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Placing Western Coins Near the Deceased in Ancient China: The Origin of a Custom

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Placing Western Coins Near the Deceased in Ancient China:
The Origin of a Custom

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the custom in ancient China of placing Western coins in proximity to corpses during burial. Academic attention has focused on the origin of the custom since Marc Aurel Stein initially connected the finding in Turfan of Western coins placed in the mouths or on the eyes of the corpses with Charon's obol, the ancient Greek coin that, similarly placed, paid Charon to ferry the dead to the underworld. Some scholars agreed with Stein's proposal, while others suggested that it was instead a traditional Chinese funerary ritual, unrelated to Greece. This article moves away from over-reliance on written sources and aims at uncovering the patterns underlying this custom, through the collection and analysis of available archaeological material. Results indicate that the custom possibly originated in the Hellenistic practice of Charon's obol and then traveled to China with Sogdian immigrants, developing into a regional funeral ritual in Turfan.

Keywords: Western coins; burial customs; Charon's obol; Sogdians; Turfan

INTRODUCTION

During his third expedition in Central Asia, between 1913 and 1916, Aurel Stein discovered six Western coins in the mouths or over the eyes of corpses in the ancient cemetery of Turfan, China. Three of the coins were Byzantine gold pieces or imitations of such pieces, and the other three were Sasanian silver pieces.¹ Stein originally suggested that the coins were deliberately placed in the mouths or on the eyes of the corpses as a payment or bribe to Charon, who is the ferryman of the nether world in Greek mythology; however, this assessment came under question, as M. Chavannes reminded Stein that a similar practice also existed in ancient Chinese societies.² This marked the beginning of a century-long debate on the matter.

Generally, there have been two opposite viewpoints concerning the origin of the ancient Chinese custom of placing Western coins near bodies at burial. One is that this custom can be attributed to longstanding Chinese funeral rituals of placing objects in the mouth and/or the hand of the deceased, known as the *koushi* and/or *shouwo* 口实手握 (filling the mouth and/or the hand) rituals. In the strict sense, the designation is composed of two independent rituals. The objects placed in the mouth of the deceased were known as *koushi* 口实 (filling the mouth), while those placed in the hands were known as *shouwo* 手握 (filling the hand). Because these two rituals shared the same basic function as that of offering ritual provisions for the afterlife and were sometimes practiced simultaneously, they are often grouped together in the discourse of Chinese scholars.³

A clear majority of Chinese scholars believe that the custom of placing Western coins near bodies was most likely a natural evolution from the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals. During the historical development of the rituals, various objects, such as rice, cowry shells, jade, or coins, were selected as amulets to be placed near the deceased.⁴ Thus the adoption of foreign coins as part of

¹ Marc Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia* (Oxford, 1928), 643–647.

² *Ibid.*, 646.

³ Luo Feng, “Beizhou Shijun mu chutude Baizhanting jinbi fangzhipin,” *Wenwu* 3 (2005): 57–65. Wang Weikun, “Sichou zilü yanxian faxiande sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu,” *Kaogu Xuebao* 02 (2003): 219–240.

⁴ The objects designated to fulfill the ritual mainly depended on the social ranking of the deceased. Cheaper objects such as cowries and Chinese copper coins could be afforded by low-ranking people, while jade products were emblematic of the

Chinese funerary rituals was likely a natural development that arose due to the prosperity that the Silk Road brought to China and because Western coins were flowing in.⁵

But dissenting opinions have also been presented, mainly by the scholars F. Thierry, Odani Nakao, and Luo Feng, who all agree with Stein’s suggestion that the custom probably originated in the Hellenistic practice of Charon’s obol.⁶ “Charon’s obol” refers to coins being placed in burials (usually in the mouth of the deceased) as payment to the mythical ferryman for transport across the river Styx to the afterlife.⁷ It has been established that the Hellenistic practice was introduced into Central Asia as a result of the wars waged by Alexander the Great.⁸ However, as far as I have observed, the deity Charon

burials of emperors and nobles. M. Marinova, “Origin and Interpretation of the Custom of Placing Objects in the Mouth of the Deceased in Ancient China,” in Alexander Alexiev and Pawel Zygodlo, eds., *China and the World: Language, Culture, Politics* (Sofia, 2020), 1: 304–317.

⁵ Xia Nai, “Zongshu Zhongguo chutude bosi sashanchao yinbi,” *Kaogu Xuebao* 01 (1974): 91–109. Li Chaoquan, “Kouhanwu xisu yanjiu,” *Kaogu* 08 (1995): 724–730. Wang, “Sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu,” 219–240.

⁶ F. Thierry, “Sur les Monnaies sassanides trouvees en Chine,” *Revue Numismatique* 36 (1994): 109–145. Odani Nakao, “Guanyu sizhe kouzhong hanbi de xisu(yi),” in Wang Weikun and Liuyong (trans.), *Kaogu Yanjiu* 5 (1991): 80–86. Odani Nakao, “Guanyu Sizhe Kouzhong Hanbi de Xisu (er)” in Wang Weikun and Liuyong, trans., *Kaogu Yanjiu* 1 (1993): 81–100. Luo Feng, “Zhongguo Jingnei Faxian De Dongluoma Jinbi,” *Zhongguo Qianbi Xuehui Sizhou Zhilu Yantaohui Zhuankan* (2004), 84–109.

⁷ Lisa Brown, “Charon’s Obol? An Archaeological Study of the Role of Coins in Roman Burial Ritual (with Case Studies from Roman Italy, Germany, Britain, and Unconquered Scandinavia)” (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2013), 41.

⁸ Odani provided two pieces of evidence to demonstrate that the Hellenistic practice of Charon’s obol was followed in Central Asia. First, the earliest coins placed close to the deceased in Central Asia discovered thus far date to the first century BCE, which postdates the earliest coins representing Charon’s obol in Greece, which are dated to the fourth–fifth centuries BCE. Second, these earliest coins in Central Asia were all replicas of Greco-Bactria silver coins; “Guanyu Sizhe Kouzhong Hanbi de Xisu (er),” 87. Odani did not say what these earliest coins in Central Asia were, but it is most likely that he referred to those from the Tulkhar cemetery in Tajikistan and the Tup-Khona cemetery in Tajikistan (for details, see app. 3, no. 30–51). Notably, although a clear majority of those coins were replicas, three coins were genuine Greco-Bactrian silver coins (app. 3, no. 30–32). To the best of my knowledge, no later scholars have challenged Odani’s suggestion. They have mostly accepted this suggestion or given tacit consent to the connection between Charon’s obol in Greece and the similar practice in Central Asia. See Luo, “Beizhou Shijun mu,” 57–65; Wang, “Sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu,” 219–240.

was never portrayed in any Sogdian artwork or recorded in their written sources.⁹ With Charon absent from the Sogdian pantheon, it is not reasonable to state that Sogdians or Central Asians worshiped Charon. To avoid this implication, I will refer to the Central Asian version of “Charon’s obol” as “Charon’s myth” in this paper. Charon’s obol is mentioned here only as the source of the practice, but the specific beliefs that that practice entails are set aside.¹⁰

Thierry, Odani, and Luo attributed the ancient Chinese custom of placing Western coins close to the deceased to reasons other than Charon’s obol. Thierry and Odani both suggested that the traditional Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals did not select coins (whether Western or Chinese) as amulets to be placed near the deceased. Thierry claimed that the Chinese placed only jade or cowries in the mouth of the dead.¹¹ According to Odani’s observations, the first wave of cultural transmission took place in the remote regions of China during the Han dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE, 25–220 CE), and the second wave penetrated deep into inner China along the silk roads during the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907 CE). The fact that none of the coins found placed in the hands or mouth of the deceased could be dated to the third–sixth centuries corresponds to the hiatus between the two waves that occurred during that time period.¹² However, while Luo acknowledged that Chinese copper coins were part of Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals, he suggested that the adoption of Western coins was likely an exotic custom resulting from contact with the Sogdians. He connected the spread of the custom to

9 Matteo Compareti, an authority on Sogdian beliefs, told me that he has never seen anything like the Charon’s obol in the Sogdian motherland (personal communication, November 10, 2022).

10 The notion of payment in return for safe passage to the afterlife was not confined to Greece, but rather was common to many cultures, including the ancient Near East, ancient Egypt, China (ancient and modern), and Japan (ancient and modern). For such ideas in the ancient Near East and ancient Egypt, see Brown, “Charon’s Obol?,” 42–46. For such notions in China and Japan (ancient and modern), see Odani, “Guanyu Sizhe Kouzhong Hanbi de Xisu (er),” 81–100. Zoroastrianism, the primary Sogdian religion, also contains a similar notion. According to Zoroastrianism, the Chinvat Bridge separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. All souls must cross the bridge upon death. Only if the deceased person’s good thoughts, words, and deeds in life are judged to be sufficient can the soul cross the bridge to the Zoroastrian paradise; see J. A. Lerner, “Zoroastrian Funerary Beliefs and Practices Known from the Sino-Sogdian Tombs in China,” *The Silk Road* 9 (2011): 18–25.

11 Thierry, “Sur les Monnaies sassanides,” 109–145.

12 Odani, “Guanyu sizhe kouzhong hanbi de xisu(yi),” 80–86; Odani, “Guanyu Sizhe Kouzhong Hanbi de Xisu (er),” 81–100.

Sogdian residents in China, drawing attention to the fact that many Sogdian tombs in China have been found to contain Western coins so placed.¹³

METHODOLOGY

In this article, the origin of the custom of laying Western coins close to the deceased in ancient China is described. To obtain more detailed insight into the practice, my research relies on case studies in which archaeological material related to the custom is gathered, organized, and analyzed. The geographical area in which the data were collected corresponds to the territory currently held by China, with the aim of avoiding semantic indeterminacy due to the territorial changes that often occurred in ancient China. The Western coins include Byzantine gold coins, Sasanian silver coins, and their various imitations.

Specifically, such coins were deliberately placed in direct contact with the deceased. In fact, other coin placements in graves (e.g., on the floor or in a vessel) have been identified through archaeological discovery in many Eurasian areas, such as China, Central Asia, and the Roman Empire.¹⁴ These "unorthodox" locations of grave coins likely carry rich cultural meanings.¹⁵ To avoid possible controversy, only those coins that were placed in direct contact with the deceased, such as over or in the body, are considered in this study.

Using the methods described above, I collected information on forty-four genuine or counterfeit Byzantine gold coins based on the excavation reports of forty-one tombs found in China and forty genuine or counterfeit Sasanian silver coins based on the excavation reports of thirty-five tombs found in China (Figure 1). These seventy-six tombs, which contained eighty-four Western coins, were all found in northern China, particularly in strategic locations along land-based silk roads such as Turfan and Guyuan, and in Chinese cosmopolises such as Xi'an. A few of these tombs date to either the fifth or the eighth century, while many more date to the sixth–seventh centuries.

¹³ Luo, "Beizhou Shijun mu," 57–65.

¹⁴ Brown, "Charon's Obol?"; Wang, "Sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu," 219–240.

¹⁵ Brown, "Charon's Obol?," 311–314; Qiu Jianming, "Shangzhou Qinhan Sangzang Yongbi Yanjiu" (Master's thesis, Sichuan University, 2013), 80–101.



Figure 1. Distribution of studied Byzantine gold coins, Sasanian silver coins, and their imitations in China

A wide range of information on both the coins and the deceased is considered in this study. These data were collected and sorted according to the following features: coin identification (ID) reference, coin status (genuine or counterfeit), coin sovereignty, date of burial, burial site, coin position relative to the deceased, and ethnicity of the coin's owner (i.e., the deceased) (Appendixes 1 and 2). The excavation reports of these 76 tombs often provide photos or descriptions of the unearthed Western coins, enabling the required information to be obtained.

The only required information that these excavation reports often fail to provide is the ethnicity of the coin's owner. Specialists have generally classified such ethnicity based on the surname since there was a prevalent naming system in ancient China by which foreigners' Chinese surnames were generally created on the basis of their respective homelands.¹⁶ For instance, when a person was given the surname Kang, it implied that this individual was a Sogdian who came from the Kang state (modern Samarkand). The fact that the surname of the tomb's owner was usually recorded on the epitaph placed at the burial site facilitates this aspect of the study.

For those deceased individuals whose surnames cannot be directly identified from epitaphs or whose tombs do not have epitaphs at all, alternative methods for identifying ethnicity are adopted. We can speculate about the ethnicity of a deceased individual whose surname is unknown when the body

¹⁶ Ren Ziyi, "Qianyi woguo de xingshi qiyuan," *Caizhi* 04 (2018): 133–134.

is discovered in a collective tomb or family cemetery. The surname of a spouse or the family name can help us determine the deceased's ethnicity, as mixed-race marriages between Sogdians and Chinese were rare in the period in which these burial rites occurred (i.e., the fifth–eighth centuries).¹⁷ For example, if the deceased's husband was surnamed Kang, it is highly likely that the deceased herself was also Sogdian.

Furthermore, to determine which of the two suggested alternatives (i.e., the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals or the Central Asian version of Charon's obol) accounts for these incidences of Western coins in Chinese burials, knowing the precise form taken by these archetypical custom is necessary. Two possible origins of the custom are discussed in the Introduction with the arguments supporting each, but statistical analysis of the actual archaeological material might be more helpful for revealing their characteristics.

The practice of Charon's obol in Central Asia is unclear. Although Odani and Wang¹⁸ both mentioned some examples related to the funerary ritual, they did not provide detailed descriptions. This serves as motivation for conducting actual data collection according to archaeological findings. Consequently, I collected information on fifty-one coins unearthed from Central Asia burials that had been linked to "Charon's myth" (Figure 2). Most of these fifty-one coins were buried from the first to the fourth century. Although they were unearthed in four different modern countries—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan—their geographical distribution converged on the shared border areas of these countries, where ancient Central Asians had followed the Hellenistic practice of Charon's obol after the collapse of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom in the second century BCE.

¹⁷ Mixed-race marriages between Sogdians and Chinese were very uncommon before the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763 CE), particularly because almost all Sogdian males chose their spouses from among their own ethnic community. See Rong Xinjiang, *Zhongguo Zhongguo yu wailai wenming* (Beijing, 2001), 134.

¹⁸ Odani, "Guanyu Sizhe Kouzhong Hanbi de Xisu (er)," 81–100. Wang, "Sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu," 219–240.

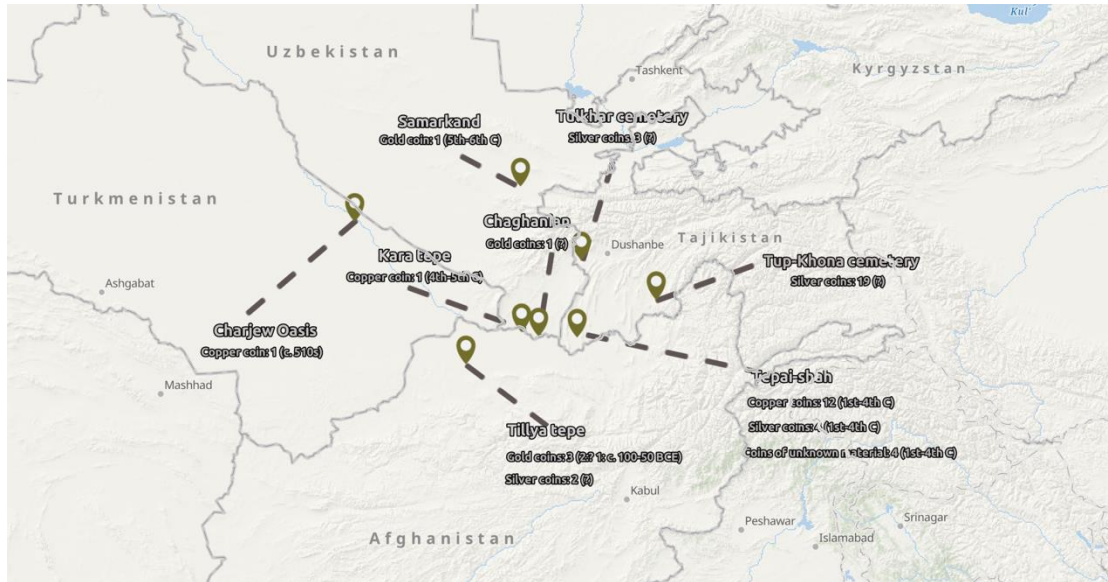


Figure 2. Distribution of studied coins in Central Asia

The data on the fifty-one coins that were unearthed in Central Asia were organized according to the categories mentioned above, with only minor changes (Appendix 3). Determining the ethnicity of the coins' owners is often not possible, because no relevant clues remain. Thus, this category is omitted.

Regarding the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals, for comparison, the objects used in the rituals are limited to Chinese copper coins,¹⁹ and the period that these practices occurred is limited to the fifth through the eighth centuries. A specific sampling strategy was used for data collection in Shaanxi and Henan provinces, as these regions are important centers for China, in which the custom was likely to have originated during this period. Along China's borders, Turfan was also thought to have gained detailed knowledge about the specific phenomenon. In total, I collected information on twenty-four Chinese copper coins from the excavation reports of fifteen tombs found in China (Figure 3). The data on these coins and the deceased are presented in a contingency table (Appendix 4).

¹⁹ From the third century onward, Chinese copper coins gradually became common mouth and hand amulets even though other alternatives continued to be used. Marinova, "Origin and Interpretation of the Custom," 309.

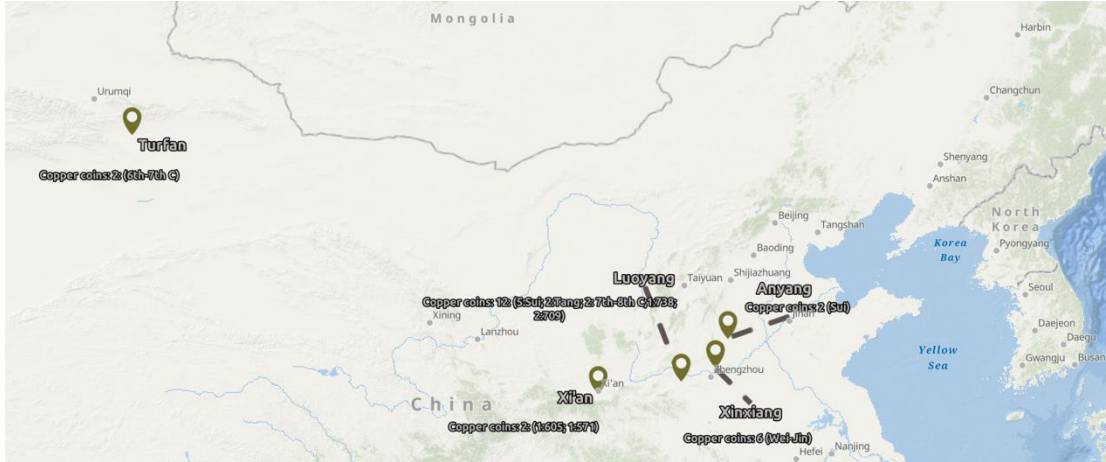


Figure 3. Distribution of studied Chinese copper coins in China

Notably, these twenty-four Chinese copper coins constitute only a small portion of the archaeological findings pertaining to the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals, because these rituals were longstanding and popular in ancient China. It is not possible to include every relevant burial due to their abundance.²⁰ In contrast, the other two kinds of studied coins, i.e., Western coins in China (see Figure 1) and Western coins in Central Asia (see Figure 2), primarily represent currently known archaeological material.

To better uncover the patterns that underlie the custom of burying the dead with Western coins, the studied eighty-four Western coins are analysed from four different perspectives in the following sections. In the first section, the fact that a high proportion of Western coins were placed close to the head of the deceased, which exhibits a great similarity to Charon’s myth, is noted. The second section investigates the spatial distribution of the custom, which shows that most cases occurred in Turfan. I refer to this phenomenon as “Turfan distinctiveness.” The third section investigates the temporal distribution of the custom, which finds a temporal convergence between the emergence of the practice

²⁰ As far as I could determine, none of the studies list all of the instances related to the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals. Wang Weikun made a relatively complete survey of the *koushi* ritual: “Suitang muzang chutude sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu Suyuan,” *Kaogu yu Wenwu* 05 (2001): 76–88. Tursun Gulzar made a relatively complete survey of the *shouwo* ritual: “Tangdai sangzang xisu zhong shouwo de zonghe yanjiu” (Master’s thesis, Northwest University of China, 2019), 46–47. Although their studies were focused on a single segment of the combined rituals, hundreds of such instances are referenced.

and the period in which the Sogdians started building Chinese-style tombs. In the final section, particular attention is given to the people who practiced the custom; the results indicate that Sogdians were the principal practitioners of the custom. All four dimensions are tied together to answer the research question: which of the two burial rituals (i.e., Charon's obol and the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo*) served as the origin of the custom of burying the deceased with Western coins in proximity in ancient China?

POSITION OF THE COIN

The position of a coin in a tomb specifically refers to where it was when it was found. Admittedly, the position of a coin at the time it was discovered might not be its original position, because of events that may have occurred after it was placed, such as earthquakes, animal disturbances, and grave robberies. It is rarely possible to determine whether a coin has been disturbed. Thus, the analysis in this section is based only on the recorded find-spots. Fortunately, the excavation position of all eighty-four collected Western coins was recorded or sketched.

Although my investigation is limited to those coins that were deliberately placed in direct contact with the deceased, as mentioned above, I can still identify great variations in coin locations, including where they were located in the mouth, around the torso, around the head, on the shoulder, on the collarbone, around the spine, under the arm, at the waist, in the hand, on the eye, or on the neck. Different coin placements might imply different considerations. However, I do not discuss this issue in detail because it is tangential to this research. Rather, the focus of this section is on the comparison between the targeted custom and its two possible origins regarding the position of the coin that enables the determination of its authentic origin.

To minimize any issues in interpreting the locations of these Western coins, the coin positions were consolidated based on the principle of proximity. As such, coins located in the mouth, on the eye, and around the head were grouped in the same category: "close to the head." Similarly, coins found on the shoulder, on the collarbone, and on the neck were grouped in the same location. This method led to the formation of the following groups: close to the head, in the hand, at the waist, on the neck, close to the spine, under the arm, and close to the torso (Table 1).

Table 1. The 84 coins’ positions relative to the deceased²¹

Position	Head	Hand	Waist	Neck	Spine	Arm	Torso
Number of coins	68	1	1	6	3	1	4

Sixty-eight of these coins were placed close to the head, accounting for approximately 81 percent of the total. However, hand placement only occurs once. This imbalance is more evocative of the characteristics of “Charon’s myth” than of those of the *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals.

Wang indicated that coins placed in the hand rather than in the mouth of the deceased gradually became mainstream in China after the Eastern Han Dynasty.²² Wang’s assertion is confirmed by archaeological material that I collected (Appendix 4), in which sixteen coins (75 percent) were in the hands of the deceased. In contrast, the head of the deceased has been determined to be the primary coin location when following “Charon’s myth” (Appendix 3). There were thirty-five coins placed close to the head of the deceased, representing approximately 69 percent of the total, while only five coins were found in the hand, accounting for only approximately 10 percent of the total. This comparison indicates that the custom of placing Western coins close to the deceased is more akin to “Charon’s myth” than to the *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE CUSTOM

The geographical distribution of burials containing Western coins placed near the deceased is considered next. Eighty-four Western coins, comprising forty-four Byzantine gold coins and forty Sasanian silver coins, were considered, because the excavation sites of the tombs in which they were found are all accessible from their excavation reports. For comparison purposes, the excavation sites are all defined on the urban administrative regional level. All the items were sorted according to their excavation sites from west to the east (Table 2).

²¹ Sources: appendixes 1 and 2.

²² Wang, “Sizhe kouzhong hanbi xisu yanjiu,” 219–240.

Table 2. The 84 coins by excavation site²³

Excavation site	Turfan	Guyuan	Xi'an	Shangzhou	Hohhot	Luoyang	Chaoyang
Number of coins	62	11	5	1	1	2	2

As many as sixty-two coins were unearthed from Turfan, accounting for approximately 75 percent of the total. I refer to this phenomenon as “Turfan distinctiveness.” Turfan distinctiveness made a difference not only in the geographical distribution of the custom, but also in its chronology and its users, as is stressed in the following sections.

Turfan distinctiveness might result from a combination of factors. Just two important factors are referenced here, for furthering our understanding of the unique setting of Turfan. Turfan was located at the intersection of several silk roads; as a result, Byzantine gold coins and Sasanian silver coins were relatively common there. From approximately 580 CE to 700 CE, Sasanian silver coins were used as the main form of currency in Turfan.²⁴ Turfan had a heterogenous society comprising people of various cultural backgrounds. According to Wang Qitao, ancient literature written in diverse languages, such as Chinese, Sogdian, Turkic, Persian, and Tibetan, has been found in the area.²⁵ So Turfan was very different from other areas of China (in this article referred to as “inner China” for convenience).

Guo Yunyan argued that the custom of placing Western coins close to the deceased probably came from China rather than the West, because the area between Turfan and Central Asia showed no incidence of the practice.²⁶ However, this assertion may not be fully convincing.

According to a review of available archaeological material in Central Asia, the burial site nearest

²³ Sources: appendixes 1 and 2.

²⁴ Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford, 2012), 83–112.

²⁵ Wang Qitao, *Tulufan chutu wenxian yuyan daolun* (Beijing, 2012), 1–7.

²⁶ Guo Yunyan, “Guanyu Xinjiang tulufan diqu kouhanbi xisu de yidian sikao,” in Tulufanxue Yanjiuyuan and Tulufan Bowuguan, eds., *Tulufanxue Yanjiu: Disijie Tulufanxue Guoji Xueshu Yantaohui Lunwenji* (Shanghai, 2015).

to Turfan is the cemetery of Tup-Khona in Dushanbe, Tajikistan²⁷ (see Figure 2). The straight-line distance between Dushanbe and Turfan is 1780 kilometers. Thus, there is indeed an area between Turfan and Central Asia that exhibits no incidence of this practice. However, the same situation appears when one looks east. In inner China, the burial site displaying this custom lying nearest to Turfan is Guyuan (see Figure 1). The straight-line distance between Turfan and Guyuan is nearly as great, approximately 1500 kilometers. So it seems that the distribution spread of the custom cannot explain its origin until more evidence is available.

CHRONOLOGICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE CUSTOM

The third analysis compares the date across different time periods. It is used to identify when the custom appeared and ended in ancient China and whether it peaked during a certain period.

Normally, biographical epitaphs²⁸ and objects with distinctive temporal characteristics found in graves constitute two of the key elements used for dating; epitaphs generally refer to a particular day, while objects found in graves are less precise. Dating yields three types of temporalities: (1) a clear date; (2) an approximate period, such as a century, with a small range of possible error; or (3) an even more approximate period with a wider range of error, such as a long period covering centuries or an even an entire dynasty.

The third kind of dating result (i.e., covering centuries or an entire dynasty) provides a lengthy time span that cannot provide a detailed picture of the distribution patterns due to the large size of its error range. Thus, only the first two kinds of results, involving forty-six coins composed of twenty-nine

²⁷ M. M. Dyakonov and B. A. Litvinskij successively conducted archaeological excavations in the cemetery of Tup-Khona. Nineteen coins placed near the deceased came to light, including thirteen coins that had been placed in the mouth, three on the chest, two on the heart, and one in the hand of the corpses. All of these coins were imitations of silver coins minted under Eucratides I, who was one of the most important Greco-Bactrian kings. See B. A. Litvinskij and A. V. Sedov, *Kul'ty I Ritualy Kushanskoi Baktrii*, (Moscow, 1984), 227–231. For the collected data, see app. 3, no. 33–51.

²⁸ A Chinese epitaph refers to a piece of writing ascribing personal details to the deceased that is engraved on slabs and placed in a tomb. Although the content of epitaphs varies, most of them include temporal information about the deceased and the burial, such as the person's date of birth, death, and burial. See Zhu Zhiwu, "Zhongguo Gudai Muzhi Qiyuan Xinlun," *Anhui Shixue*, 03 (2008): 33–38.

Byzantine gold coins and seventeen Sasanian silver coins, is analyzed in this section. The burials containing these forty-six Western coins are divided into one-hundred-year date ranges since a considerable number of these cases can be allocated to at least a particular century (Table 3).

Table 3. The 46 coins divided by date into 100-year periods²⁹

Burial date	500–600 CE	600–700 CE	700–800 CE
Number of coins	13	29	4

The temporal clustering of this practice between 500 CE and 600 CE indicates a time when Western coins were just beginning to be buried with the deceased, and this cluster includes thirteen coins that were unearthed from eight tombs,³⁰ including tomb I.3, tomb I.5, tomb 66TAM48, tomb V.2, the tomb of Tian Hong, the tomb of Li Dan, the tomb of Shi Jun, the tomb of Shi Jun. The first four of these tombs were all found in Turfan, while the latter four were all found in inner China. Setting aside the four tombs located in Turfan, the remaining four tombs, located in inner China, all belonged to non-Han people who either were Sogdians or had partially Sogdian backgrounds.³¹

In fact, the presence of Western coins in China predates the sixth century. In the city of Gaochang (in modern Turfan), two hoards were discovered that contained silver drachms of Shapur II (r. 309–379 CE), Ardashir II (r. 379–383 CE), and Shapur III (r. 383–388 CE). Both hoards are dated to the fourth–fifth centuries.³² However, at this period, Western coins were never buried with the deceased in Chinese burial contexts, according to extant archaeological material. When Sino-Sogdians began to

²⁹ Sources: appendixes 1 and 2.

³⁰ Sources: app. 1, no. 1, 2, 6, 31–34, 38, 40, 41; app. 2, no. 11–12, 13.

³¹ For the relationships between these non-Han minorities and Sogdians, see the Ethnicity section.

³² The first hoard, found in approximately 1950, contained ten coins of Shapur II, seven coins of Ardashir II, and three coins of Shapur III. The second hoard, found in 1955, contained four coins of Shapur II, five coins of Ardashir II, and one coin of Shapur III. Xia, “Zongshu Zhongguo”, 92. M. Alram has provided a relatively detailed description of Western coins found in China, “Coins and the Silk Road,” in Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, eds., *Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China* (New York, 2001), 271–277.

build Chinese-style tombs during the sixth century, such as Kang Ye's tomb (burial in 571 CE), An Jia's tomb (burial in 579 CE), and Shi Jun's tomb (burial in 580 CE), Western coins were brought into these Sogdian tombs and likely were to serve as Charon's obol. It can be argued that Sogdians were the earliest group to display the custom of burying the deceased with Western coins.

Nevertheless, the role of Sogdians as forerunners is challenged by a consideration of the situation in Turfan. In Turfan, some Han people had already begun to practice this burial custom in the sixth century.³³ This phenomenon corresponds to the Turfan distinctiveness mentioned above. Hence, the argument must be limited to inner China, where the first visual representation of the custom occurred in Sogdian tombs rather than in native Chinese tombs. In other words, Sogdians were probably the forerunners of this custom in inner China.

Furthermore, the clustering that appears between 700 CE and 800 CE indicates a sharp drop in the incidence of this custom through to the extinction of the custom at the end of the eighth century. In fact, not only the custom itself but also its materials (i.e., Byzantine gold coins and Sasanian silver coins) disappeared in China during this period. According to Luo's and Sun's statistics, none of the Byzantine gold coins or Sasanian silver coins found in China are dated later than the eighth century.³⁴

The fact that both the custom of placing Western coins near the deceased and its materials disappeared during the same period predisposes me to connect the custom with Charon's myth through hypothetical syllogisms. If the custom was simply a variety of the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals, then its materials would include both Western coins and Chinese copper coins. With the disappearance of Western coins, Chinese copper coins would have been adopted as substitutes. But, to the best of my

³³ Six Western coins that were placed near the deceased and could be dated to the sixth century have been found in Turfan (app. 1, no. 1, 2, 6; app. 2, no. 11, 12, 13), among which four of the coins probably belonged to Han people.

³⁴ For their statistics, see Luo "Zhongguo Jingnei faxiande Dongluoma jinbi," 84–109; Sun Li, "Sashan yinbi zai Zhongguo de fenbu jiqi gongneng," *Kaogu Xuebao* 01(2004): 35–54. The waning and disappearance of Western coins in China resulted from a combination of factors, among which an important reason was likely that the link between China and the West through the land-based Silk Roads was severely weakened after the second half of the eighth century, due to a series of important historical changes taking place in Eurasia, such as An Lushan's rebellion and the Arab conquests. See Mark Edward Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, 2009), 156–163.

knowledge, none of the non-Han people did that after the disappearance of these foreign coins. So the proposal that the custom was a variety of Chinese burial ritual is denied.

If the custom came straight from Charon's myth, then its materials would follow the selection of the classical. With the disappearance of Western coins, however, the custom ended, due to the lack of the materials necessary for it. This historical fact affirms that the custom probably came straight from Charon's myth.

ETHNICITY OF THE CUSTOM'S FOLLOWERS

In this section, the ethnicity of those who followed the custom is considered. Specialists have developed a series of methods to identify an individual's ethnicity in ancient China (see the Methodology section). After processing the selected samples through these methods, I identified and presented the ethnic backgrounds of the owners of fifty-eight Western coins (Table 4). Notably, these fifty-eight coins were not owned by fifty-eight corresponding people. Rather, some burials employed more than one Western coin, most likely as a sign of wealth and prestige. For example, Tian Hong (d. 575 CE), who was a Xianbei elite, was buried in proximity to four genuine Byzantine gold coins (App. 1, no. 31–34).

Table 4. The ethnic distribution of the owners of 58 coins³⁵

Ethnicity of coin owners	Han	Sogdian	Kucha	Xianbei	Indian
Number of coins	28	22	2	5	1

An overwhelming majority of the coins, accounting for fifty, were owned by Han Chinese people and Sogdians. The Sogdians, who owned twenty-two coins, lived in various locations throughout

³⁵ Sources: appendixes 1 and 2.

China.³⁶ By contrast, all the Chinese who among them owned twenty-eight coins lived in Turfan.³⁷ Again, Turfan distinctiveness is evident. The Han people's adoption of the custom in Turfan was probably a reflection of its popularity in that region.

The fact that none of the Han Chinese who followed the custom were located in inner China greatly weakens the connection between the custom of placing Western coins near the deceased and the Chinese *koushi* and/or *shouwo* rituals. If the custom were actually a variation of the Chinese burial rituals, then the Han residents in other parts of China would not have totally rejected it. Compared with the Han Chinese, the Sogdians practiced the custom across a much wider geographical area, as the custom appears in all the sites from which coins were excavated, aside from Chaoyang (a city in today's Liaoning Province). Thus, the custom apparently had a stronger link to the Sogdians than to the Han.

Furthermore, the non-Han people who practiced the custom were related to the Sogdians in some way. Two Xianbei individuals—Tian Hong, who was buried with four Byzantine gold coins (app. 1: no. 31–34), and He Ruoque, who was buried with one Byzantine gold coin (app. 1: no. 39)—had similar experiences, as they both lived in the Hexi region (west of the Yellow River, mainly in modern Gansu Province) because of their employment or family³⁸, an area where many Sogdians settled or were based for trade.³⁹ The only deceased Indian person whose burial shows evidence of the practice was Li Dan's wife (app. 1: no. 38), who had a more visible connection to the Sogdian people. The funeral stone bed at her grave was engraved with a fire altar, a typical token of Zoroastrianism.⁴⁰ Moreover, her son was

36 Sources: app. 1, no. 16–17, 22–25, 27–30, 36, 40–44; app. 2, no. 1–2, 7–9, 37. The owners of these 22 coins were certainly or most likely Sogdians. Their burials were scattered throughout China, both inner China, such as Guyuan (app. 1, no. 27–30, no. 36; app. 2, no. 37), Xi'an (app. 1, no. 40–41), Shangzhou (app. 1, no. 42), Luoyang (app. 1, no. 43), Hohhot (app. 1, no. 44); and Turfan (app. 1, no. 16–17, 22–25; app. 2, no. 1–2, 7–9).

37 Sources: app. 1, no. 1–4, 7–13, 18–20; app. 2, no. 3, 11–12, 14–20, 25, 27–29. The owners of these 28 coins were certainly or most likely Han people. Their burials are all in Turfan.

38 Tian Hong was appointed Prefectural Governor of Minzhou (modern Minxian, Gansu Province). He Ruoque's husband, who was named Dugu Luo, was appointed Prefectural Governor of Liangzhou (modern Wuwei, Gansu Province). See Luo, "Beizhou Shijun mu," 57–65.

39 Rong, *Zhongguo Zhongguo yu wailai wenming*, 17–37.

40 There was not an exclusive relationship between Sogdians and Zoroastrianism, but it was the fundamental religion in

named 槃陀 (medieval Chinese pronunciation: bwan da), a transliteration of the Sogdian word *βntk*, and her daughter-in-law was a Sogdian from the state of An (modern Bukhara, Uzbekistan).⁴¹ These links strengthen the argument that the custom was likely a convention among ethnic Sogdians.

CONCLUSION

There were two similar funerary rituals that entailed the custom of depositing Western coins near the deceased in ancient China: these rituals were based on the different cultural backgrounds of Central Asia and China. The ritual as practiced in Central Asia has been generally thought to be a parallel to the Hellenistic practice of Charon's obol, which circulated as a result of the wars waged by Alexander the Great. The Chinese practice, which is referred to as *koushi* and *shouwo* 口含手握 rituals, was meant to provide resources to the deceased for his or her journey into the afterlife. To determine which of the two suggested origins accounted for the custom of depositing Western coins near the deceased in ancient China, this study investigates the custom in four dimensions, including the position of the coin, the geographical distribution of the custom, the chronological distribution of the custom, and the followers of the custom.

The placement of the coin was found to be more akin to the custom of Charon's myth than that of Chinese rituals. The greatest numbers of Western coins were placed around the head of the dead. This fact corresponds to the Central Asian version of Charon's obol but is contrary to the Chinese funerary rituals, in which instead the hand was the most important location for coin placement.

The geographical distribution of the custom does not provide distinctive evidence to facilitate its tracing, but, in support of attribution to Turfan distinctiveness, sixty-two coins were extracted from Turfan, accounting for approximately three quarters of the entire set.

At one point in time, the custom converged with the adoption of Chinese-style tombs by Sogdians. Both of these events occurred in the second half of the sixth century. Thus Sogdians can be

Sogdian societies and is generally regarded as a symbol of Sogdian culture. For the importance of Zoroastrianism in Sogdian backgrounds, see Etienne De La Vaissiere, *Sogdian Traders* (Brill, 2005), 199–209.

⁴¹ Ma Xiaoling, "Beichao zhi suiting ruhua suteran muzang yanjiu" (PhD dissertation, Northwest University of China, 2015), 141.

deemed the forerunners of the custom because they were the first ethnic group that buried Western coins in Chinese-oriented tombs. Notably, this finding was not established in Turfan, where Han people had also engaged in the custom in burials during this period.

Furthermore, the simultaneous disappearance of the custom and Western coins from China indicates that it was unacceptable to replace Western coins with Chinese copper coins. The irreplaceable nature of the material of the custom undermines the hypothesis that the custom was a variation of Chinese funerary rituals.

Sogdians were the main followers of this custom, which was due not only to their high proportion (around 38 percent) among the custom's followers whose ethnicity had been identified, but also to their extensive practice across north China. Moreover, the other minorities (e.g., the Xianbei and Indians) who honored this custom had either potential or firm links to the Sogdian culture, although their numbers were small. Again, this finding was not established in Turfan where a greater number of Han people practiced the custom.

Overall, the investigations based on these four dimensions all come to a common, general conclusion: the custom of placing Western coins near the deceased in ancient China probably came straight from the Central Asian version of Charon's obol rather than as a variation of the Chinese *kouhan* and/or *shouwo* (口含手握) rituals. The custom itself was more akin to Charon's myth than to the Chinese rituals, for example, using the head rather than the hand as the dominant location of coin placement, and the irreplaceable nature of coins of Western origin. Moreover, during the spread of the custom, Sogdians played a much more significant role than Chinese. Sogdians were the forerunners, the main users, and the propagators of the custom. To a certain degree, this custom can be called a Sogdian ethnic norm.

Notably, the significant role played by the Sogdians was weakened by Turfan distinctiveness, in that Han people engaged in this custom early and deeply. Perhaps the practice of burying Western coins with the deceased had matured into a regional custom in Turfan.

There is insufficient space to explore the cultural considerations underlying the custom in detail. First, it is uncertain whether the Western coins were meant to be a direct payment for Charon. If the arguments provided by this article are accurate, Sogdians brought the Hellenistic practice into China with them. Although the propagation path now becomes clear, it is questionable whether Charon,

a Hellenistic deity, would be worshiped by so many diverse populations across the Eurasia continent.

Second, the secular significance of Western coins has not been discussed here. Western coins of different materials (e.g., gold, silver, and copper) were used in the Central Asian version of Charon's obol (see Figure 2 and Appendix 3). When Sogdians transferred the custom into China, however, only Byzantine gold coins, Sasanian silver coins, and their imitations were used. This might have been a new development of this custom that emphasised the prominent status of the coin-owners. Byzantine gold coins and Sasanian silver coins, particularly the former,⁴² were often regarded as status symbols. Does the extra secular significance of Western coins as status symbols result from Sogdian commercial traditions along the land-based silk roads? These interpretations should be addressed in future studies.

⁴² At the beginning of the sixth century, the Byzantine Empire entered its first golden age. Cosmas Indicopleustes (d.550) stated that "This currency [Byzantine gold coin] is regarded with admiration by all men of whatever kingdom they belong, since there is no other country in which the like of it exists" (J. W. McCrindle. ed. and trans, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* [Cambridge, 2010], 73). Indicopleustes probably did not overstate the situation, since a considerable number of Byzantine gold coins and their imitations, both of which served as status symbols, were excavated from elites' graves in the Eurasian steppes. See Lin Ying and Saren Bigeli, "Zushu yu dengji: menggu guo bayannuoer tujue bihuamu chutan," *Caoyuan Wenwu* 01 (2016): 124–129.

APPENDIX 1. BYZANTINE GOLD COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN BURIALS FOUND IN CHINA⁴³

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
1	×	✓	Justinian I (527–565)	c. 6th C	Tomb I.3, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han?
2	×	✓	Justinian I (527–565)	c. 6th C	Tomb I.5, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han?
3	×	✓	Justinian I (527–565)	632	Tomb I.6, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han

43 Sources: No. 1, Stein, 646. No. 2, Ibid. No. 3, Ibid. No. 4, Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqiu Bowuguan [XWZB], “Tulufan xian asitana halahezhuo gumuqun qingli baogao,” *Wenwu* 01 (1972), 8–29. No. 5, Ibid. No. 6, Xinjiang Bowuguan Kaogubu [XBK], “Tulufan asitana gumuqun fajue muzang dengjibiao,” *Xinjiang Wenwu* 03–04(2000): 215–243. No. 7, Ibid. No. 8, Ibid. No. 9, Ibid. No. 10, Ibid. No. 11, Ibid. No. 12, Ibid. No. 13, Ibid. No. 14, Ibid. No. 15, Tulufan Diqu Wenguan suo [TDW], “Tulufan Caikan gumuqun qingli jianbao,” *Xinjiangwenwu* 03 (1990): 1–2. No. 16, Tulufan City Bureau of Cultural Relics [TCBCR], Academy of Turfanology [AT], and Turfan Museum [TM], *Tulufan jintang mudi* (Beijing, 2019), 7–53. No. 17, Ibid. No. 18, Ibid., 78–106. No. 19, Ibid. No. 20, Ibid., 107–140. No. 21, Ibid., 146–187. No. 22, Ibid., 188–317. No. 23, Ibid. No. 24, Ibid. No. 25, Ibid. No. 26, Ibid., 318–324. No. 27, Luo Feng, *Guyuan nanjiao Sui Tang mudi* (Beijing, 1996), 146–163. No. 28, Ibid. No. 29, Ibid. No. 30, YLK, *Tang Shi Daoluo mu*, 136–138. No. 31, YLK, *Beizhou Tian Hong mu*, 86–87. No. 32, Ibid. No. 33, Ibid. No. 34, Ibid., 150. No. 35, Chen Wei et al., “Ningxia Guyuan jiulongshan suimu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 10(2012), 58–65. No. 36, Ibid. No. 37, Luo Feng, “Guanyu Xian dongjiao tangmu suochu dongluoma jinbi fangzhipin taolun,” *Neimenggu Jinrong Yanjiu* S3 (2003), 46–49. No. 38, Cheng Lingquan, “Xian Beizhou Li Dan mu de kaogu faxian yu yanjiu,” *Xibu Kaogu*, 01 (2006): 391–400. No. 40, Luo, “Beizhou Shi Jun mu,” 57–65. No. 41, Kou Xiaoshi, “Xian Beizhou Kang Ye mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 6 (2008): 14–34. No. 42, Wang Changfu, “Shangzhou shi beizhou suidai muzang qingli jianbao,” *Kaogu Yu Wenwu* 04(1997): 3–7. No. 43, Zhao Zhenghua and Zhu Liang, “Luoyang longmen tang anpu fufu mu,” *Zhongyuan Wenwu* 03 (1982): 24–29. No. 44, Gai Shanlin and Lu Sixian, “Huhehaote shi fujin chutu de waiguo jinyinbi,” *Kaogu* 03(1975): 182–185.

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
4	×	✓		639	Tomb 67TAM92, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
5	✓	×	Maurice (582–602)	7th C	Tomb 68TAM138, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
6	×	✓		596	Tomb 66TAM48, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
7	×	✓		645	Tomb 72TAM150, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
8	×	✓		Qu's Gaochang (502–640)	Tomb 72TAM153, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
9	×	✓		751	Tomb 72TAM188, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
10	×	✓		680	Tomb 73TAM191, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Torso	Han?

LYU, "PLACING WESTERN COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN ANCIENT CHINA"

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
11	×	✓		Tang	Tomb 73TAM213, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
12	×	✓		660	Tomb 73TAM214, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
13	×	✓		Tang	Tomb 73TAM222, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
14	×	✓		Tang	Tomb 69TKM36, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
15	×	✓		5th–6th C	Tomb 76TCM1, Kaner, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Head	
16	×	✓	Anastasius I (491–518)	640	Tomb 05TYGXM11, Gouxi, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Shoulder	Sogdian

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
17	×	✓		662	Tomb 05TYGXM20, Gouxi, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	Spine	Sogdian
18	×	✓		609	Tomb 05TMM203, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	Han
19	×	✓	Justin II (565–578)	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TMM214, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	Han
20	×	✓	Constans II (641–648)	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TMM302, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	Han
21	×	✓		7th C	Tomb 04TBM106, Badamu, Turfan. Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Kucha

LYU, "PLACING WESTERN COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN ANCIENT CHINA"

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
22	×	✓	Anastasius I (491–518)	7th C	Tomb 04TBM235, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Head	Sogdian
23	×	✓		6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM237, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Sogdian
24	×	✓	Anastasius I (491–518)	7th C	Tomb 04TBM238, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Arm	Sogdian
25	×	✓		6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM252, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Sogdian
26	×	✓		6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM301, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	Shoulder	
27	×	✓	5th–6th C	664	Shi Suoyan's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓?	×	×	Sogdian

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
28	×	✓	5th–6th C	670	Shi Hedan's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓	×	×	Sogdian
29	×	✓	Zeno (474–491)	678	Shi Daode's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓	×	×	Sogdian
30	✓	×	Justin II (565–578)	658	Shi Daoluo's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓?	×	×	Sogdian
31	✓	×	Leo I (457–474)	575	Tian Hong's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	×	×	Waist	Xianbei
32	✓	×	Justin I (518–527)	575	Tian Hong's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	×	×	Collarbone	Xianbei
33	✓	×	Justinian I (527)	575	Tian Hong's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	×	×	Head	Xianbei
34	✓	×	Justinian I (527–565)	575	Tian Hong's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	×	×	Head	Xianbei
35	✓	×	Justin I (518–527)	Sui	M4 tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓	×	×	

LYU, "PLACING WESTERN COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN ANCIENT CHINA"

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
36	✓	×	Justinian I (527–565)	Sui	M33 tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓	×	×	Sogdian?
37	×	✓	Anastasius I (491–518)	Tang	Dongjiao, Xian, Shannxi	✓?	×	×	
38	✓	×	Justinian I (527–565)	564	Li Dan's tomb, Xian, Shannxi	✓	×	×	Indian
39	✓	×	Justin II (565–578)	621	He Ruoque's tomb, Xian, Shannxi	✓?	×	×	Xianbei
40	×	✓	Side a: Theodosiu II (408–450)? Side b: Anastasius I (491–518)?	580	Shi Jun's tomb, Xian, Shannxi	×	×	Torso	Sogdian
41	✓	×		571	Kang Ye's tomb, Xian, Shannxi	✓	×	×	Sogdian
42	×	✓	Justin II (565–578)?	Sui	Shangzhou, Shannxi	✓?	×	×	Sogdian?
43	×	✓	Phocas (602– 610)	709	An Pu's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	✓	×	Sogdian

ID reference	Coin Condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
44	✓	×	Leo I (457–474)	N. Dynasties	Shuimogou, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia	×	×	Torso	Sogdian?

APPENDIX 2. SASANIAN SILVER COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN BURIALS FOUND IN CHINA⁴⁴

ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
1	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	6th–7th C	Tomb 04TYGXM1, Gouxi, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Sogdian
2	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TYGXM14, Gouxi, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	head	Sogdian
3	✓	×	Khosraus I (531–579)	609	Tomb 05TMM203, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	Han
4	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TMM301, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	

44 Sources: No. 1, TCBCR, AT and TM, 7–53. No. 2, Ibid. No. 3, Ibid., 64–77. No. 4, Ibid. No. 5, Ibid. No. 6, Ibid. No. 7, 188–317. No. 8, Ibid. No. 9, Ibid. No. 10, Ibid., 318–324. No. 11, Stein, 647. No. 12, Ibid. No. 13, Ibid., 646. No. 14, Xia, 91–109. No. 15, Ibid. No. 16, XBK, 14. No. 17, Ibid. No. 18, Xia, 91–109. No. 19, Ibid. No. 20, Ibid. No. 21, Ibid. No. 22, Ibid. No. 23, Ibid. No. 24, Ibid. No. 25, Ibid. No. 26, Ibid. No. 27, Ibid. No. 28, Ibid. No. 29, Ibid. No. 30, Ibid. No. 31, Ibid. No. 32, TDW, 6. No. 33, Xia, 91–109. No. 34, XBK, 215–243. No. 35, TDW, 6. No. 36, Xia, 91–109. No. 37, Luo, *Guyuan nanjiao suitang mudi*, 143–163. No. 38, Huo Hongwei and Beizhai, "Luoyang chutu boshi sashanchao kusilao ershi yinbi kaolue," *Zhongguo Qianbi* 04 (2001): 25–29. No. 39–40, Han Guoxiang, "Liaoning Zhaoyang bowuguan shoucang de boshi sasan wangchao yinbi," *Wenwu* 07(2013), 72–74.

ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
5	✓	×	Khosraus I (531–579)?	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TMM301, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓?	×	×	
6	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	6th–7th C	Tomb 05TMM306, Munaer, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	head	
7	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM216, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	head	Sogdian
8	✓	×	Khosraus I (531–579)	6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM225, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	torso	Sogdian
9	✓	×	Khosraus I (531–579)	6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM244, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Sogdian
10	✓	×		6th–7th C	Tomb 04TBM301, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	spine	
11	✓	×	Hormizd IV (579–590)	c. 6th C	Tomb I,3, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	eye	Han?
12	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	c. 6th C	Tomb I,3, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	eye	Han?

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ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
13	✓	×		c. 6th C	Tomb V.2, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
14	✓	×	Yazdegerd III (632–651)	653	Tomb 60TAM302, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
15	✓	×	Yazdegerd III (632–651)	653	Tomb 60TAM302, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
16	✓	×		653	Tomb 60TAM319, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
17	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	663	Tomb 60TAM322, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
18	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	656	Tomb 60TAM325, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
19	✓	×		656	Tomb 60TAM325, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
20	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	665	Tomb 60TAM332, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han

ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
21	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	706	Tomb 64TAM20, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Kucha?
22	✓	×	Borandukht (630–632)	685	Tomb 64TAM29, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
23	✓	×	Djamasp (496–498)	604	Tomb 66TAM48, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
24	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 66TAM73, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
25	✓	×	Yazdegerd (632–651)	710	Tomb 67TAM363, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han?
26	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 67TAM77, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
27	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 67TAM78, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han

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ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
28	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	639	Tomb 67TAM92, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han
29	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 69TAM118, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	Han?
30	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 72TAM149, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
31	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 73TAM206, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	eye	
32	✓	×		5th–6th C	Tomb 76TCM1, Kaner, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	head	
33	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	Tang	Tomb 64TKM8, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
34	✓	×		Tang	Tomb 69TKM39, Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	

ID reference	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
35	✓	×		5th–6th C	Tomb 76TCM4, Kaner, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	neck	
36	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	7th C	Yaerhu, Turfan, Xinjiang	✓	×	×	
37	✓	×	Peroz I (459–484)	610	Shi Shewu's tomb, Guyuan, Ningxia	✓?	×	×	Sogdian
38	✓	×	Khosrau II (590–628)	7th–8th C	Magou, Luoyang, Henan	×	×	head	
39–40	✓	×	Peroz I (459–484)	N. Wei	Tomb KM1, Chaoyang, Liaoning	×	×	neck	

APPENDIX 3. COINS NEAR THE DECEASED FOUND IN CENTRAL ASIA ⁴⁵

ID reference	Metal of the coin	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the discovery site	Position relative to the deceased		
		Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others
1	gold bracteate	×	✓	Theodosius II (408–50)	5th–6th C	A toilet pit, Samarqand, Uzbekistan	×	×	near ossuaries
2	copper	✓	×	Anastasius I (491–518)	Later years of Anastasius I	A jar, Charjew Oasis, Turkmenistan	×	×	in an ossuary
3	gold bracteate	×	✓	Anastasius I (491–518)		An early medieval crypt, Chaghanian, Uzbekistan	×	×	arm
4		×	✓	Kanishka III (265–270)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
5		✓	×	Kanishka III (265–270)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×

⁴⁵ Sources: No. 1, Aleksandr Naymark, "Sogdiana, its Christians, and Byzantium: A Study of Artistic and Cultural Connections in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2001), 105. No. 2, Ibid., 109. No. 3, Ibid., 110. No. 4, B. A. Litvinskif and A. V. Sedov, *Tepai-Shah*, (Moscow, 1983), 161–169. No. 5–23, Ibid. No. 24, Staviskij B, *Kara-Tepe (1972–1973)*, (Moscow, 1975), 28. No. 25, V. Sarianid, *Bactrian Gold* (1985), 52–53. No. 26–29, Ibid. No. 30, A. M. Mandelshtam, *Kochevniki na puti v Indiyu*, (Moscow, 1966), 15. No. 31, Ibid., 64. No. 32, Ibid., 68. No. 33–51, B.A. Litvinskif and A.V. Sedov, *Kulty I Ritualy Kushanskoi Baktrii*, (Moscow, 1984), 227–231.

ID reference	Metal of the coin	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the discovery site	Position relative to the deceased		
		Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others
6		✓	×	Kanishka III (265–270)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
7	copper	✓	×	Vasishka (247–265)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
8	copper	✓	×	Vasishka (247–265)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
9	copper	✓	×	Vasishka (247–265)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
10	copper	✓	×	Vasishka (247–265)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
11–16	copper	✓	×	Kanishki I (127–151)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
17		✓	×		1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
18	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
19	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
20	copper	✓	×	Vima Kadphises (113–127)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
21–22	silver	✓	×		1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×

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ID reference	Metal of the coin	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the discovery site	Position relative to the deceased		
		Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others
23	copper	✓	×	Huvishka (150–180)	1st–4th C	Tepai-shah, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
24	copper	✓	×		4th–5th C	Kara tepe, Uzbekistan	×	✓	×
25	gold	✓	×	Tiberius (14– 37)		Tomb 03, Tillya tepe, Afghanistan	×	✓	×
26	silver	✓	×	Mithradates II (123–88 BCE)		Tomb 03, Tillya tepe, Afghanistan	×	✓	×
27	gold	×	✓			Tomb 04, Tillya tepe, Afghanistan	×	×	chest
28	gold	×	✓		First half of the first century BCE	Tomb 06, Tillya tepe, Afghanistan	×	✓	×
29	silver	✓	×	Phraates IV (37–2 BCE)		Tomb 06, Tillya tepe, Afghanistan	✓	×	×
30	silver	✓	×	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Kyprah XI, 18., Tulkhar cemetery, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
31	silver	✓	×	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Kyprah XI, 14., Tulkhar cemetery, Tajikistan	×	×	spine

ID reference	Metal of the coin	Coin condition		Sovereign on the coin	Date of the burial	Area of the discovery site	Position relative to the deceased		
		Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others
32	silver	✓	×	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Kyprah XI, 14., Tulkhar cemetery, Tajikistan	×	×	pelvis
33–34	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Tup-Khona cemetery, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
35– 36	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Tup-Khona cemetery, Tajikistan	×	×	heart
37– 47	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Tup-Khona cemetery, Tajikistan	✓	×	×
48– 50	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Tup-Khona cemetery, Tajikistan	×	×	chest
51	silver	×	✓	Eucratides I (171–145 BCE)		Tup-Khona cemetery, Tajikistan	×	✓	×

APPENDIX 4. CHINESE COPPER COINS NEAR THE DECEASED IN BURIALS FOUND IN CHINA⁴⁶

ID reference	Coin condition		Inscription on the coin	Date of the Burial	Area of the Burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
1	✓	×	Wuzhu	Sui	Tomb M8, Anyang, Henan	×	×	waist	
2	✓	×	Wuzhu	Sui	Tomb M8, Anyang, Henan	×	×	femur	
3-8	✓	×	Wuzhu	Wei-Jin	Tomb M1, Xinxiang, Henan	×	✓	×	
9	✓	×	Kaiyuan Tongbao	Tang	Song Zhen's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	×	femur	Han
10	✓	×	Qianfeng Quanbao	Tang	Song Zhen's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	×	femur	Han
11	✓	×	Huobu	738	Li Jingyou's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	✓	×	Han

46 Sources: No. 1, Kong Deming, Jiao Peng, and Shen Mingqing, "Henan Anyangshi zhiducun bahao suimu fajue kianbao," *Kaogu* 4(2010): 48-57. No. 2, Ibid. No. 3-8, Zhao Zhengning, Wangchunling, and Helin, "Henan Xinxiangshi faxian yizuo weijin muzang," *Kaogu* 10 (2007), 94-96. No. 9, Xu Diankui, "Henan Yanshi xingyuancun de liuzuo jinian tangmu," *Kaogu* 05(1986), pp. 429-457. No. 10, Ibid. No. 11, Ibid. No. 12-16, Wang Zhulin, "Henan Yanshi xian chutude suiting mu fajue jianbao" *Kaogu* 11(1986), 994-999. No. 17, Liu Daiyun et al., "Xian nanjiao sui Li Yu mu fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 07 (2009): 4-19. No. 18, TCBCR, AT, and TM, 188-317. No. 19, Ibid., 318-324. No. 20-21, Huo and Bei, 25-29. No. 22, Kou, 14-34. No. 23, Zhao and Zhu, 24-29. No. 24, Ibid.

ID reference	Coin condition		Inscription on the coin	Date of the Burial	Area of the Burial	Position relative to the deceased			Ethnicity of the owner
	Genuine	Counterfeit				Mouth	Hand	Others	
12-16	✓	×	Wuzhu	Sui	Tomb 85YBM1, Luoyang, Henan	×	✓	×	
17	✓	×	Wuzhu	605	Li Yu's tomb, Xi'an, Shaanxi	×	×	femur	Han
18	✓	×	Gaochang Jili	7th C	Tomb 04TBM238, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	×	eye	Sogdian
19	✓	×	Changping Wuzhu	6th-7th C	Tomb 04TBM301, Badamu, Turfan, Xinjiang	×	✓	×	
20-21	✓	×	Kaiyuan Tongbao	7th-8th C	Magou, Luoyang, Henan	×	×	head	
22	✓	×	Buquan	571	Kang Ye's tomb, Xian, Shaanxi	×	✓	×	Sogdian
23	✓	×	Kaiyuan Tongbao	709	An Pu's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	✓	×	Sogdian
24	✓	×	Kaiyuan Tongbao	709	An Pu's tomb, Luoyang, Henan	×	✓	×	Sogdian

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