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository</i>), and publications (in the <i>Journal of Global Change Data & Discovery</i>). <i>Data</i> sharing policy includes: (1) <i>Data</i> are openly available and can be free downloaded via the Internet; (2) End users are encouraged to use <i>Data</i> subject to citation; (3) Users, who are by definition also value-added service providers, are welcome to redistribute <i>Data</i> subject to written permission from the GCdataPR Editorial Office and the issuance of a <i>Data</i> redistribution license; and (4) If <i>Data</i> are used to compile new datasets, the ‘ten per cent principal’ should be followed such that <i>Data</i> records utilized should not surpass 10% of the new dataset contents, while sources should be clearly noted in suitable places in the new dataset ^[3]
Communication and searchable system	DOI, CSTR, Crossref, DCI, CSCD, CNKI, SciEngine, WDS/ISC, GEOSS

3 Main Content of the Dataset

This dataset refers to the collection of the digitized woodcarving statues collected by Luoyang Folk Museum, totaling 210 woodcarvings of immortal statues collected from 2011 to 2013, which would be traced back as early as to Yuan dynasty, Ming dynasty, Qing dynasty till the era of the Republic of China. In the data is specified the name, archive code, size, texture, age and quantity of woodcarving statues, which are further divided into 3 categories and 11 subcategories. To be specific, the data is comprised of pictures of 27 statues of Wealth God, 8 statues of Guan, Yu, 17 statues of god of door, 5 statues of Mountain God, 4 statues of Thunder God, 36 statues of Land God, 3 statues of Kitchen God,

3 statues of Lord Ma, 71 statues of Guanyin, 29 statues of Lao-tzu and 7 statues of Lu-tsu (Table 2, Figure 1–3, Table 3, Figure 4–6).

Most of the immortal statues collected in Luoyang Folk Museum have been carved in the Ming and Qing Dynasties when small woodcarving statues were extremely popular. Among the colorful works of art of Ming and Qing Dynasties in China, nothing can be widely spread like traditional woodcarvings, which appeal to both the more and the less cultured, including the upper class from the royal palace, temple, governmental department, villa residence of the super-rich and down to the common people’s living room. It is unprecedented that such a large number of woodcarvings have been passed down to this day^[1].

Table 2 Classification of Woodcarving Figures in Luoyang Folk Museum

Type	Wealth-related						Nature-related				Baby-blessing goddess	Total
	Gods of wealth	Guan, Yu	Lao-tzu	Lord Ma	Lu-tsu	Kitchen God	Mountain God	Door God	Thunder God	Land God	Guanyin	
Quantity	27	8	29	3	7	3	5	17	4	36	71	210

3.1 Worshipping of God of Wealth in Hope of Making More Money and Protect the Earnings

Caishen, widely worshipped by Chinese folks, is a god of wealth in charge of money making. In ancient times, it was often placed indoors that could bless people with money pouring in from all sides. Until today, such belief of Wealth God still exists widely among folks. There are two categories of statues collected by Luoyang Folk Museum, with one for civil Caishen represented by Bigan and another for martial Caishen by Zhao, Gongming and Guan, Yu.

The woodcarving of the civil Caishen collected in Luoyang Folk Museum is represented by Bigan statue, which is dressed in a Kylin robe and wears a black gauze cap custom-made for prime minister and five beams of beards, and holds symbols of wealth of a gold ingot or the Ruyi silver ingots under his feet. Bigan statue looks serious but delicate, with the typical dress-up of civil officer. According to a legend, Bigan, the uncle and prime minister of King Zhou of Shang dynasty, pleaded with King Zhou not to do offer the oppressive political ruling. Refused by the king, Bigan threatened him with death. Historical Records of Song, Weizi Family reads “Bigan, a relative of King Zhou, seeing Jizi enslaved due to his bold speaking in defense of justice, said that the people would suffer if the king did not listen to his minsters’ advice, and bluntly remonstrated with King Zhou. He became furious and intimidated Bigan by saying ‘do you believe there are seven orifices on the heart of a saint?’ King Zhou killed Bigan and dug out his heart.”^[4]. A legend has it that Bigan, with no greed for money, did not die even with no heart, and was named the civil god of wealth in charge of the world’s earnings. His statue in the museum looks gentle and quiet of disposition, and his noble qualities of loyalty, integrity and selflessness are kept deeply in the hearts of the working people, which represents the aspirations of people to live an affluent life by making more money. Therefore, the woodcarving follows the image of Bigan and became the civil god of wealth. Up to now, the picture of Bigan, the civil god of wealth, is still very popular during the period of Chinese Spring festival.

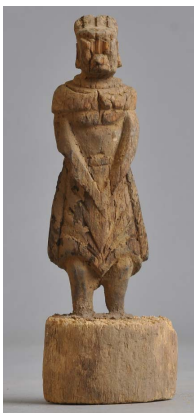


Figure 1 Door God (002144)



Figure 2 Door God (002324)



Figure 3 Wealth God (002290)

Table 3 List of collections

No.	Name	Code	No.	Name	Code
1	Woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God	002030	30	Woodcarving figure of Mountain God	001773
2	Woodcarving statue of martial Wealth God	002163	31	Woodcarving figure of Mountain God (male)	001908
3	Woodcarving statue of martial Wealth God	002164	32	Woodcarving statue of Mountain God	002542
4	Woodcarving statue of martial Wealth God	002165	33	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002141
5	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002287	34	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002142
6	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002288	35	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002143
7	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002290	36	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002144
8	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002291	37	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002145
9	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002292	38	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002146
10	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002318	39	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002147
11	Martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002319	40	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002148
12	Colored woodcarving figure of Wealth God	002341	41	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002149
13	Colored woodcarving figure of Wealth God	002361	42	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002150
14	Colored woodcarving figure of Wealth God	002404	43	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002160
15	Woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002445	44	Door God	002249
16	Woodcarving golden figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002446	45	Woodcarving statue of Door God	002324
17	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002447	46	Colored woodcarving statue of Door God	002502
18	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002448	47	Colored woodcarving statue of Door God	002503
19	Woodcarving golden figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002449	48	Colored woodcarving statue of Door God	002504
20	Woodcarving golden figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002453	49	Colored woodcarving statue of Door God	002505
21	Woodcarving golden figure of Wealth God	002464	50	Woodcarving statue of Thunder God	002151
22	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002490	51	Woodcarving statue of Thunder God	002152
23	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002491	52	Woodcarving statue of Thunder God	002153
24	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002493	53	Woodcarving statue of Thunder God	002162
25	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002494	54	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001975
26	Colored woodcarving figure of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming	002574	55	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001976
27	Woodcarving statue of Wealth God	002909	56	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001977
28	Woodcarving figure of Mountain God	001739	57	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001978
29	Woodcarving figure of Mountain God	001764	58	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001979

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(Continued)

No.	Name	Code	No.	Name	Code
59	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001980	96	Statue of Avaloktesvar	002281
60	Woodcarving statue of Land God	001981	97	Statue of Avaloktesvar	002282
61	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002034	98	Statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002325
62	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002085	99	Statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002326
63	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002086	100	Statue of Avaloktesvar	002335
64	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002087	101	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002412
65	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002088	102	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar (golden-surfaced)	002450
66	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002089	103	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002470
67	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002090	104	Colored woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002472
68	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002091	105	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002482
69	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002092	106	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002483
70	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002093	107	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002484
71	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002094	108	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002485
72	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002095	109	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002486
73	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002096	110	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002487
74	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002097	111	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002488
75	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002098	112	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002489
76	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002099	113	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002532
77	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002100	114	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002533
78	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002101	115	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar (golden-surfaced, two pieces)	002534
79	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002102	116	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002535
80	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002103	117	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002536
81	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002159	118	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002537
82	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002161	119	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002568
83	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002243	120	Colored woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002570
84	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002244	121	Colored woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002573
85	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002245	122	Woodcarving statue of sitting Avaloktesvar(with niche)	002633
86	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002336	123	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002634
87	Woodcarving figure of Land God	002353	124	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar(golden-surfaced)	002635
88	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002512	125	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002636
89	Woodcarving statue of Land God	002513	126	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002670
90	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar (2 pieces)	002028	127	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002672
91	Woodcarving statues of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar, pure youth and maiden	002106	128	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002673
92	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002166	129	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002674
93	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002193	130	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002676
94	Statue of Avaloktesvar	002274	131	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002678
95	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002275	132	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002681

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(Continued)

No.	Name	Code	No.	Name	Code
133	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002682	172	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002499
134	Colored woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002683	173	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002543
135	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002725	174	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu holding <i>The Tao Te Ching</i>	002889
136	Statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar (golden-surfaced)	002745	175	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002895
137	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002752	176	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002896
138	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002753	177	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002900
139	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002756	178	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002904
140	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002760	179	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002912
141	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002761	180	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002915
142	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002762	181	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002916
143	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002764	182	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002918
144	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002768	183	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002927
145	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002769	184	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002928
146	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002771	186	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	003159
147	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002772	185	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu (Luo, Yongqing)	003158
148	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002773	187	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	003160
149	Woodcarving statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar	002777	188	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	003163
150	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002804	189	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	003199
151	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002805	190	Colored woodcarving statue of Lord Ma	002473
152	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	002932	191	Colored woodcarving statue of Lord Ma	002474
153	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003026	192	Colored woodcarving statue of Lord Ma	002501
154	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003166	193	Woodcarving statue of Lu-tsu	001946
155	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003167	194	Woodcarving statue of Taoist Lu-tsu	001990
156	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003168	195	Statue of Lu-tsu	002279
157	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003169	196	Statue of Lu-tsu	002280
158	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003285	197	Woodcarving statue of Lu-tsu	002323
159	Woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003387	198	Woodcarving statue of Lu-tsu	002539
160	Colored woodcarving statue of Avaloktesvar	003392	199	Colored statue of Lu-tsu(golden-surfaced)	002554
161	Statue of Lao-tzu	002276	200	Memorial tablet of Kitchen God	001091
162	Statue of Lao-tzu	002277	201	Statue of Kitchen God and Goddess	002211
163	Painted Buddha statue of Lao-tzu	002321	202	Woodcarving statue of Kitchen God	002575
164	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002452	203	Woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	001951
165	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu (golden-surfaced)	002455	204	Woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	002031
166	Woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu (golden-surfaced)	002457	205	Colored statue of Guan, Yu	002209
167	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002460	206	Colored statue of Land God (golden-surfaced)	002357
168	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002495	207	Woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	002360
169	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002496	208	Colored woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	002408
170	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002497	209	Woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	002511
171	Colored woodcarving statue of Lao-tzu	002498	210	Woodcarving statue of Guan, Yu	00888

Zhao, Gongming, known as martial god of wealth, is also worth noting. Luoyang Folk Museum holds the largest number of statues of martial Wealth God Zhao, Gongming. As a legendary figure in the folklore, Zhao can be found in fairy tales in many ancient books like *In Search of the Supernatural*, *Origin of Three Religions*, etc. However, his public image of being the martial god of wealth is actually derived from *Creation of the Gods*, written in Ming dynasty. Zhao, Gongming was regarded as a god and Jiang Ziya named him Blessing God supervising four deities who bless people with different forms of luck and wealth.

The woodcarvings of Zhao, Gongming collected in Luoyang Folk Museum are just a small share of the Wealth God in Qing dynasty. At that time, the god of wealth was enshrined and worshipped in almost every household during Qing dynasty. As the god in charge of financial resources in folklore, Zhao, Gongming became an embodiment for the Chinese working people to have a good fortune and achieve every success.

Luoyang Folk Museum has a collection of woodcarving statues of Guan, Yu, another martial god of wealth. Dressed in broad robe and jade belt, Guan, Yu had a martial bearing and thick eyebrows, reading *The Spring and Autumn Annals* while sitting or holding broadsword while standing. Guan, Yu was loyal and brave all his life, not greedy for gold and silver so that he was worshipped by the followers of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. After Guan, Yu's death, the people honored Guan, Yu as Guangong, and many imperial courts in the past dynasties sang high praise for him. The carving of Guan, Yu's statues are mostly funded by the government while Zhao, Gongming's carvings are supported by civilians. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Guan, Yu was regarded as the King of martial art and Saint of war. Making use of the people's firm belief in Guangong, the rulers of feudal society portrayed him as the defender of the ethics of feudal society. Therefore, they repaired the Guandi Temple extensively while vigorously publicized and advocated him as a model of loyalty and courage.



Figure 4 Statue of Guan, Yu (002209)



Figure 5 Statue of Kitchen God (002211)



Figure 6 Statue of Wealth God (002494)

Most of these woodcarving statues of Guangong collected in Luoyang Folk Museum were dated back to Ming and Qing Dynasties. Guangong was regarded by folks as a mascot good at money making and saving. Reading *The Spring and Autumn Annals* while sitting or holding broadsword while standing represents that Guangong is well versed in both

literature and military affairs. For this reason, businessmen often worship Guangong in expectation of making big money by their learning.

3.2 Statue of Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvara

There are a total of 71 pieces or sets of the sitting statue of Avaloktesvara collected in Luoyang Folk Museum, most of which are small and medium-sized woodcarving works (Figure 7). The statues, holding a baby sitting or standing, always look quiet and solemn, gentle and beautiful, leisurely and easy.

After the Ming dynasty, there were folk stories in Buddhism that Avaloktesvara taught her disciples Shancai and Daughter of the Dragon, from then on, Shancai and Daughter of the Dragon always come out in the meantime, implying to bring good luck and happiness to people. The statue of Avaloktesvara sending a child witnesses the secularization and looks like female folk so that she becomes approachable, gentle, quiet and popular among the people. In the feudal society, many people went to temples to make wishes for having a large family or having more sons in front of the statue of Avaloktesvara.

Most of these woodcarvings collected in Luoyang Folk Museum are of small size, which are easy to carry and put in order for individual families. It can be seen that the belief in Avaloktesvara sending a child has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and the Guanyin worshipping of human reproduction has been passed down from generation to generation.



Figure 7 Baby-blessing Goddess Avaloktesvar (002106)

3.3 Worshipping Earth God, Mountain God, Raytheon and Dragon King for Peace

There are statues of 5 Mountain Gods, 4 Thunder Gods and 36 Land Gods collected in Luoyang Folk Museum (Figure 8–10). These gods in terms of natural elements such as land, mountains and thunder are worshipped for the reason that people have faith in the force of nature in feudal society in hope of these natural gods blessing them safe and sound.



Figure 8 Mountain God (002542)



Figure 9 Woodcarving Statue of Thunder God (002162)



Figure 10 Land Lord (002034)

Land God, known as the guardian of people's wellbeing, is one of the immortals for folks in ancient times, extremely popular in spite of its low status in Taoist deity system. The worship of Land God began and prevailed in the Ming dynasty, which is closely related to the birth of Zhu, Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, in the land temple. In the feudal society, people showed high respect for monarchy and farmed the land for food and clothing. Therefore, the temple of local god of the land and statues has been built all around to show the locals' worship of Land Gods. The statues of these Land Gods collected in Luoyang Folk Museum are mostly of the civil officers or elders, holding a walking stick, or a Ruyi, Yuanbao and so on. They look kind in face and plain in clothes. These woodcarving statues are dressed like ancient landlords, with hats on their heads and two pieces of cloth at the brim drooping over their shoulders. Generally speaking, they wear plain clothes, with round and plump faces, slightly narrowed eyes and a kind smile. Some of these woodcarvings of the Land God are enshrined either in the temple or in people's home. Such practice embodies people's worship of the land, and they expect it to bring good luck and harvest for farmers, to come first in the highest imperial examination and to get rich and prosperous for businessmen.

In addition, there are 29 statues of Lao-tzu's, 7 Lu-tsu's, 3 horse lords and 3 Kitchen Gods stored in Luoyang Folk Museum (Figure 11–13).



Figure 11 Statue of Lao-tzu (002457)



Figure 12 Statue of Lu-tsu (002280)

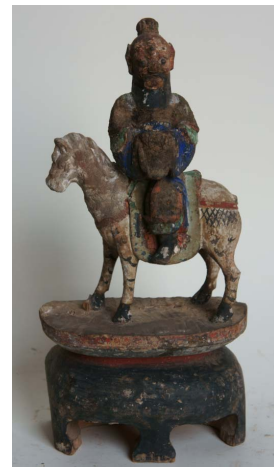


Figure 13 Statue of Lord Ma (002474)

4 Conclusion

If the history is likened as a river, a museum should be a bridge, which would connect the present with the past and be very forward-looking. The worshippers of immortals are always very superstitious due to the backward productivity in feudal society. It is a common belief in immortals for the ancients, which should be called the faith in the instinctive survival rather than the faith in a primitive religion. Such belief can help people to conquer the fear of death^[1]. The working people in the past don't know how to get through the long night and how to face birth, senility, illness and death, hence they embody their way of thinking in

immortals, and hope that the gods of nature can bless the good weather, safeness and smoothness, and the life of wealth and happiness.

These woodcarving statues have provided physical evidence for today's people to understand people's living conditions, folk customs and spiritual beliefs in a specific period of the history. To conquer the fear of death, people should be provided with the firm belief in the solidity and indestructibility of human life^[5]. On the other hand, there is a high artistic value for these precious historical artifacts, from which the carving techniques, unique plastic arts, selection and preservation of raw materials are all worthy of in-depth study.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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