Introduction:
The tomb of the Princess of Chen of the Liao Dynasty of China, buried in the 11th century, contains an unusually high quantity of amber. The Liao Dynasty, ruled and founded by the Khitan people, was in the process of adopting Chinese cultural practices, including burial practices, which differs greatly from traditional Khitan burial and death practices. The Imperial Liao tombs incorporated some burial practices of the earlier golden age of China, the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). Placing the contents of the tombs at the Princess of Chen in the context of the earlier Chinese Tang tombs, contemporary Chinese Song (960-1279) CE tombs, and the relationship between the Khitan people and the Chinese Empires, I aim to answer two questions:

First: what was the significance of the presence of the amber to the Khitan Liao people, and
Second: what was the significance of the presence of the amber to the Khitan Liao people, and to the Royal Court?

Results:

A.1. The Liao tombs make up 9% of the amber found in the tombs of the Liao Dynasty, of which 87% contain reported grave goods.

A.2. Approximately 7% of Liao tombs contained reported amber. 8% of Liao tombs with grave goods reported amber, compared to 13.3% of Song tombs with reported grave goods which contain amber.

B.1. Imperial Liao amber was in massive quantities throughout the three main modes. The first was demanding tribute from favourable peace negotiations with Song Dynasty. Second was strategic through trade network reaching as far as Syriac and the Baltic Sea. Thirdly, through gifts from foreign nations and tribute taken from producers within and near the empire.

B.2. Central Asian Islamic mummies indicated the Liao would import Baltic amber due to its deeper colour. Also indicates the Chinese would use the amber to “ward against the evil eye”.

B.3. Every Dynasty has a set of five colours associated with them. The Imperial colour was Purple, or red blue “9th”. This colour is associated with Internality in buddhist doctrine, and Supremacy in Confucian doctrine.

Conclusion:
The amber found in many Liao tombs is deeply associated with the Liao dynasty. Making up the clear majority of tomb found amber in northern China between the 9th and 13th centuries. This has led to a plethora of amber found in the tombs of the Liao Dynasty. One of the main reasons is the symbolic significance of the amber in the tombs. In order to understand the connection between the Liao Dynasty and their use of amber, I will be attempting to find answers to the origins of the Liao Dynasty and their use of amber. It is evident that the use of amber in the tombs is an intermixing of Qidan religious practices and the use of Chinese idioms to legitimize the expansion of the Liao Dynasty.

Bibliography:


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