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Silk Road Exchange in China

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Aftereffects of Silk Road Exchange in China

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Activities of all sorts that took place on the Silk Road have become progressively more interesting to a wider audience in the past few years. Certainly the increased attention results in large part simply from the increase in materials available for study, especially from China. This renewed awareness is reinforced by the lively and interactive world in which we live today, which offers, for example, a number of television-ready documentaries on the Silk Road (NHK 1989, 1990). Beyond mere romance, these videos and recently published texts are serious studies that bring new historical documentation into the field in fresh ways, whatever the target audience.

Wonderful new publications and exhibitions have enhanced our knowledge and understanding of this exchange. For instance, there have been two major exhibitions in the past three years: one on "Monks and Merchants" at the Asia Society in New York in 2001 and the other on "The Glory of the Silk Road: Art from Ancient China" at the Dayton Art Institute in 2003. Both exhibits were accompanied by handsome catalogues with sets of essays written for the scholarly audiences (Juliano and Lerner 2001; Li 2003). Other key recent volumes on various aspects of exchange include: Richard Foltz's text on religions of the Silk Road (2000), Sally Wriggins' relatively new version of Xuan Zang's text (1996), Elfriede Knauer's ingenious study called *The Camel's Load in Life and Death* (1998), and Vadime Elisseeff's edited volume on the "Highways of Culture and Commerce." The Silk Road Foundation website has the most up-to-date information on lectures, publications, seminars, travel, and the like, so that the most casual visitor as well as scholars who visit the site can find something of interest (Silk Road Foundation 2004). In a class by itself is the glorious photographic work of a modern-day traveler, Jonathan Tucker, who guides the reader visually along the Silk Road from western Asia, across the steppe, Central Asia, and into and around China (2003). Many, many accounts of new excavations in western China have been published in archaeological journals and entire books as well (See Bibliography, Li 2003: 232-46.). Some of the more spectacular of

these include the excavation of the mummies of Tarim Basin published in English language by James Mallory and Victor Mair (2000) and the study of textiles from those sites discussed by Elizabeth Barber (1999). These discoveries open up the question of when this exchange began, which is clearly long before the ancient Chinese government officially authorized routes of trade beyond the borders of the Empire.

The papers that follow treat materials and ideas that were traded, exchanged, and/or manufactured along the Silk Road and that had a considerable and lasting effect in Chinese society. Evidence from archaeological, religious, and social contexts confirms their value far beyond their commercial worth. In this volume, art historians, historians of trade and religion, as well as archaeologists, come together to consider materials from the Silk Road as residual evidence of the movement of people, artifacts, and ideas into China. The authors explore the use of such items, the materials of their manufacture and the technology used to produce them, as well as their content in relation to several questions: What role did these “exotic” ideas and materials have in the lives of their patrons and/or owners? Are new ideas and materials valued as “foreign” (Wu JM, Wu XL) or are they fully incorporated or assimilated into the dominant ways of thinking as a way of “controlling” foreignness (Wu HY)? Are forms changed and original representational integrity lost in favor of technological display (Krieg), or are technology and iconography used intentionally to express a gender and/or class distinction (Wu JM, Wu XL, Lullo, Krieg)?

Because familiarity with material science, the history of ideas, epigraphy, and the archaeology of death, with analysis of iconography, commercial and political exchange are required to analyze these questions, the papers are grounded in interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches. They were first generated in my graduate seminar at the University of Pittsburgh in spring 2003. From that group of papers these five were selected to be delivered at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in San Diego in 2004. The result of this work is a set of papers trained on examining and explaining the effects of Silk Road exchange in China.

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Exotica in the Funerary Debris in the State of Zhongshan: Migration, Trade, and Cultural Contact

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In ancient Chinese texts, the State of Zhongshan 中山 (c. 450-296 BC) (Fig. 1) of the Warring States Period (476-221 BC) is claimed to have been founded by a group of semi-nomadic pastoralists called the White Di 白狄 who migrated eastward from the Ordos region and Northern Shaanxi 陕西 during the sixth century BC. During the late 1970's, the excavation of the tomb of King Cuo, who died around 313 BC in Hebei 河北 Province, brought to light thousands of artifacts of various materials. Although most artifacts belong to the Zhou tradition of material culture, some bear exotic decorative motifs, including raptor heads, winged felines, and animal-combat scenes. This paper discusses these foreign motifs in relation to migration and trade.

After being rejected for two decades, migration theory recently has received renewed interest in archaeology, for its study of inter-regional dynamics, including the diffusion of technology and ideology, inter-polity trade, and inter-polity exploitation. Scholars have begun to view migration as a patterned human behavior whose structure can be analyzed (Anthony 1990, 895). Using historical texts and

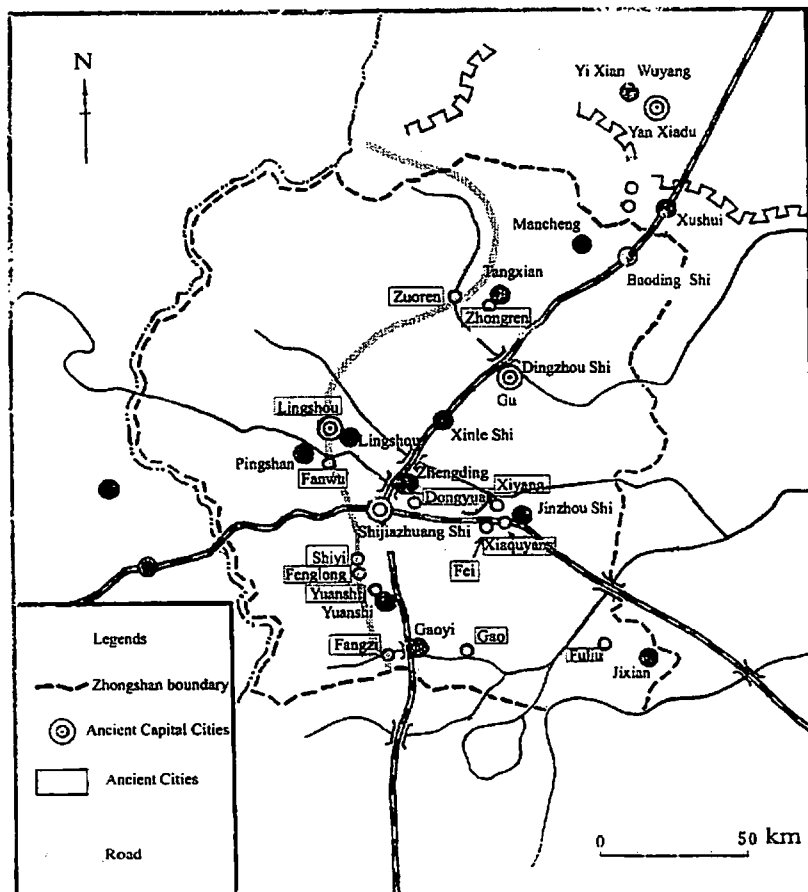


Fig. 1 Map of the Zhongshan State showing the capital city at Lingshou and an important north-south highway (based on *Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics* 1995, 6)

archaeological remains, this article argues that Zhongshan was an important part of the so-called

steppe silk road that connected China and Central Asia during the Eastern Zhou period, and that trade and migration, as interconnected processes, were both important contexts in which the interpretation of the Zhongshan artifacts must be carried out.

Raptor-head Motif or Bird-of-prey

Two jade combs with a raptor-head motif were found in King Cuo's tomb (Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics 1995, color pl. 30). One of them has a semicircular handle decorated with a cutout design of two birds whose heads turn away from each other, both birds having pronounced beaks. The other comb has a handle formed by more stylized curvilinear lines resembling an animal face, but a closer look reveals that each curve is actually the hooked beak of a raptor, whose eyes, however, are reduced to a comma-shaped pattern.

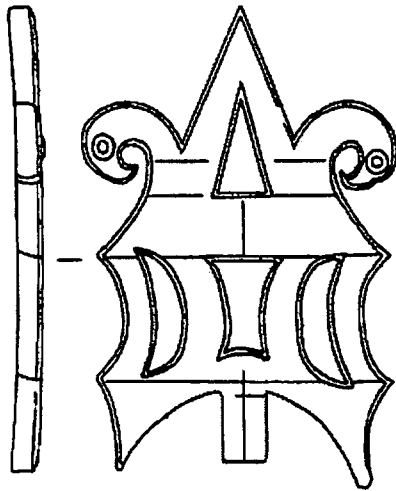


Fig. 2 Tile fastener decorated with two raptor heads
(after Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1989, Fig. 33)

Heads of birds of prey also appeared on architectural ornaments of some Zhongshan buildings. Some caps for tile nails found at the Zhongshan capital at Lingshou 灵寿 are decorated with two raptor heads (Fig. 2) (Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1989, 60). They have hooked beaks and large eyes represented by two incised concentric circles. Facing opposite directions, the beaks share similar composition with those on the jade combs.

Raptor-head appendages began to appear on artifacts of the pastoral tribes along the northwest frontier of China in the later half of the fourth century BC, and mythical animals displaying raptor-head body parts were traditionally associated with nomadic tribes located further west (Bunker 1992). Archaeological sites where artifacts with raptor-head attributes were found cluster in the northern and western edges of China's cultural frontier. For instance, raptor-head appendages appeared on bronze belt plaques and on pommels of bronze daggers as early as the fifth century BC at the Maoqinggou 毛庆沟 cemetery in north central Inner Mongolia (Tian and Guo 1986, 299-302). Images of raptors abound on artifacts buried in the Xiongnu 匈奴 tombs in the Ordos region. The head of the eagle on the golden headdress from a tomb at Aluchaideng 阿鲁柴登 in the Ordos region can turn to different directions (Tian and Guo 1980, 334). A golden headdress dated to the fourth century BC found

in Nalin'gaotu 纳林高兔 in northern Shaanxi Province is decorated with a hoofed animal that has a beak and various raptor-head appendages (Dai and Sun 1983, pl. 4.1). These artifacts and their raptor-related imagery were indicators of high status, and they were probably made by the Chinese for the nomadic pastoral peoples living in northwest China and the Ordos region (So and Bunker 1995, 58).

The appearance of the raptor-head motif on these artifacts suggests that northern motifs had been incorporated into the decorative vocabulary of the Zhongshan workshops soon after they appeared on the northern and western borders of such states as the Qin and the Zhao. The tile nail ornaments were found together with pottery tiles in a kiln at the Zhongshan capital at Lingshou, probably an official workshop run by the government (Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 1989, 417). These tile and roof ornaments probably were made for palaces and other buildings related to the king, such as buildings on King Cuo's tomb mound, and their decorative imagery must have served as an important visual symbol of the regime. The jade combs must have also been objects of display, although used in a more private setting. The raptor-head motif on these objects suggests that the Zhongshan elite had quickly accepted this imagery in both their public and private lives as an indicator of status.

Winged Felines

During the fifth and fourth centuries BC, winged felines as a new motif appeared in a vast area on the steppe from central Asia to the borders of China. They were found on ornaments made of gold, silver, and bronze, buried with their owners. In Kazakhstan and Xinjiang 新疆, winged felines feature real animals in the round, such as lions and leopards, with short wings behind their necks (Davis-Kimball 1998, Figs. 8, 9). In Xinjiang, winged



Fig. 3 Winged feline with silver inlay found in King Cuo's tomb (after Hebeisheng Wenwu Guanlichu 1979, pl. 3.1)

felines also appear on gold decorative buttons from the fourth- and third-century tombs at Alagou 阿拉沟, east of the Tianshan 天山 Mountains (Xinjiang Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1981, pl. 8.3). The ornaments with winged felines are mostly small and flat items attached to other materials, such as cloth.

Four winged felines made of bronze, cast in the round, were found in the tomb of King Cuo (Fig. 3). Geometric patterns and two fantastic birds rendered with silver inlay decorate their smooth bodies. Long wings extend backwards from both sides of the body, and the tips curve upward. Strips of silver inlay and fine incised lines represent individual features on their wings. Unlike winged felines from Central Asia, the bodies of these beasts are so stylized that it is impossible to identify them with any real animal. The emergence of the winged feline motif in China was inspired by similar motifs on the steppe (Li 2001), and this motif probably came to the attention of Zhongshan artisans through the flow of commodities.

Predator with Victim

Predator-with-victim and animals-in-combat were popular motifs in the art of the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples on the northern frontier of China during the fifth and fourth centuries BC (Linduff 1997, 39). During the late third century BC, representations of predator-with-victim had become such a familiar iconographic idiom along the northern frontier of China that its adaptation by Chinese artisans was no longer a rare occurrence. For instance, a gold rectangular decorative plaque found in Tomb 2 at Xigoupan 西沟畔, Jungar banner, Inner Mongolia, has a relief pattern on its front that depicts a combat between a tiger and a boar (Yikezhaomeng Wenwu Gongzuo Zhan 1980, pl. 2); some gold decorative plaques found in Tomb 30 at Xinzhuangtou 辛庄头, Yixian 易县, Hebei Province, also have representations of predators-with-prey (Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics 1996, 715). The Chinese characters on the back of these plaques specifying their weight suggest that they were made in workshops of such states as Zhao (Li 1984, 276). The bronze tiger attacking a deer found in Cuo's tomb, however, is more than catching up with the fashion (Fig. 4). One of three stands for a folding screen, this object was cast solid in the round in bronze decorated with gold and silver inlay. It weighs 27 kilograms and extends 51 centimeters from head to tail. The size and embellishment of this object was unexpected among artifacts of the same motif, and when

displayed it must have proposed a strong statement, suggesting both a cultural connection with the northern nomads and the power and authority of its owner.

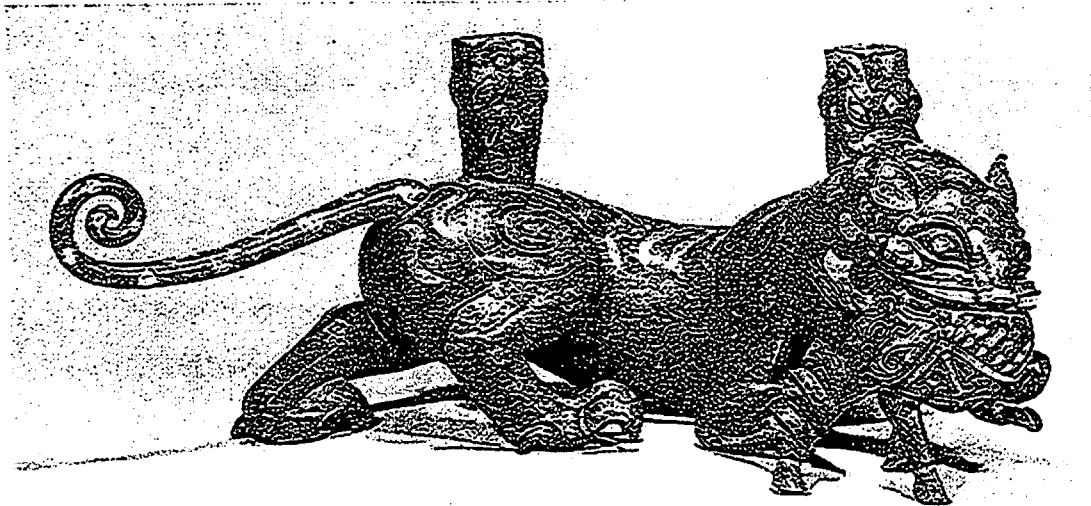


Fig. 4 Bronze screen stand shaped as a tiger devouring a deer found in King Cuo's tomb
(after Hebeisheng Wenwu Guanlichu 1979, pl. 2.1).

Glass Beads

Many glass beads were found in Cuo's tomb and its auxiliary tombs. Chemical tests on the glass beads suggest that they have different chemical components. Most of these beads contain large proportions of lead and barium oxides, and this kind of glass was made only in China in ancient times (Shi and Zhou 1995, 589). Some glass beads, however, do not contain lead and barium oxides. For instance, a so-called "eye bead," 2 centimeters in length, dark green in color, has blue dots surrounded by white rings on the surface (Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics 1995, pl. 187.1). A chemical test shows that its components are similar to some ancient Egyptian glass beads dated back to 1400 BC (Shi and Zhou 1995). Different components of these glass beads indicate different places of production.

Many Chu tombs of the Warring States Period around the Changsha 长沙 area yielded glass artifacts, including *bi* discs, sword ornaments, and beads. Most of these artifacts are lead-barium glass and were probably made around the Changsha area. Some of them, such as the so-called "Greek beads" or "eye beads," did not contain lead and barium, and they were considered imports from the west (Hunansheng Bowuguan 2000, 513-20). They probably reached the Chu state by a down-the-line type of trade through India and Southeast Asia (Hou 1995, 258-72).

An eye bead found in a tomb at Jinshengcun 金胜村 near Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi 山西 Province, suggests another route for imported beads. The thirteen beads found in this tomb were originally strung together in a ring (Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996, 159). The largest one is very similar in shape and pattern to the eye bead found in Cuo's tomb, which is of sodium-calcium glass. Larger in size and more refined in craftsmanship, it stands out from the other twelve beads, and must have been cherished by its owner. It is probably also a sodium-calcium bead traded from the West. This tomb was dated to the early fifth century, earlier than the oldest glass beads found in the Chu tombs around Changsha. It is probable that this glass bead came into the possession of the tomb owner through the northern frontier of China, instead of the Chu area.

Discussion: Trade and Migration

Interestingly, some ancient Chinese texts suggest that the White Di originally lived in the Ordos region and northern Shaanxi before they migrated to north-central Hebei province and founded a state called Zhongshan (Chen 1969). This Zhongshan was conquered by the Wei 魏 around 406 BC. The Zhongshan, who regained independence after the rule of Wei, under discussion here, were also assigned a Di origin (Li 1984, 75-85). Zhongshan artifacts that show northern flavors such as the characteristics discussed in this article were thought by many scholars to suggest the "northern origin" of the Zhongshan. However, the ethnic identity of the Zhongshan rulers is still uncertain. Moreover, the population of Zhongshan was a mixture of different ethnic and cultural groups (Průšek 1971, 1989). Our interpretation of these artifacts calls for perspectives other than a focus on ethnic and cultural identities.

Significant trans-Eurasian exchanges of goods, culture, and ideas took place no later than the second millennium BC and intensified during the first millennium BC (Christian 2000, 14-5). Silk and other Chinese products found at Pazyryk suggest a trade network connecting Central Asia, Siberia, and China proper in the middle of the first millennium BC. The bronze, gold, and silver ornaments featuring natural and fantastic animals that spread across the Eurasian Steppe from the Black Sea to the northern frontier of China also attest to this steppe trade route.

According to a letter to King Huiwen of Zhao (赵惠文王) in 283 BC, recorded in the *Shiji*, the trade route on which jade was imported to China passed through the northern part of Shanxi Province (Ma and Wang 1994, 5; Sima et al. 1959, 1818), the territory of the state of Dai

before it was annexed by Zhao in the mid-fifth century BC. In addition to jade, other important commodities including horses from Dai (“Daima 代马”) and dogs from Hu (“Huquan 胡犬”) also flowed into the Central Plain states through this route.

King Mu's Journey to the West, a book compiled during the Warring States Period, also gives us a hint about the route followed by the travelers of this period. This route starts from the Loyang 洛阳 area, goes north across Hebei Province and turns west through northeast Shanxi Province in order to bypass the hostile Qin 秦 state on its way west (Qian 1982). An important section of this route relied on the road system within the Zhongshan territory (Fig. 1). Zhongshan controlled the high and flat terraces at the foot of the Taihang 太行 Mountains, a strategic highway for the movement of both commodity and troops. In addition, Lu Hongchang's research indicates that a north-south highway connected the Zhao capital Handan 邯郸 and the Zhongshan capital Lingshou, and went further north through the Daoma Pass (倒马关) into the Dai territory in northern Shanxi Province (Lu 1986). This highway was probably the route over which jade from Kunlun 昆仑, horses from Dai, and dogs from Hu were transported into the Chinese states east of the Qin, and it was also an important route for Chinese exports.

The trade network connecting Central Asia and the Central Plain in the Warring States Period depended on a down-the-line method (Wang 1993, 179). Various political or ethnic groups on this route controlled sections of it and formed parts of this chain of exchange, such as the Yuezhi 月氏 who controlled the Hexi 河西 corridor, and therefore controlled the flow of jade from Xinjiang to China proper. The Zhongshan might have been another group that served as an intermediary on this trade route. According to the *Shiji*, the Zhongshan territory was a densely populated area and good farming land was rare; the Zhongshan people relied on profiteering for their living.¹ Since a large portion of its population had come from the Ordos region and northern Shaanxi through Shanxi since the sixth century BC, the trade route discussed above was probably also the route they followed in their migration to Hebei. Movement across the Taihang Mountains was possible only through a series of mountain passes along the modern border between Shanxi and Hebei. Large-scale movement of people or commodities could not have

¹ “Huozhi liezhuan.” Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 3263. The Zhongshan State of the Han dynasty was established in 154 BCE. It is not clear which Zhongshan this passage is describing. But the city and place names in the same paragraph suggest that the Zhongshan of the Warring States Period was under discussion here.

been possible without a well-known route. This route of migration undoubtedly channeled the flow of information between these culturally and politically separated regions, and ultimately facilitated the flow of goods. The existence of such a route could best explain the resemblance between some Zhongshan artifacts and those from regions far west. It is clear that Zhongshan played an important role in the cultural and economic interaction between the Chinese states and the outside world.

Conclusion

A close look at Zhongshan history, especially its role on the ancient trade routes we call the “Silk Road,” has provided fresh perspectives for the understanding of the stylistic diversity of Zhongshan artifacts. The exotic artifacts found in Cuo’s tomb probably manifested the great impact of trade with the northern pastoral groups and migration of peoples rather than suggesting the “northern origin” of the Zhongshan rulers.

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Glass in Early China: A Substitute for Luxury?

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At first glance, a glass *bi* disc of the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) may easily be mistaken for its well-known model in jade. The phenomenon of glass employed for jade forms is one that archaeological evidence, such as glass *bi* discs that were discovered in tombs from the Chu state in present-day Hunan Province (see map), can date to the middle Warring States period of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 475-221 BCE). The focus of this essay will be on these *bi* discs and other glass imitations of jade objects, the production of which continued throughout the first half of the Han, or the Western Han period (ca. 206 BCE-9 CE). While only an extremely small percentage of glass objects during this time were created as reproductions of jade forms—the overwhelming majority consisted of beads (Braghin 2002b: 3-4)—their category represents a very particularized and intentional use of material. In the context of the exchanges of items, ideas, and technologies on the early Silk Roads, I will foreground the material of glass and examine its incorporation into the burial program of Chinese tombs as a specific example of the way in which a technology was adopted and appropriated for culturally specific purposes. In addition, I will challenge the idea that they were simply cheap substitutes for jade objects, and suggest that these glass replicas, which *in material* also imitated Western luxury items from tombs, held more value than other substitutes.

I will begin by providing some brief background information on the history of glass technology in both the West and China, asserting the hypothesis that glassmaking was a technology diffused east into China from the West. From there, glass replicas of jade will be discussed in terms of Christopher Tilley's idea of material metaphors, objects that, through mimesis, adopted the symbolic associations of jade. Finally, I will speculate upon the value of glass objects in the tombs of China within the larger context of the Silk Roads.

Technology in the West and China

In western Asia, the first glass probably was created in Mesopotamia around 1500 BCE. Glass of antiquity was mainly comprised of soda, silica, and lime (Tatton-Brown and Andrews 1991, 21). This ingredient combination has been known at least since the fourteenth-twelfth centuries BCE, when a recipe for glass was recorded on a clay tablet in cuneiform writing, which

lists not only the ingredients, but also the varying proportions necessary for making different types of glass (Tait 1991, 8). The technique of making glass spread west from Mesopotamia to the Roman Empire around the seventh-sixth centuries BCE, where its products quickly became treasured objects (Whitehouse 1988, 5). By the mid-first century CE, the technique of glassblowing was invented, which enabled large-scale manufacture of glass objects in Rome, depreciating its value as a luxury item (Macfarlane and Martin 2002, 13).

Glassmaking in China fits less neatly into the path of diffusion of technology. It remains contested whether glassmaking was introduced to China from outside or developed independently. Glass beads found in Warring States period Chu state tombs were found to have a distinct elemental composition that thus far proves exclusive to the region of China (Tanaka 1997, 251; Braghin 2002b, 11-12). It is clear that the craftworkers in China were not using recipes from the outside because the elemental composition of its early glass artifacts contains much higher levels of lead (Pb) and barium (Ba).² While the compositions did vary with time,³ these early specimens represent a type of glass unknown to the ancient West (Brill et al. 1991, 34). As a result, a “self-invention” hypothesis was introduced by Gan Fuxi as early as the 1970s, and further chemical analyses, a great deal of which were published in proceedings from a symposium held in Beijing in 1984 (Brill and Martin 1991), have lent credence to the idea of an indigenously created Chinese-type glass.⁴

Cecilia Braghin, on the other hand, who has written one of the most detailed chapters thus far on glass in the early periods of dynastic China (Braghin 2000), has proposed a more likely hypothesis based on the earlier appearance of Western-type glass objects among burial goods in China. She explains that the earliest examples of glass in China, found in Spring and Autumn Period (ca. seventh century BCE) tombs, were polychrome beads produced in the Eastern Mediterranean. She posits that these beads, of soda-silica-lime composition, were

² For a brief overview of scholarship on these two elements in the glass of China, see Francis 2002, 72-74.

³ According to Gan Fuxi, the lead-barium combination remained prevalent throughout the Han period, after which the presence of barium in domestic glasses began to decrease. By the Sui and Tang dynasties (6th-10th centuries), barium is seldom, if at all, present in glass objects. An Jiayao reports that glass-blowing technology did not enter China until the Northern Wei period (386-534), when it was first employed to create Chinese forms. See Gan 1991, 2; and An 1991, 7-8.

⁴ According to Gan Fuxi, the earliest glass from China dates to the Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1050-770 BCE) and consists mostly of beads and sword inlay of high quality *faience*, a ceramic-like glass material created through the sintering of quartz. By the Spring and Autumn period of the Eastern Zhou, however, tombs contained not only *faience* beads, but true glass beads of both Western and, later, Chinese elemental compositions (Gan 1991, 2; for information on *faience* beads, see Shortland 2000).

acquired by the Chinese and studied over time until they could be recreated using local materials, resulting in the definitive lead-barium glass type found in China (Braghin 2000b, 17-18). Considering the refinement of bronze-casting technology in China by this time, it is not surprising that they would have been able to create their own forms of glass within as little as a century. While there is no doubt that the peoples of China were importing Western glass objects at this time, it nevertheless remains apparent that they began to employ their own recipes for glassmaking, a mixture of elements that facilitated the creation of specific forms in glass into and during the Han period.

Glass Imitations as Material Metaphors

I will now turn to glass imitations of jade forms, particularly glass *bi* discs and glass shrouds,⁵ forms that we know when carved in jade were highly charged with ritual and symbolic significance. Because a great deal of research has already been published on the material significance of jade, I will simply reiterate that jade, because of its durability, was during the Han associated with longevity and immortality. Jade *bi* discs were placed in the tomb, often surrounding the deceased, and both on top and beneath the body. During the Han, this encompassing of the body with jade was taken a step further by directly encasing the body in layers of jade. Some of the most remarkable jade artifacts come from Western Han tombs, namely the famous jade suits, or shrouds, such as the full body coverings from the tomb of Prince Liu Sheng and his wife, Dou Wan, from Mancheng, Hebei Province, and that of the King of Nanyue from Xianggang, Guangzhou. These jade coverings also have been found in less complete form, as in the jade "body parts" found in the tomb of Liu Ci from Linyi, Shandong Province (Jiangsu Xian Wenwuzu 1980, 96; Wu 1997).

As was mentioned earlier, the elemental composition of Chinese glass, specifically during the Han, was characterized by a lead-barium combination. Each of these components contributed distinct features to the finished product that lent it the appearance of jade. The high lead content in Chinese glasses created a refractive quality, rendering it shiny and lustrous like polished jade. Barium in glass caused turbidity, a cloudiness that leaves the glass somewhat opaque (Brill et al. 1991, 34). In addition, with regard to both elements, it is unclear which

⁵ Glass was also used for sword decoration, seals, plaques, both as body coverings and in belt ornamentation, and as plugs for bodily orifices (Braghin 2002b, 17).

ingredient facilitated density, or heaviness in the glass objects, a characteristic present that in handling during ritual might have further emphasized a connection to jade.

Following this, the color of the glass objects, often green or white in hue, possibly due to lead content, also connotes jade. Glass *bi* discs, such as the 120 specimens found in Chu tombs analyzed by Gao Zhixi (1991, 119), and one from Guangxi province, discussed in an article by Zhang Fukang (1991, 185), mostly fall in the range of “light green, followed by milk white, cream, and dark green.” This demonstrates a direct color association with the range of colors of jade in its two types: jadeite and nephrite.⁶

These qualities combined—refractivity, turbidity, density, hue, and form—coalesce and result in objects that truly mimic their jade models. In his book *Metaphor and Material Culture*, Christopher Tilley (1999) discusses material metaphors, or what he terms *solid metaphors*, as objects that function to link different domains of culture. Tilley distinguishes this type of metaphor from linguistic metaphor, which involves naming, identifying, and denoting. Solid metaphors, on the other hand, are fueled by their potential for visual stimulation and an immediacy of cognitive analogizing (Tilley 1999, 264). The glass objects under consideration here are solid metaphors that constitute a phenomenological experience in which visual qualities and form provide a means to perceiving culturally or subjectively based connections between object and idea. In this sense, as the material of glass is cast into already pervasive jade forms, within ritual practice, such as the funerary rites, its appearance would trigger an association to culturally specific notions attached to the material of jade, and in turn, these objects would have had the potential to function like jade objects.

Perhaps the most remarkable of these instances of glass taking on jade forms, other than those of the *bi* discs, are the glass shrouds, or so-called garments. Traces of two such objects have been discovered to date. The first, and more complete, was unearthed at Ganquanshan in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, and it dates to the first half of the Han dynasty, or the Western Han

⁶ It is unclear whether the Chinese craftworkers knew the formula for glass and manipulated it to their own culturally specific tastes, or used materials that occurred naturally in compounds that would have produced the likeness of jade. Braghin suggests both possibilities, stating that glassmaking technology was deliberately manipulated in order to produce jade-like pieces. According to studies done on Roman vessels, she reports, the opaque white glass could only be produced by intentionally adding certain agents. It is also possible, however, that the barium was included initially because it was associated naturally with lead. In addition, air bubbles that cause turbidity might have been unintentional, as they can occur with insufficient firing temperatures, a potential result of early experimentation with glass technology (Braghin 2002b, 17-18, n. 47-50; Brill et al. 1991, 34).

(206 BCE-9 CE).⁷ The tomb belonged to a woman of nobility identified as Mo Shu. Consisting of 600 “mold-pressed” flat pieces of rectangular, trapezoidal, and circular shape, the garment, like the partial suit found in the tomb of Liu Ci mentioned above, was perhaps a covering for either the head or the body only (Cheng and Zhou 1991, 21). Though these pieces now have the appearance of stone, scientific analysis has revealed a core of lead-barium glass. The second glass suit is evidenced by two sample pieces from two groups of plaques lent from a private collection to the Corning Museum of Glass for chemical analysis. Like the Yangzhou pieces, these plaques were determined to be of the lead-barium type glass. While audiences were probably not fooled into thinking that these suits were authentically jade—indeed, there were visual clues that perhaps marked them as glass replicas, such as surface decorations of floral designs or pigmentation—parallels in form and configuration would have associated these glass suits with the symbolic preservative powers of their jade models.

In addition to these well-known types, I would like to mention another instance of glass objects made to imitate jade. According to Braghin, nineteen vessels of Chinese lead-barium type are known. While Western glass vessel forms, such as the fragments of a Roman mosaic vessel found in the tomb of Liu Jin at Ganquan in Jiangsu Province, did exist, it should not be assumed that Chinese glass vessels were imitations of Western vessel forms. Two of the vessels reported by Braghin, an eared cup and plate⁸ that were found in the Western Han tomb of Liu Sheng at Mancheng, are clearly not replicas of Western types, but instead possess the form of lacquer vessels found in many tombs of these period. According to Braghin, “Although the shapes of these vessels were borrowed from lacquer, the white opaque glass from which they were made was a clear reference to jade. Therefore, they appear to be imitations of jade copied from lacquered vessel types. Copying a conventional lacquer vessel in a rare and precious material like jade would have made this piece ‘out of the ordinary’, perhaps to provide a special ‘effect’ or benefit to the owner” (Braghin 2000: 32-33). As stated, these glass vessels are replicas of replicas, but their visual association with jade metaphorically would have imbued them with the significance of a luxury replica.

⁷ For images of glass pieces from this shroud, see Cheng and Zhou 1991, 24, figs. 1-4; and Tanaka 1997, 255, fig. 172.

⁸ For images of these vessels, see Braghin 2000, fig. 7; Tanaka 1997, 253, figs. 168-69.

Speculations Upon Value

Of course, there are numerous examples of pottery replicas of *bi* discs, but pottery was also used to replicate many other items, from utilitarian vessels to actual people. In thinking of the focus on the creation of glass imitations of jade forms, the conscious and direct link to the highly prized material of jade, glass nevertheless should not be dismissed as simply a cheap or more easily produced substitute. In fact, it has been reported that glazed pottery replicas of glass beads were found in burials of the Warring States period (Braghin 2002, 11, n. 27), a further attestation that glass as a material possessed more value than similarly used pottery. What is more, these glass forms are most commonly found in tombs of noble or high-ranking persons. Even Braghin concedes that in the Spring and Autumn period of the Zhou dynasty, when production centers in the Chu kingdom began manufacturing glass beads, though they had become more accessible, they were still rare and exceptional burial objects (Braghin 2002, 12). The tomb of the King of Nanyue, for example, an eight-chambered structure mentioned above for its famed jade suit, contained many items of glass, including stacks of *bi* discs that were discovered in the western side chamber. This chamber was a storage space for the utensils, medicine, and various personal collections of the King. Burial goods were originally stacked on wooden shelves encircling the chamber, while jade items were situated in the center. Among these central items were the *bi* discs: three jade discs, and one ring among five glass discs (Mai 1991: 41, 57). The association between the materials is clear, but did the two have the same function? Or in this particular context, were both simply collected as archaic or exotic items of the King, closeted for future admiration during the afterlife?

If this were true, then the material of glass would have been treasured both for its ability to imitate jade and for its rarity as a material otherwise associated with the West—in a sense, as a double replica, of something highly symbolic, and simultaneously, foreign by the nature of its importation along the Silk Roads. Considering this, were glass replicas of jade objects substitutes for luxury, or were they luxury forms in themselves? More research is needed on glass objects, and researchers should be open to multiple interpretations of their function and meaning. The Chu kingdom, in whose tombs glass has been found, had direct access to maritime trade routes where foreign glass vessels would have circulated as luxury items; it appears that the material could have maintained a value connection to these exotica. One might even consider technology itself to be an important factor. If the glass-making technology were known to be a Western

import, the products made in China might have gained prestige by virtue of their being produced similarly to foreign exotica. When considering the materiality of glass during the Han, both in terms of its imitation of culturally-valued jade objects, and in addition, as a material associated with imported vessels and technology, it may be constructive to conceive of glass as a material of high value in its own right.

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**Lotus Blooming under the Cross:
Interaction between Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism in China**

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For centuries, the Silk Road was an important link between Central Asia and China. Those who traveled it—including merchants, religious figures, emissaries, and the like—not only traded in goods, but also in lifestyles, cultures, and religious beliefs. These in turn were transformed as they interacted with new cultures and ideas, encountered competition from other religious doctrines and practices, sought to attract religious followers, and came under the sway of new political realities. “The Silk Road,” as Richard Foltz rightly notes, “constituted a formative and transformative rite of passage. No religion emerged unchanged at the end of the journey” (Foltz 1999, 8).

Scholars of religion are well aware of the multi-layered process involved in moving a religion from one culture to another. Indeed, in the case of Chinese religion, the transmission of Buddhism from west to east is well documented and addresses linguistic, cosmological, social, economic, and political considerations. By the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Buddhism had been transformed from a “foreign religion on foreign soil” to one that had successfully navigated the foreign-Chinese divide, laying claim to new Chinese schools of thoughts and practice and standing alongside Confucianism and Daoism at court.

Less well documented is the role Buddhism played in introducing other foreign religions into China. One such case is Nestorian Christianity, which was introduced into China in the early Tang. Nestorian Christianity takes its name from Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople (born into a Persian family in Antioch; d. 436), who insisted that divine and human persons remained separate in the incarnate Christ. Ecclesiastically condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and exiled, his brand of Christianity separated from Byzantine Christianity and was centered in Persia, from where it eventually was transmitted to China via the Silk Road.¹

Of the scant number of relics extant today, those dating to the Tang Dynasty include a Nestorian tablet, Nestorian texts, and a painting discovered in Dunhuang; there are also images on tombstones from the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368). The material evidence demonstrates a

¹ Nestorian Christianity separated from western Byzantine and was located in the eastern part of the Byzantine Empire, including present-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, and southeastern Turkey.

twofold relationship between Buddhism and Nestorianism. On the one hand, in its capacity as a “foreign” religion, Buddhism supplied the methodological blueprint for the early transmission of Nestorian Christianity. This is particularly evident when we look at linguistic borrowing and structural transformation associated with the problems of scriptural translation. On the other hand, in its capacity as a so-called Chinese religion, Buddhism provided Nestorian Christianity with the primary symbols and images for its interaction with Chinese culture.

Textual interaction

According to the inscription on the Nestorian tablet dating around 781 and found in Xian in the seventeenth century, Nestorian Christianity was officially introduced into China in the early Tang. The tablet inscription reads:

In the ninth year of Zhenguan (635 CE), a missionary of great virtue called Alopen... arrived in Chang'an with sacred icon and sacred scriptures to present to the emperor. The emperor ordered the prime minister Fang Xuanlin to meet [Alopen] in the western suburbs of Chang'an. Alopen translated some sacred scriptures in the imperial library, and preached to the emperor in his inner court. In the twelfth year of Zhenguan (638 CE), the emperor issued a decree, "...Since [Nestorianism] is beneficial both to the people and other creatures, it should be promoted throughout the country." Accordingly, the concerned government officials allowed a Nestorian monastery [called the Daqin Si] to be built in Yining Ward. Twenty-one monks were ordained....² (*Daqin jingjiao liuxing zhongguo beisong bing xu* 大秦景教流行中国碑颂并序 The Monument of the Transmission of Nestorian Christianity in China, 1).

This inscription was probably composed by Jingjing 景净, a Nestorian of Persian descent, active in the Buddhist translation projects in the capital in the mid- to late-eighth century.³ A similar account of the official introduction of Nestorianism into China is also reiterated in the *Zunjing* 尊

²All the Nestorian texts quoted in this paper are translated from the Chinese Nestorian texts collected in P. Y. Saeki's *The Nestorian Documents and Relics in China*, Tokyo: The Academy of Oriental Culture Tokyo Institute, 1951. The following notes will list only the title of the text cited.

³Jingjing is associated with the translation projects of the Central Asian Buddhist monk, Prajñā, who arrived in China by sea in 782 and made his way to Chang'an. "The commander-in-chief of the imperial army believed in Buddhism, and requested Prajñā to translate the Buddhist sūtras. Therefore, Prajñā collaborated with a Persian Nestorian priest named Jingjing to translate the *Ṣaṭpāramitā Sūtra* from a Hu copy. They finished about seven volumes. But because Prajñā did not know the Hu language and Jingjing did not know Sanskrit or the essence of Buddhism, although they claimed to have translated the scripture, the translation did not express half of its true meaning" (*Datang zhenyuan xu kaiyuan shijiao lu* 大唐贞元续开元释教录, T 55, no. 2156: 756a).

经 (Scripture of the Honored), one of the surviving Nestorian texts, where Jingjing's name is associated with the translation of thirty Nestorian texts.⁴

Based on the above evidence, it appears that Nestorian text translations were supported by the Tang Court and thus were probably a collaborative effort between Persians and Chinese or at least made by a Nestorian, born in China, with experience in the massive Buddhist text translation projects of the Tang. More to the point, these Nestorian scriptures indicate extensive borrowing from Chinese Buddhist translations. So, for example, it is not surprising to find such terms as “*si*” 寺 (Buddhist temple) and “*seng*” 僧 (Buddhist monk) used in reference to Nestorian Christian churches and clerics respectively (*Jingjiao liuxing zhongguo beisong bing xu*, 7). The important Buddhist term “*fa*” 法 (Dharma) is also found in Nestorian works. The above-mentioned inscription, for example, reads: “There is the Dharma left by twenty-four prophets. The country was ruled on the base of the Dharma” (2). Here Dharma refers to the prophecies in the *Old Testament*. In the *Xu ting mishisuo jing* 序听弥诗所经 (Listening to the Scriptures of the Messiah), we further find: “If one has been baptized, but has no fear of the Heavenly Lord, although one was once converted to the Buddhist Dharma (*fofa* 佛法), one does not obey the discipline and is a rebel” (19). “Buddhist Dharma” in this case refers to Nestorianism. And in a direct borrowing from the *Lotus Sūtra*, we find the following addressed to Jesus in the *Zhi xuan anle jing* 志玄安乐经 (Scripture of Mysterious Peace and Joy): “Great Supreme Lord! The Dharma you taught is mysterious, profound, and incredibly wonderful. But I still cannot understand it all! It is my desire that you explain in detail”⁵ (82).

Even the name of the Buddha and the Buddhist pantheon were adapted to introduce the novel ideas of angels. “Of all the buddhas, deities, *yamas*, and *arhats*, who has ever seen God?” (*Xu ting mishisuo jing*, 13). And again: “All of the buddhas travel around in the pure wind of God...” (Ibid, 13). Buddha himself is also used to connote God. “The Heavenly Lord gives people great wisdom. Who can reward Buddha's compassion?” (Ibid, 14). Other Buddhist terms, such as karma, karmic retribution, pure land, the three worlds, merit, wisdom, universal salvation, and so forth can be found in the extant Nestorian scriptures.

Concerning these technical terms, Saeki notes:

⁴ According to the *Zunjing*, Alopen presented 530 Nestorian texts to the emperor in 635. Later, Jingjing was asked to translate them; he completed thirty texts.

⁵ Cf. *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法莲华经, T 9, no. 262: 6b. “World Honored One! The Dharma you taught is very profound, mysterious, and difficult to understand.... It is our desire that you explain it to us.”

These are very unusual expressions to be found in the Nestorian writings, but may throw some light on the history of the very beginning of the Nestorian Church in China. Such expressions may show that the Nestorian author of this document was assisted by a Chinese Buddhist scholar in composing this scripture, if not, under the influence of Chinese Buddhism, as far as his phraseology and diction were concerned (Saeki, 1951, 48).

Foltz also rightly remarks:

Successful translation is not merely linguistic; meaningful analogs between one cultural vocabulary and another simply do not exist and must be invented. It is thus easy to see how the substance of religious traditions often was transformed along the Silk Road...as a result of the translation process (Foltz, 1999, 17).

As Saeki suggests, the direct borrowing of Buddhist vocabulary found in Chinese Nestorian texts points to two possibilities with reference to the translators proper. In addition to direct borrowing, Foltz adds a second option with regard to the translation process itself. Namely, in the absence of meaningful analogs, new vocabularies may be completely invented out of “nothing” and, in many cases, these inventions give new meaning to existent vocabulary.

Chinese Buddhists had long been familiar with both the advantages and pitfalls of borrowing religious terminologies. On the one hand, such borrowing aided in the initial stages of introducing foreign Buddhist concepts and ideas into China. Jingjing, who was familiar with Buddhist ideas and who was associated with early Nestorian text translations, seems to be following this precedent. On the other hand, the direct substitution of terminologies and concepts of one religion by another, in the end, detracts from and hinders a truer and deeper understanding of the imported religion. This was why Buddhist translations beginning with Daoan 道安 (314-366) in the fourth century abandoned the use of *geyi* 格义 or “matching concepts” (Zürcher, 1972, 39-40, 184). Thus whatever the motivation for these translations, they represent an early stage in the introduction of Nestorian Christianity into China and follow early Buddhist attempts to do the same for that “foreign” religion. At the same time, that Buddhist terminologies and concepts were made to correspond to those of Nestorianism suggests that these early translation projects had the cooperation or bore the influence of Buddhist translators and that Buddhism was now the “indigenous” reference for the “foreign” Nestorianism.

This latter point is further brought home by the structure of Chinese Nestorian texts. As suggested above, some Chinese translations of Nestorian scriptures were modeled on the literary style of Buddhist texts. Notably absent from the early translations are, for example, the *Gospels*

and the *Book of Acts*, which do not conform to the form of Buddhist sermons. Indeed, a cursory comparison of the *Bible* and the Chinese Nestorian texts shows vast stylistic discrepancies. Rather the Chinese Nestorian texts are set in the familiar Buddhist question-and-answer format and are introduced in typical Buddhist fashion. If we compare the opening passages of Nestorian and Buddhist scriptures, the parallels are conspicuous; even the wording is often the same. Take, for example, the opening lines of the *Zhi xuan anle jing*:

...These truthful words were heard...in the Hall of Pure Emptiness.... Many people sat in a circle. A respectful follower [Simon] stood up from the crowd, brought his arms together in supplication and said, "We are very confused. What is effective salvation?" The Messiah responded: "Good words! ..." (77)

This is quite reminiscent of the typical opening of a Buddhist text. To select one from the many Buddhist scriptures, the *Jingang jing* 金刚经 (Diamond Sūtra) begins:

Thus I have heard, the Buddha dwelt in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍika.... Many monks approached the Buddha and paid homage to him.... Subhūti rose from his seat, exposed his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, pressed his palms together in reverence and said, "World Honored one.... How should a son or daughter of a good family who has set out in the Bodhisattva-vehicle progress and control his or her thoughts?" After these words, the Buddha said, "Good words! Good words! Subhūti!" (T 8, no. 235: 748c)

Here the opening lines of the two scriptures are almost the same. They begin by describing the place where the Messiah/Buddha is preaching and his audience, and go on to single out a questioner who reverently approaches the Messiah/Buddha and asks his question. Both scriptural passages end with the Messiah/Buddha proclaiming over the excellence of the question.⁶

The lack of parallel with Christian literary style and the parallel with Buddhist texts again suggest that the translator was familiar with Buddhist texts and used a form and structure familiar to the Chinese audience in introducing Nestorian Christianity to China during the Tang. It further suggests that Chinese and Buddhist concerns drove the selections of Nestorian texts and that Buddhism was the so-called "indigenous" yardstick against which the "foreign" Nestorianism was measured.

⁶ For another example of this pattern in a Nestorian text, see *Daqin jingjiao xuan yuan zhi ben jing* 大秦景教宣元至本经 (Scripture Proclaiming the Origins and Essence of Nestorianism at Daqin).

Interaction in the Visual Arts

Borrowing is also evident in the visual arts. In the Stein Dunhuang collection is a Nestorian painting found in cave no. 17, produced sometime before the early eleventh century when the caves were sealed (figure 1).



The tentative restoration of the original painting discovered by Sir Aurel Stein, Kt., at Tun-huang in 1908, by Mr. Parryman, an artist

figure 1: Saeki 1951

Of particular interest here is the mixing of Nestorian and Buddhist symbols and imagery. The crosses on the head, chest, and staff are typical of Nestorian Christianity (Saeki, Appendix XX). But the hand gesture is quite different than those found on Christian icons. The Christian hand gesture for bestowing a blessing is made by placing the thumb, ring finger, and pinky together, with the remaining two fingers held straight up and close together. In this painting, the gesture of placing the thumb and middle finger together much more closely resembles the Buddhist hand symbol (*mudrā*) for “teaching,” which is very common in Buddhist iconography.

Little is known about the fate of Nestorian Christianity in China between the religious persecutions in the mid-ninth century and the Yuan dynasty. Yet it appears that Nestorian Christianity survived among non-Chinese communities far from the central government, such as in Dunhuang, Inner Mongolia, Guangzhou, and Quanzhou (Luo 1966, 68). To these Nestorians born in China was added a new influx of Nestorian settlers in the Yuan.

Images on tombstones excavated in Quanzhou reflect the same sort of syncretism we see in Dunhuang (figure 2). Here, the cross and angel are very typical Christian motifs, but the

seated posture of the angel is very atypical of Christian imagery. This angel is seated in what appears to be the lotus position.



figure 2: Saeki 1951, 435

Other angels are also depicted in Buddhist-like fashion (figure 3 and figure 4). The angels on these tombstones are depicted very similarly to the way the Buddhist flying *apsaras* are presented in Dunhuang. The flying drapery and the way in which they hold the cross closely resemble flying *apsaras* holding musical instruments and lotus flowers.



figure 3: Drawn by the author based on
<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/about/exhibitions/angels/D1000026.JPG>



figure 4: Drawn by the author based on
<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/about/exhibitions/angels/D1000026.JPG>

Finally, on the Tang Nestorian tablet and again on Yuan dynasty tombstones in Quanzhou, we find the melding of the two most symbolic Buddhist and Christian symbols—the lotus and the cross (figures 5 and 6).

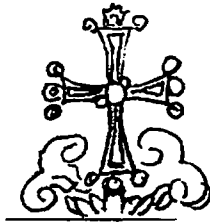


figure 5: Drawn by the author based on Foltz 1999

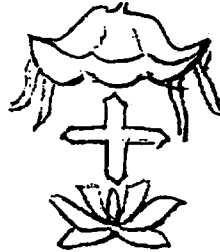


figure 6: Drawn by the author based on
<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/about/exhibitions/angels/D1000032.JPG>

Here, the cross quite literally replaces the Buddha on the lotus throne. There is no reference to the lotus in the *Bible* or other Christian texts. Nor is the lotus-cross combination found in western Nestorian Christianity iconography. Thus, although these are Yuan dynasty tombstones, their syncretic representation seems to be inherited from the Tang, and tells us something about the legacy of Nestorians on Chinese soil.

Conclusions

Nestorian borrowing from Buddhism, both in its so-called “foreign” and “indigenous” capacities, reflects three, often overlapping, patterns of transmission and transformation. First, early Nestorian exporters of their religion to China—such as the bilingual translator and the author of the Tang inscription—chose terminologies, literary styles, and images familiar to the local population in order to reduce the foreign content and feel of their religion. Buddhism served this purpose well, as it was not only widely accepted as “indigenous” by the Tang but also provided an otherworldly imagery and context by which to frame Nestorian Christianity. Equally attractive was that Buddhism began as a foreign religion that had been successfully assimilated by the Chinese. As such, it served both as a working model and a subtle reminder that imports were welcome in China.

Second, from the Chinese side, initial understanding of a foreign religion is based on indigenous religious and cultural context. In this, the Chinese joined forces with their Nestorian collaborators and found familiar (if forced) analogs between Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity or gave new meaning to existing vocabularies and imagery. At the same time, it appears that the Chinese controlled much of the dialogue, taking from Nestorianism what was of most interest to them.

Finally, in the end, Nestorian Christianity seems not to have made many conceptual inroads among the Chinese. Yet as the Yuan tombstones suggest, Nestorians living in China themselves adapted to their new home by embracing and assimilating many of the symbols, icons, and terminologies of their adopted land.

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Striking Gold: The Life of Byzantine Coins along the Silk Roads

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Coins hold a wealth of economic, historical, and cultural information. By comparing one coin from the Tang dynasty and a Byzantine example from roughly the same time period, the difference in how, stylistically, this information is conveyed becomes obvious (Figs. 1 and 2).¹ The characteristic shape of the Chinese coin carries cosmological significance—the round contour symbolizes heaven and the square hole represents earth. The inscription tells us this is the currency of the new era. In the Byzantine tradition, an image of the present ruler is displayed on the front or obverse of the coin. The back or reverse of the coin is loaded with religious imagery confirming the divine rule of the emperor. As payment for silk or tribute to appease pastoral groups, Byzantine gold coins, or *solidi*, traveled the entire length of the Silk Roads and conveyed this wealth of data. However, we must not think of the *solidi* solely as currency used to purchase various goods, but also as an exotic commodity. What did these foreign coins mean to someone at a Central Asian trading post, who could not read the Latin inscription or recognize the imperial portrait? To consider the next step of the transformation, what did an imitation of a Byzantine coin manufactured in Central Asia mean to someone in the Chinese empire? In this paper I am interested in exploring this cultural transmission of style and meaning across the Silk Roads.

I will proceed from west to east. I will start with a brief history of Byzantine coinage and will then investigate the role of the Sogdians in the transfer of Byzantine coinage traditions to China by means of the production of imitations and bracteates (imitations with a pattern imprinted only on one side of a metal disc.) Moving to the farthest eastern points along the Silk Roads, I will focus on Byzantine *solidi*, imitations, and bracteates found in Chinese tombs. By arranging my work geographically, I hope to highlight the change in function and meaning of the Byzantine coins from currency to commodity and finally their elevation to pieces of miniature, highly-valued works of art.

¹ I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Jessica C. Justice for her line drawings of the coins discussed. Kathy Linduff initially introduced me to Silk Roads research and has been an amazing resource and steadfast supporter ever since. My thanks also go to her for leading the seminar and organizing our AAS panel.

The Greeks were the first to develop coinage, in the early seventh century BCE. Alexander the Great was the first ruler to use his own image on coins, which instituted a tradition upheld by Roman emperors. When Constantine the Great moved the Roman capital to Byzantium, the *solidus* became the standard gold currency of the new eastern Roman empire. Its weight was set at 4.5 grams of pure gold, and it provided a stable currency for large government transactions and major trade (Alram 2001, 272). Production of *solidi* remained highly uniform and was conducted only at the mint of the imperial palace in Constantinople.

Gold bullion arrived in Constantinople from West Asia and the Urals, often in the form of foreign coinage gathered as war booty. Unlike Chinese coins, which were cast, Byzantine coins, just like their Greek and Roman predecessors, were individually struck. Whereas copper coins of smaller denominations based on the *solidus* were used for everyday transactions by the general population, the *solidi* were struck for financial actions by the government. The military received its salary in gold coinage and pastoral groups were often bribed with *solidi* to prevent future conflicts. However, these uses do not explain the appearance of such coins thousands of miles east. The demand in Constantinople for luxury goods from the eastern regions, most notably silk, stimulated the flow of *solidi* beyond the imperial borders. However, in the mid-sixth century Emperor Justinian I, depicted on this *solidus*, attempted formally to establish a closed economy, and the *Codex Justinianus* confirms his strict isolationist policy: "If henceforth gold is supplied by merchants to the barbarians, either for sale or in exchange for whatever kind of commodities, they shall suffer not just a fine but an even heavier punishment" (*Codex Justinianus* IV.63.2; Hendy 1985, 257). Justinian had every reason to be concerned. These gold coins with powerful images of foreign rulers acquired much fascination in Central Asia, where gold coinage was not used. Although such legislation attempted to impede the loss of gold currency to foreign states, trade merchants found ways to circumvent the laws (Alram 2001, 285). This restriction also possibly enhanced the value of *solidi* that did reach central and eastern Asia.

The Central Asian kingdom of Sogdiana, situated in present-day northern Tajikistan, was one point of intersection of West and East along the Silk Roads from the fifth to eighth centuries CE. Documents in the Sogdian language have been found as far east as Dunhuang (Miyakawa et al. 1984, 8), and Sogdian settlements have also been discovered recently in Xian, providing evidence for the Sogdians' role as traders and travelers. While finds of Byzantine *solidi* are extremely rare in Sogdian settlements, two imitations and six bracteates mimicking the coinage

of Byzantine rulers from the fifth and sixth centuries CE, all inspired by Byzantine coinage, have been discovered in the city of Pendjikent, which lay directly on the Silk Road.²

The first imitation was found in 1975 outside of the city walls in the necropolis (Fig. 3). It was most likely part of a funerary gift, as it was discovered amongst pottery shards and fragments of ossuaries. The imitation is probably based on the *solidi* of Leo I or Leo II, who ruled during the mid-fifth century. During this era, in a tradition left over from Roman imperial portraiture, military dress—consisting of a cuirass (armored breastplate), spear (in the right hand), shield (in the left hand), helmet, and diadem (a headband worn as a sign of sovereignty)—was popular in Byzantine coinage (Orr 1995). The emperor stoically gazes out at the viewer with his large round eyes. On the reverse is a winged victory holding a cross staff in her right hand. The legends, or inscriptions, are now illegible because the coin has been clipped. Clipping, or removing thin strips of metal from the edges of a coin, was a common practice after the coins journeyed beyond the borders of the Byzantine empire, when their value no longer lay in their intrinsic value as gold currency but instead in their fiduciary value as exotic artifacts from foreign cultures. Besides, the legend would have been of little interest to the Sogdians, who did not know Latin. The precise clipping of this imitation suggests that it had been cut to fit into some jewelry setting.

A bracteate found in a late-seventh-century Pendjikent house offers insight into the alluring aspects of foreign coins and the subsequent appropriation of various stylistic features in Sogdiana (Fig. 4). The frontal bust of one emperor is clearly pushed to the foreground. His long, straight hair and trimmed beard are neatly articulated and his robe is gathered at his right shoulder and pinned in a fibula. Just like the previously mentioned imitation, there is keen interest in the fashion and headgear of the portrait. The models for these coins must have provided fascinating physical representations of the dress and appearance of a distant culture for the Sogdians. Behind the emperor stands his co-regent, faintly distinguishable. He also wears a cloak pinned at his right shoulder. The chlamys (cloak) and fibula are typical features of the civil dress that became prominent in coin iconography in the seventh century (Orr 1995). The bracteate is most likely based on an imitation of a *solidus* of Emperor Heraclius and his heir Heraclius Constantine as a small child during the 620s. However, certain key characteristics are

² The main source of information on these coins and bracteates is Raspopova (1999, 453-60). Unless otherwise noted, the information in the following discussion comes from this article.

missing. The Christian crosses have disappeared and the legend has been completely substituted for two decorative bands around the double portrait. The broad empty margin is not a Byzantine convention, but has been appropriated from the *drachma*—the contemporary silver currency of the Sassanian empire (Aram 2001, 288).

As is the case in Sogdiana, there have been no hoards of Byzantine *solidi* discovered in China. At this point along the Silk Roads, these were not coins used by commoners and merchants to buy and sell at marketplaces and oases. In the Byzantine Empire the *solidi* were never even intended for daily commercial use. The *solidi* were manufactured at only one mint in the entire empire—the *moneta auri* in the imperial palace at Constantinople (Aram 2001, 285). The rare *solidus* that reached China was a highly valued, extraordinary commodity in itself. *Solidi*, their imitations, and bracteates are found there in tombs, which indicates their precious nature for the Chinese.

The most extensive collection of *solidi* found in China is in the tomb of Tian Hong in the trade center of Guyuan, Ningxia. The five *solidi* span the rule of Leo I in the mid-fifth century to Justinian I, who reigned until 565—ten years before Tian Hong died.³ One of the *solidi* was also found in the mouth of the deceased, another sign of the prestige and eminence of these exotic gold coins. All coins were in good condition, which indicates they were not in heavy circulation for an extended period of time. All of them have been clipped and all, except for the youngest *solidus* of Justinian, were pierced. The number of piercings vary from two to four on each coin and are located between the type and legend. While symmetry in the placing of the holes evidently was a consideration, there was also an attempt not to allow the piercings to interfere with the overall aesthetic appearance of the *solidus*.

For instance, the *solidus* of Leo I (struck 462 or 466) has four piercings on either side of the bust of the emperor (Fig. 5). The holes seem randomly placed, but they are carefully positioned to avoid the legend on the obverse and the star design between the victory and legend on the reverse. These piercings allowed for the coins to be worn as pendants or pieces of jewelry, further evidence that the Chinese viewed them as small aesthetic wonders. More of the standard features of the Byzantine *solidus* can be seen on this example from the reign of Leo I. He is in military dress, and the Latin inscription identifies him: “D(ominus) N(oster) LEO PERPET(uus) AVG(ustus).” On the reverse the exergue, the lower segment of the coin marked off by a

³ My discussion of the *solidi* in the tomb of Tian Hong is based primarily on Michael Aram’s catalogue (2001).

horizontal line, contains the legend, "CONOB," which appears on all *solidi*. "CON" signifies Constantinopolis while "OB" stands for *obryzum*, the technical term in Latin for pure gold. The legend around the central winged victory figure reads, "VICTORIA AVGGG(ustorum) I (officina 10)." The only mint that produced *solidi* was located in the palace at Constantinople, hence the inclusion "CON," and the mint was divided into ten workshops, or *officinae*. The number of the *officina* is included in the legend of the reverse of this *solidus* as it is on all coins.

The *solidus* of Justin I and Justinian I represents a stylistic change in the *solidus* (Fig. 6). Here the co-emperors wore the garb of civil servants and are shown seated together on a double throne. Christian symbolism also has become more overt, as seen in the cross between the heads of the emperors and the transformation of the winged victory into a haloed angel. Like the emperors, the angel holds a globe to represent the sovereignty of their leadership. However, the angel's orb is more explicitly Christian with a prominent cross on top. This is an example of the *globus cruciger*, which symbolizes not only sovereignty but also the divine authority of the emperor. This coin has been altered significantly since its manufacture. Clipping has removed much of the legend on the obverse, and four piercings have been drilled around the motifs.

To conclude, I would like to consider a Central Asian bracteate found in the tomb of Shi Shoyan (died 669) in Guyuan, Ningxia (Fig. 7). This imitation of a *solidus* represents most clearly the transformation of the cultural significance of Byzantine coins from currency to commodity to curios along the Silk Roads. The wide-eyed bust of the emperor is the most distinguishable element, although we no longer have an actual portrait. The helmet has become a dotted matrix and the spear tip is barely noticeable behind the left ear. The dress is a network of linear designs that blends with the legend, which has disintegrated into an ornamental pattern. Two piercings are aligned directly above and below the bust, which would have been used to display prominently the golden portrait as a badge or pendant. Based on the dotted hair and elongated ear lobe, we may even have an image of the Buddha emerging from this transformed, exotic medium.

Based on examination of the piercings and on its decorative nature, this object was never intended to function as currency. The absence of the Byzantine imperial signifiers, the portrait and legend, in this bracteate fundamentally changes its meaning. To speculate further, perhaps this bracteate was produced in Sogdiana to fill the growing fascination with and demand for exotic gold coins. Just as we collect coins from foreign countries that we never intend to use as

currency, these *solidi*, imitations, and bracteates fulfilled the desire to possess a tiny piece of the exotic and the foreign. Indeed, the life of Byzantine coins along the Silks Roads is more than a numismatic study; it speaks to larger issues of cultural transmission and transformation.



Fig. 1: *Kai yuan tong bao* coin
(Tang dynasty, 621 and later)



Fig. 2: *Solidus* of Justinian I
(Byzantine emperor, ruled 527-565)



Fig. 3: Imitation of *solidi* of Leo I and Leo II (Byzantine emperors, co-ruled 473-474)



Fig. 4: Bracteate of an imitation of *solidus* of Heraclius (ruled 610-641) and Heraclius Constantine



Front

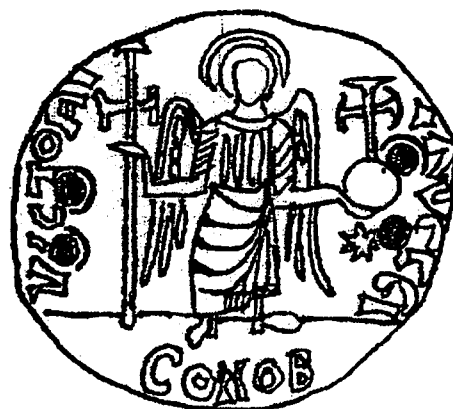


Back

Fig. 5: *Solidus* of Leo I (ruled 457-474)



Front



Back

Fig. 6: *Solidus* of Justin I and Justinian I (co-ruled 527)



Fig. 7: Bracteate imitating a *solidus* (sixth-seventh century CE)

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Exotic Goods as Mortuary Display in Sui Dynasty Tombs: A Case Study of Li Jingxun's Tomb

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The tomb of Li Jingxun (A.D. 581-608) 李靜訓, excavated in 1957, is located at Daxing 大兴, the capital of the Sui 隋 Dynasty (AD 581-618), west of the modern city of Xi'an (Fig. 1). Li Jingxun was a nine-year-old girl of the Sui royal family, who was raised by her maternal grandmother, Empress Xuan of the N. Zhou (AD 561-609) 北周宣后. Her tomb, found intact,⁴ contained many luxury goods imported from the Silk Road as well as foreign-style artifacts made in China (Zhongguo 1980, 3-28). Her tomb is unusual in several ways. First, many foreign-style objects were in her tomb, which was not a common practice in the Sui. Second, the tomb was found inside the Sui capital city—before this, burial grounds had always been separated from the space of the living. The epitaph records that Li Jingxun had a remarkable mixed lineage encompassing different ethnic groups including both the military class of the N. Zhou and the royal family of the Sui dynasty (Zhongguo 1980, 26) (Fig. 2).

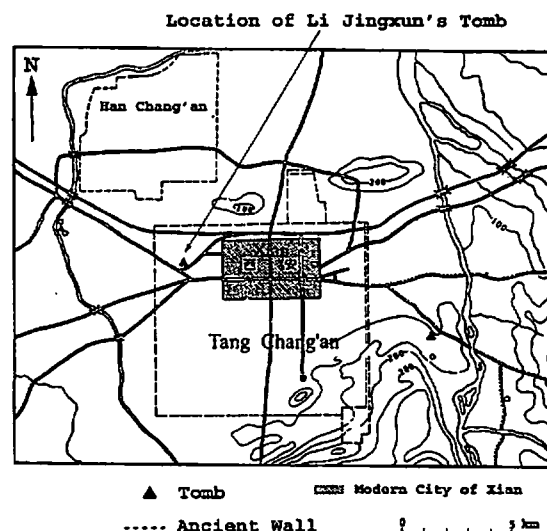


Fig. 1 Location of Li Jingxun's tomb, after Zhongguo 1980, 1

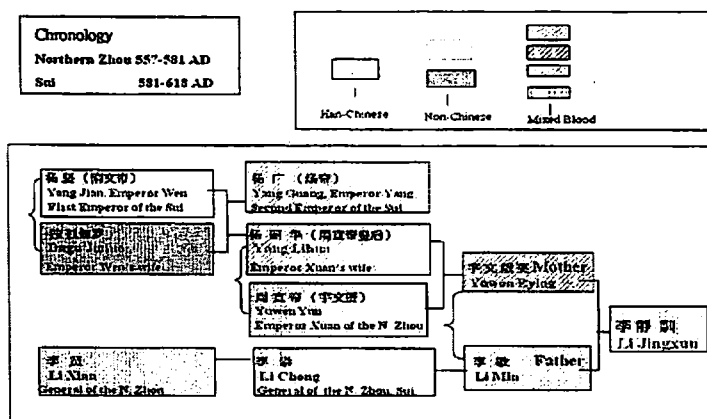


Fig. 2 Lin Jingxun's lineage, based on Zhongguo 1980, 26

Previous investigations of exotic goods in China

⁴ According to the excavation report, Li Jingxun's tomb was intact, but a portion of the skeleton had been disturbed by a small amount of water. The skull, legs, and arms were at the original location (Zhongguo 1980, 4).

in this period have dealt mainly with evidence from the Tang Dynasty. For example, based on the written records, Schafer examined the exotics in China and their impact on Chinese life during the Tang Dynasty early in 1962 (Schafer 1985). Qi Dongfang 齐东方 examined the gold and silver objects in the Tang dynasty as well. Qi has brought archaeological examples and museum collections of the exotic goods of the Tang Dynasty together and discussed their techniques and decorative motifs in relation to the foreign cultures during this period (Qi 1999b). My research on exotic goods, the objects imported from the Silk Road and objects with foreign forms, materials, and/or techniques, focuses on the Sui dynasty tombs, in particular that of Li Jingxun. Chinese scholars generally have studied her tomb in its Sui-Tang context because they assumed that the goods in her tomb were directly connected either to her maternal grandmother or to her paternal great-grandfather. In recent years, archaeologists have stressed the political significance of mortuary practices and their potential for active negotiation of the social identities of both the deceased and the living members of the society (Carr 1995; Morris 1991). Theories related to mortuary analysis may help us reintegrate mortuary studies on exotics into sociopolitical complexity within the Sui Dynasty.⁵ I will apply some of this thinking to examine the patterns of the use of burial goods in Li Jingxun's tomb and to compare them with those displayed in seventy-six Sui tombs found in other parts of China⁶ (Fig. 3), with those in two tombs of Tang princesses, and with those of the Northern Dynasties. I will address the following questions: Why were so many luxury objects found in the tomb of such a young girl? How can we explain their stylistic and artifactual diversity? I propose that Li Jingxun was buried as an "outsider" princess, a status possible not through her father, but through her maternal

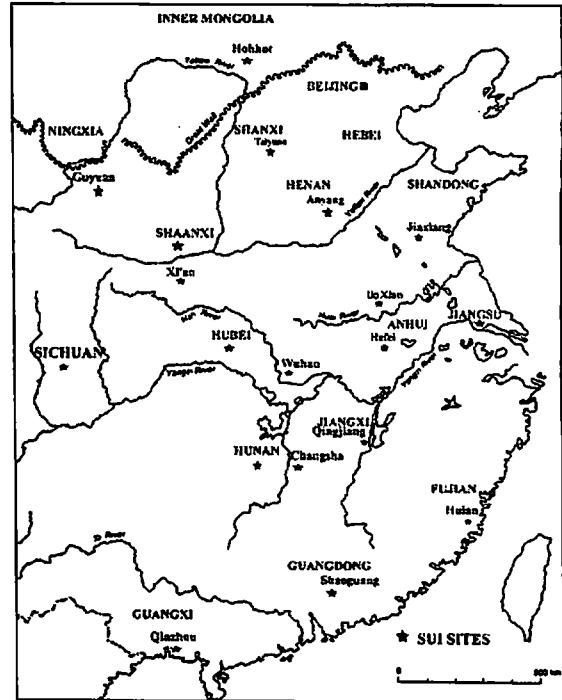


Fig. 3 Map of the Sui sites

⁵Some archaeologists have questioned the reconstruction of cultural ethnicity by archaeological remains (Shennan 1989). However, in this case study, the ethnic identity can be reconstructed by examining the archaeological data, mortuary epitaphs, and historical records.

⁶ See Appendix One.

grandmother. The exotic, Western-style objects and vessels and the foreign coins found in the tombs functioned as symbols of high rank, were especially favored by the “non-dynastic-peoples” of the Sui period from the north, and acknowledged their ethnic backgrounds. Their taste for and choice of the “exotic” can be documented by examining the contexts of their tombs.

The Evidence: Archaeological Records

I have examined the patterns of use of burial goods evident in Li Jingxun’s tomb and compared them to sixty other Sui tombs found in other parts of China (Fig. 3), as well as those of the Northern Dynasties. I will also make comparisons with two tombs, located in modern Guyuan 固原 close to the Great Wall, that are of particular relevance to Li Jingxun’s. One is that of Li Xian 李贤, Li Jingxun’s great-grandfather, which allows us to address questions of the persistence of burial customs over several generations. The other is the Sui period tomb of Shi Shewu 史射勿, a Sogdian of an “outsider” lineage who was linked to the Silk Road.

Tomb Structure and Stone Coffin

In China, the shapes and sizes of graves are often determined by the rank and social status of the deceased (Linduff 2002). Li Jingxun’s tomb is rectangular, has one ramp, and is 6.85 meters long. Her inner coffin was made of stone. Although stone objects were sometimes used as funerary coffins in tombs in eastern China as early as the first century BCE, stone outer coffins were commonly found in the north in the tombs of the non-dynastic peoples during the fifth and sixth centuries. (Liu 1986; Wu 2002, 38) For example, recent excavations in Xian and Taiyuan found stone funerary furniture⁷ in the tombs of An Jia 安伽 and Yu Hong 虞弘, each of whom was most likely a Sogdian *sabao* 萨宝 of the N. Zhou and Sui Dynasty respectively (Shaanxi 2001; Shanxi 2001). According to Rong Xinjiang, *sabao* was an administrative and religious leader of the Sogdian settlements. (Rong 2003, 32). Li Jingxun’s inner coffin was unusual not just because it was made of stone but

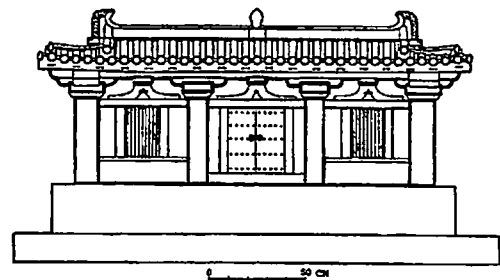


Fig. 4 Line drawing of Li Jingxun’s Coffin, after Zhongguo 1980: 9, Fig. 8

⁷ Their tomb furnishings were decorated with Zoroastrian symbols (Rong 2003).

because of its form and carving.⁸ It is a model of a type of house of Sui date, with three walls and nine ridges on the roof⁹ (*miankuo sanjian* 面阔三间, *jiuji diantang* 九脊殿堂) (Zhongguo 1980; Qin 1992, 411) (Fig. 4). There were incised designs of two female attendants and of two male attendants on it. This kind of carved stone coffin can also be seen later in another tomb, that of a Yongtai 永泰 princess (684-701), whose outer coffin confirms that such coffins were used by high-ranking individuals.¹⁰

Burial Goods

1. Exotic Goods

In Li Jingxun's tomb, luxury goods produced outside of China were found inside the inner stone coffin near her head and near or on her body, probably indicating that they are important personal items. The most spectacular were a gold necklace and two gold bracelets positioned on her body (Fig. 5). The gold necklace was originally embellished with strands of twenty-eight pearl-inlaid gold beads, two lapis lazuli insets from Afghanistan,

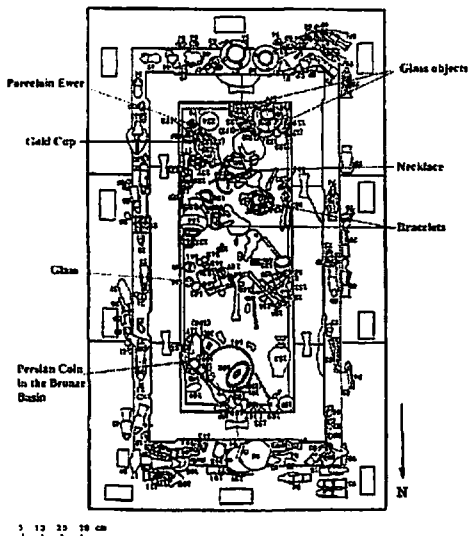


Fig. 5 Layout of the burial goods in Li Jingxun's tomb, after Zhongguo 1980, 5

five gemstones *en cabochon* at the bottom, and a blue, crystal-like stone pendant (Fig. 6). The two gold

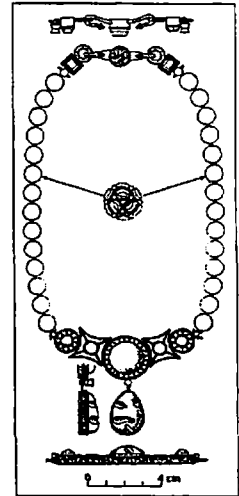


Fig. 6 Li Jingxun's necklace, after Zhongguo 1980, 17, Fig. 12

bracelets were also inlaid with hemispherical glass-

like beads (Zhongguo 1980, 17-18). Although the excavators think that these two pieces of jewelry were made in a Persian style, Xiong and Laing suggest that the necklace was particularly associated with the forms, techniques, and motifs of the jewelry in the regions of Northern India, Pakistan, and Persian Afghanistan (Xiong and Laing 1991).

⁸In addition, on the interior, the four walls of the inner stone coffin originally were decorated in color with scenes from life, such as female attendants on the northern and southern walls, and landscapes, animals, and architecture on the east wall; however, most of these were worn due to moisture (Zhongguo 1980, 9).

⁹This style has nine ridges at the roof, with the main ridge on the top and four ridges on each of two sloping sides.

¹⁰The stone coffins found in the Sui tombs examined in this paper were in the tombs of Li He 李和, the top ranking official, and in that of Yu Hong, most likely a Sogdian, and in that of Li Jingxun.

Other goods placed in the upper part of the inner coffin near Li Jingxun's head include a gold and a silver cup.¹¹ This type of cup is known to have been produced near the Black Sea, not in China (Qi 1999a, 406-409). Fangling Dachang 房陵大长, shows how, in a later mural in the tomb of a Tang princess, such gold cups and ewers were used as a set. In Li Jingxun's tomb, these two cups were placed with white porcelain ewers,¹² suggesting that their function was similar to those in the mural (Fig. 5). Similar ewers made of silver have been excavated in the western regions (Qi 1999a, 408). The color, shape, and function of the porcelain ewers may have been intended to mimic those of the silver ones (Rawson 1991). Indeed, in the eighth-century text of the Book of Tea, *Chajing* 茶经, by Lu Yu 陆羽, it is recorded that the white porcelain, Xing ware, attempted to imitate both silver and snow (Lu 1965; Qi 2002, 128).

Eight transparent glass objects also were found in her tomb (Fig. 5). There is some debate (Xia 1978, 113; Qi 2002, 221; An 1984, 425-33; An 1991) about where the glass was made, but scholars generally agree that it was associated with the Silk Road. The glass may have been related to foreign-style objects coming off the Silk Road.¹³ An Jiayao 安家瑶 has proposed that all the glass vessels in Li Jingxun's tomb were made in China because their shapes are similar to Chinese porcelain vessels found in Sui tombs (An 1984, 425-27; An 1991, 8). However, she also thinks that the green glass utensils found in Li Jingxun's tomb were similar to those made by a Sogdian craftsman, He Chou 何稠, as recorded in *Beishi* 北史¹⁴ (An 1984, 433). Additional foreign objects were found in the lower portion of the inner coffin. Near Li Jingxun's feet, a pierced Persian coin was found in a bronze basin along with a string of agates, ten silver finger-caps, a lynx stone, etc. (Fig. 5). This pierced Persian coin was probably used as an ornament rather than as currency (Zhongguo 1980, 6).

¹¹There were other goods placed in the upper part, including silver objects, such as a silver bowl, a silver chop-stick, a silver spoon, and some fine ceramics (Zhongguo 1980, 4).

¹²Qi Dongfeng thinks that the white porcelains in Li Jingxun's tomb were Xing ware made in the Xing state (Qi 2002, 124-25).

¹³Xia Nai 夏鼐 thinks that they were imported from Persia during the Sasanian dynasty (Xia 1978, 113), and Qi Dongfang believes that a green flat bottle and two vases made of soda-lime glass were imported from the west (Qi Dongfang 2002, 221).

¹⁴An quotes the studies of Xiang Da 向达 and a Japanese scholar, Kuwabara Jitasuzō 桑原鹭藏, to the effect that He Chou was a Sogdian from Kashania, located between modern Samarkand and Bukhara (An 1984, 433).

How does this display of exotic goods compare to the other mortuary display from other Sui tombs? In fact, only a few of the seventy-six tombs examined in this study contained exotic goods (Fig. 6). According to Qi Dongfang, some Byzantine-style cups were found in China in the period from the N. Dynasties to Tang. In five Sui tombs, imitations made in green porcelain, bronze, tin, and glass were found in the southern areas of Hunan 湖南, Hubei 湖北, and Guangxi 广西¹⁵ (Qi 1999a, 410-11). However, two silver cups and one white-porcelain cup were found in two Sui tombs, near Hohhot 呼和浩特, Inner Mongolia, and Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi 山西, respectively (Qi 1999a, 409-11).

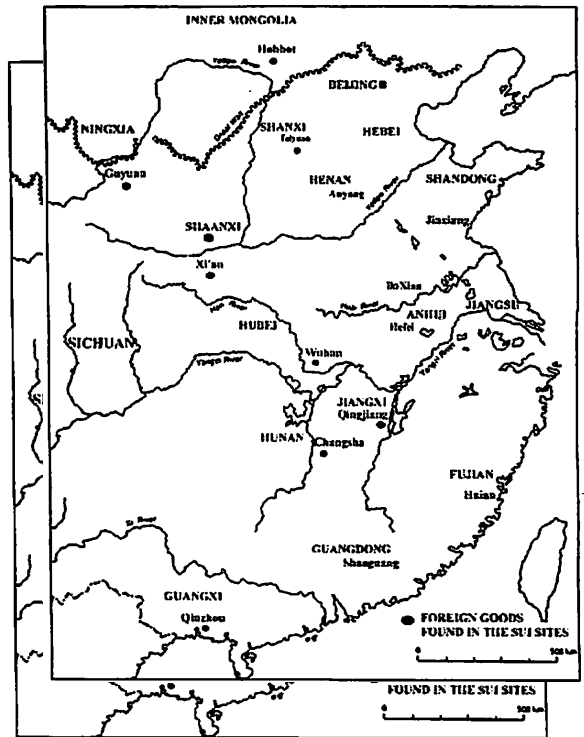


Fig. 7 Map of the Sui site that contained foreign goods

It is possible that these small exotic goods reached China through two different routes: by sea into southern China and by land into northern China. The five Sui tombs¹⁶ in the south were either near big rivers or close to the sea, and their locations undoubtedly enhanced the accessibility of exotic goods (see Fig. 7). Moreover, some exotics were found in southern China in tombs of the Han and Eastern Jin periods (Xiong and Laing 1991). Unfortunately, the identity of the deceased is unknown, and the Sui tombs in the south contained green porcelains and ceramics. In contrast, two northern tombs contained more exotic goods; for example, in the tomb near Hohhot one Byzantine coin, two finger rings set with colored engraved stones, and golden ornaments were found. The identity of the deceased is, unfortunately, unknown. The other tomb was found at Taiyuan and contained a mortuary epitaph that specified the name of the deceased, Hulu Che 斛律彻, and the information that the interred's great-grandfather, Hulu Jin 斛律金, was *xiangguo* 相国, or chancellor, of the N. Qi (Shanxi 1992).¹⁷ The restored burial goods contained 328 ceramic objects. Among them were two green ware vessels decorated with floral motifs in relief, similar to silver objects found in the western regions (Rawson 1991). In addition,

¹⁵Qi further suggests that they probably came into southern China through the Sea Route that was associated with the Byzantine Empire.

¹⁶The five tombs are located at Changsha 长沙, Wuhan 武汉, and Qinzhou 钦州 (see Appendix One).

¹⁷His tomb was damaged very extensively by water, which disturbed the layout of the burial goods.

according to Yao Wei yuan 姚薇元, based on the *Book of N. Qi* 北齐书 and the *Book of Wei* 魏书 Hulu Che's great-grandfather, Hulu Jin, was originally from the north, and came to northern China during the N. Wei (Yao 1962, 304).

The Sui period tomb of Shi Shewu 史射勿, a Sogdian with links to the Silk Road, displayed more exotic goods even though it had been looted (Luo 1996, 7-30). In the tomb of Shi Shewu, a gold finger ring; two inlaid ornaments with a teardrop motif filled with stone, glass, and pearls; and a pierced Persian coin were found¹⁸ (Luo 1996, 7-30; Juliano and Lerner, ed., 2001, 258-59, 280). However, there is some evidence that he was not typical of the Han elite of the Sui period. The epitaph of Shi Shewu 史射勿 states that his ancestor was from the western regions and his great-grandfather and grandfather both had held the governmental title of *sabao*. Luo Feng 罗丰 suggests that Shi Shewu (543-609) was a Shi from a small state in Sogdiana¹⁹ (Luo 1996; 2001, 239). It may be significant that later members of Shi Shewu's family also were buried with exotic goods (Luo 2001, 243). The Tang Dynasty tomb of Shi's son, Shi Hedan 史诃耽, contained an imitation Byzantine coin (Luo 1996, 59-60), and the tomb of Shi's grandson, Shi Tiebang 史铁棒, contained a pierced imitation Sassanian coin as well (Luo 1996, 82).

The use of exotic goods in burial may have been a family tradition. In the same area as Shi Shewu's tomb in modern Guyuan, archeologists discovered the double burial of Li Xian and his wife, Li Jingxun's paternal great-grandparents, who were buried during the N. Zhou (Ningxia 1985). Based on Li Xian's epitaph, many scholars believe that Li Xian was a Tuoba Xianbei 拓跋鲜卑, a non-dynastic group from the north (Lü 2002, 44; Li 1994, 97; Wang 1985, 62). Additionally, Li Xian's epitaph records that he was in charge of defense work along the Silk Road at the northern frontier. Their tomb contained remarkable goods from the western regions. Although their tomb was looted, a green Sassanian glass bowl (An 1986, 180) and a gold finger ring set with an engraved blue stone were excavated. Moreover,

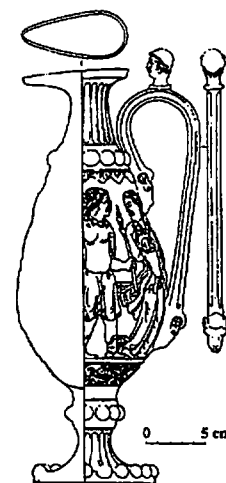


Fig. 8 Li Xian's ewer, after Ningxia 1985, 11, Fig. 23

¹⁸ There is debate about the origin of this Persian coin. Luo Feng thinks that it was a real silver coin of the Sassanian Peroz III type. But Juliano and Lerner suggest that it was an imitation of the Peroz *drachm*, because it displays wrong inscriptions, mint abbreviation, and reversed composition of the motifs. However, Luo, Juliano, and Lerner all agree that it was used as an ornament.

¹⁹ His great-grandfather moved to China probably during the latter half of the fifth century.

a gilded silver ewer, 37.5 cm tall, in Li Xian's tomb was decorated with a continuous scene of Greco-Roman figures in relief (Fig. 8). There is debate about where it was made and why it was found in Li Xian's tomb. Wu Zhuo 吴焯 thinks that it is of a style made in Persia during the Sassanian dynasty and was probably presented to Li Xian because of his important position (Wu 1987; 1991). But Alexandra Carpino and Jean James suggest that the ewer shape and its relief style were a mix of Roman and Sassanian models and that these objects documented Li Xian's wealth and social status (Carpino and James 1989). Nevertheless, they all agree that this ewer documents Silk Road connections during the fifth and sixth century A.D. To sum up, it appears that western-style ornaments, foreign coins, and vessels were more accessible in the north during the Sui Dynasty, and those found in Li Xian and Shi Shewu's tomb probably display their own taste and choice. These choices were continued by later generations and may have marked their owners as outsiders.

2. Conventional Chinese Goods

Li Jingxun's tomb also contained conventional Chinese grave goods, including eighty-eight terracotta figurines, animals, and ceramic vessels (Fig. 9). Figurines of female attendants and officials stood along the four sides of her inner coffin. Similar conventional Chinese objects were found in most of the Sui tombs examined for this paper. The numbers and types of terracotta artifacts correlate with the social rank and/or position of the deceased. Overall, the conventional Chinese goods surrounding Li Jingxun's coffin suggest that their function was to reflect her high social status. These terracotta warriors, officials, and servants probably symbolized assistants in the afterlife.

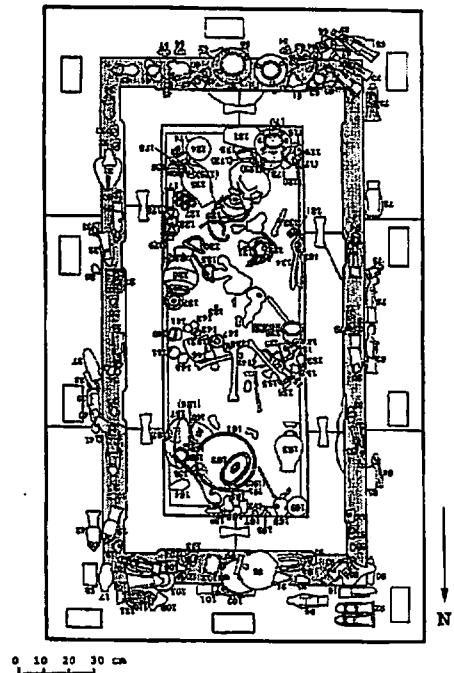


Fig. 9 Layout of conventional goods, after Zhongguo 1980, 5

Discussion

People traveled or emigrated along the Silk Road, and ideas and artifacts were exchanged or created. The evidence discussed above suggests that there was a connection at this time between exotic goods and high social status. In addition, the presence of exotic goods may

correlate with the deceased's ethnic background. For instance, many exotic goods were found in the north in tombs of the non-dynastic peoples. Evidence for both correlations can be found in Li Jingxun's tomb arrangement, casket, and types of burial goods. It is extraordinary that there were so many luxury objects found in the tomb of such a young girl. Their presence may link her to her family lineage. With this in mind, I wonder how the diverse styles of artifacts in her tomb constructed a social and ethnic identity for both the deceased and the living.

Li Jingxun seemingly was treated at death as a princess, suggesting that her social identity was constructed by her family members, especially her maternal grandmother, Yang Lihua 杨丽华, the daughter of the Sui emperor and the wife of an emperor of the N. Zhou. Li Jingxun's epitaph names her maternal grandmother as her guardian and the one who raised her. Indeed, Li Jingxun's mother was the only child of Empress Xuan, recorded in the *Book of Sui*, *Suishu* 隋书. Li Jingxun was the fourth daughter, and her courtesy name was Xiaohai 小孩 ("Little Child"), as recorded on her epitaph (Zhongguo 1980, 25-28). It is likely that Empress Xuan had custody of this young girl and treated her like a little princess. Furthermore, the epitaph specifies the place where this girl died and was buried. The location of Li Jingxun's tomb, Xiuxiang Li Wanshan Daochang, 休祥里万善道场—inside the Sui capital city walls—was very unusual. According to the Tang text, *Liangjing Xinji* 两京新记 (*New Documents of Two Capitals*) by Wei Shu 韦述, the Wanshan temple was located at Xiuxiang Fang 休祥坊 and was built during the reign of the N. Zhou Emperor Xuan. In the second year of the Sui dynasty (AD 582), approximately one thousand female attendants of Li Jingxun's maternal grandmother were forced to take tonsure there (Zhongguo 1980, 27). This further suggests that the exceptional location of Li Jingxun's tomb was associated with her maternal grandmother. The evidence indicates that Li Jingxun was treated as a princess, a high status possible, not through her father, but through her maternal grandmother, the empress of N. Zhou. This unconventional practice, presenting Li Jingxun's social identity through her maternal lineage, explains her royal-style burial and accounts for her lavish tomb and its location.

Why then was Li Jingxun buried as an "outsider" princess? Luxury goods, especially the exotic ones, may stress her ethnic background. Indeed, Li Jingxun's maternal lineage was not the only guide for her burial display. Her tomb contained many exotic goods. Other tombs, such as those of Hulu Che, Shi Shewu, and Li Xian, that contained such goods were those of the "outsiders." It is possible that these goods acknowledged Li Jingxun's ethnic background.

Furthermore, these burial goods were abundant and probably provided a way to make her more marriageable in the afterlife. Marriages between upper-class Chinese and non-Chinese elite were very common during the N. Dynasties and in many, the brides were very young. For example, both Li Jingxun's maternal great-grandmother and her maternal grandmother were married when they were about thirteen years old. It is possible that Li Jingxun's grandmother wanted this for her in the afterlife. The stone coffin modeled after the imperial house of the Sui might provide a permanent palace for her in the afterlife, while expressing her imperial identity and mixed lineage.

Conclusion

The unconventional practice of Li Jingxun's burial shows that the mortuary practice negotiated both the social identity of the deceased and the living members of the Sui royal family. The privileged location of the ramped, square tomb; the palace-shaped stone coffin; and the exotic burial goods show that Li Jingxun's status was that of a princess. This position could be traced through her maternal grandmother, the daughter of the Sui emperor and the wife of an emperor of the N. Zhou. Li Jingxun's high status was reflected in the rich goods, the carved stone coffin, and the tomb's location. Her maternal lineage, then, explains this royal style burial, and records an exceptional practice. However, Li Jingxun's maternal lineage was not the only guide for her burial display. Her tomb contained many exotic goods, and since most tombs that contained such goods were those of non-dynastic peoples from the north, it is possible that these goods stressed an ethnic affiliation expressed in mortuary practice. The abundant and diverse artifacts labeled her as an "outsider" princess and signified different cultural and ethnic affiliations, and these can be identified with the royal family itself.

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