



Was Tong Bin a historical figure, and what is the reason behind the widespread respect for this figure in Jingdezhen?

During the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, the imperial kiln factory was dedicated to pursuing diversity and complexity in the patterns and forms of porcelain. In addition to producing large-scale dragon cylinders and screens, they also made chessboards, chess stones, pen holders, candlesticks, and even secret play devices, capable of making everything with exquisite craftsmanship.

In 1599, a eunuch named Pan Xiang came to Jingdezhen to supervise the production of blue and white dragon cylinders. However, the cylinder could not be successfully fired for a long time. Pan Xiang whipped and even killed the porcelain workers. A kiln worker master named Tong Bin (from Licun Village) couldn't bear it and bravely fought against Pan Xiang out of anger for loyalty and justice. He ultimately jumped into the kiln fire to protest against Pan Xiang's actions. The kiln workers were grief-stricken. Tong Bin's sacrifice ignited the indignation of the porcelain workers. People shouted for Pan Xiang to pay for his deeds, which frightened Pan Xiang and he hurriedly fled back to the capital.

In order to appease the people's anger and alleviate social unrest, the authorities built a temple called "Yutao Lingci" (Shrine of Yutao) on the east side of the imperial kiln factory to commemorate Tong Bin and regarded him as the "God of Wind and Fire." Inside the temple, there is a statue of Tong Bin, and on both sides are statues of various kiln worker masters, such as

mold-making masters, base-making masters, plastering masters, miscellaneous workers, etc., covering almost every process needed to make ceramics. Furthermore, according to local documents, during the reign of Tang Ying, who was the superintendent of ceramics in the Qing Dynasty, he moved the rejected donated vessels from the Ming Dynasty and a bottomless blue dragon cylinder from Sengming Temple to the Fire God Shrine. They were placed on a high platform and accompanied by the "Fire God Legend" and the "Dragon Cylinder Record." Another superintendent, Nian Xiyao, also wrote the inscription for the "Monument of the Restoration of the Fire God Temple." These records of Tong Bin's deeds are still preserved in local documents.

According to existing historical records and documentations, Tong Bin is a fictional character from the Ming Dynasty, and there is no solid evidence to prove his existence. In the historical stories and legends of Jingdezhen, Tong Bin is a symbol of bravery and sacrifice, representing the love and dedication of the porcelain workers to their craft and industry. His story is used to pass on the spirit and values of the ceramic craftsmanship in Jingdezhen. Although there may be various versions and details of Tong Bin's story, we should understand them as legends and fables rather than exact historical figures.