



New Researchs on the Discovery of Sogdian Graves in China

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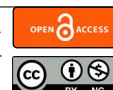
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Article Info	Abstract
Pp: 237-265	Sogdiana was one of the oldest city-states in Eastern Iran, and it was located along the ancient Silk Road. According to historical records and archaeological materials, numerous Sogdian tombs have been discovered in Western China. It appears that these tombs were constructed by Sogdians living in the area. The examination of these artefacts indicates the use of Iranian-Chinese architectural styles. Historical documents and Chinese texts suggest that Sogdians entered China as government officials, merchants, and others, establishing family-run businesses in this region. These enterprises played a significant role in trade, culture, history, religion, and more. Archaeological discoveries in the central plains of China have notably reinforced the strategic importance and role played by the Sogdians and Sogdian cities in these exchanges. Given the significance of this topic and the rich information available in the Chinese literature, this article compiles the excavated Chinese tombs and analyzes these data. This section explores how the Sogdians became one of the most influential ethnic groups in the political, economic, social, religious, linguistic, and cultural changes of Chinese dynasties over time, alongside other cities in Western China.
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1. Introduction

The Sogdians played a crucial role in cultural exchange between ancient China and Iran, and they were strategically located along the transportation routes of ancient Central Asian countries. Since the excavation of Yu Hong's tomb in Taiyuan, the excavation of Anjia's tomb in Xi'an, the excavation of Shijun's tomb, and the excavation of Kangye's tomb, Miho Art Museum, Guyuan, Tianshan, Luoyang and other. The most important Sogdian tombs discovered in China. These tombs are not only the earliest discovered Sogdian tombs with precise dating, but also the statues on the stone coffins have obvious Sogdian artistic features, and their religious connotations have attracted considerable attention from scholars. They not only promote practical exchanges through trade and economic interactions but also facilitate the integration of culture, art, religion, and other aspects. Over the past century, the long-term integration of Sogdian culture with Chinese society, along with the subsequent process of "Sinicization," has further strengthened exchanges between China and Iran.

As key figures in cultural exchange between Central Asia, scholars have conducted extensive research on the migration and cultural dissemination of the Sogdians from Chinese historical records, Dunhuang Turpan documents, stone carvings, and other sources. In addition, the discovery of the graves of Sogdian leaders who settled in China reveals the fusion of local beliefs and Chinese funeral customs. This article will summarise the Sogdian tombs excavated from different dynasties by combining Chinese historical materials and archaeological excavations to clarify the Hu cultural identity of the Sogdians in China.

2. 1. The tomb of Anpu and his wife from the Tang Dynasty in Luoyang

An Pu (Chinese: 安菩) is a General Tang Dingyuan (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2), and his wife He Shi. Anpu, with the surname An, given name Pu, is a descendant of the great leader of the nine surnames An in the Western Regions (roughly located in present-day Bukhara, Uzbekistan). Anpu was born around 600 AD and surrendered to the Tang Dynasty with his father in 630 AD. Due to his bravery and ability to defend the Tang Dynasty's borders, he was appointed a fifth-rank official in the capital and a general in Dingyuan. The historical books describe Anpu as "using one as a thousand to sweep away the swarm of bees flying alone." As a Sogdian, Anpu was born in the Western Regions, died in Chang'an, and was buried in Luoyang. His life was quite legendary.

In April 1981, an archaeological excavation team from Luoyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology discovered the Anpu joint burial tomb at the northern foothills of Longmen Dongshan (Longmen East Hill). The site is geographically situated approximately 13 km south of modern Luoyang's urban center, positioned 1 km west of the Yishui River's western bank, and located approximately 8 km north of the documented position of the southern city wall of the Sui-Tang period (581-907 CE) Luoyang capital. This strategic location places the burial complex within the historical hydrological system and urban configuration of the medieval Chinese capital.

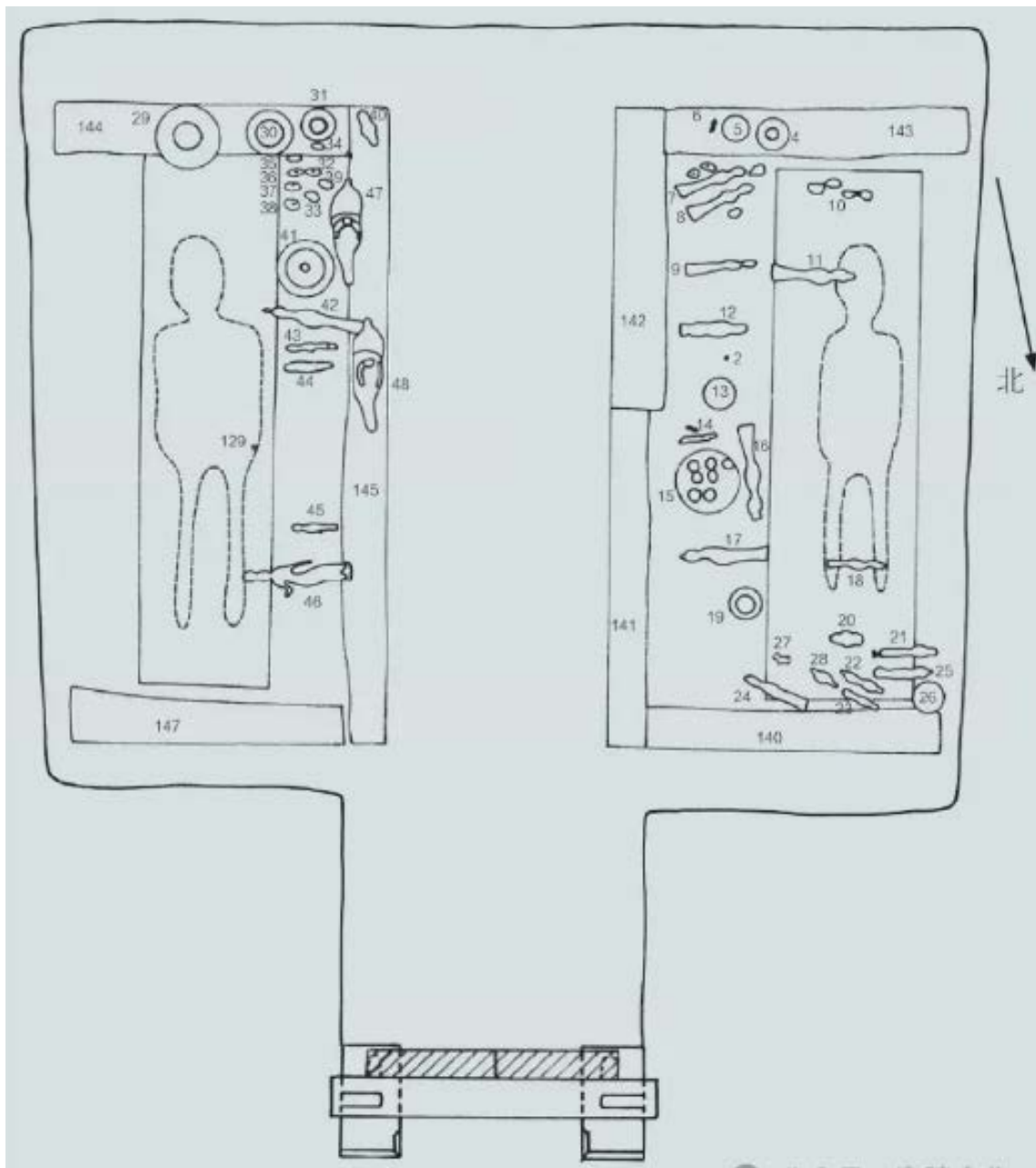


Fig. 1: Luoyang Institute of Archaeological Research.(1981). An Pu tomb plan .The tomb of An Pu has a spade-shaped (or “shovel-shaped”) floor plan, situated with its back against the Eastern Hills and oriented south-to-north (https://q6.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20240424/d69e30ad732747aaa20c71ce328d1a10.png).

The Anpu Tomb is shaped like a shove, with its back facing Dongshan and facing south to north. It consists of four parts from north to south: the tomb passage, tomb door, corridor, and tomb chamber, with a direction of 168°. The tomb passage was damaged before cleaning, and on-site signs indicate that it may be a sloping tomb passage of unknown length.

The Anpu Tomb features a tripartite architectural configuration comprising a sloped passageway, sealed entrance portal, and rectangular burial chamber. No extant surface-level architectural features remain due to extensive temporal degradation. In 1987, as part of an urban heritage preservation initiative, the Luoyang Municipal Government commenced development of China’s



Fig. 2: Luoyang Municipal Institute of Archaeology. (1981). Portrait of tomb owner An Pu facing right (https://q8.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20240424/67151314f89847bf-9798385f644a5129.png).

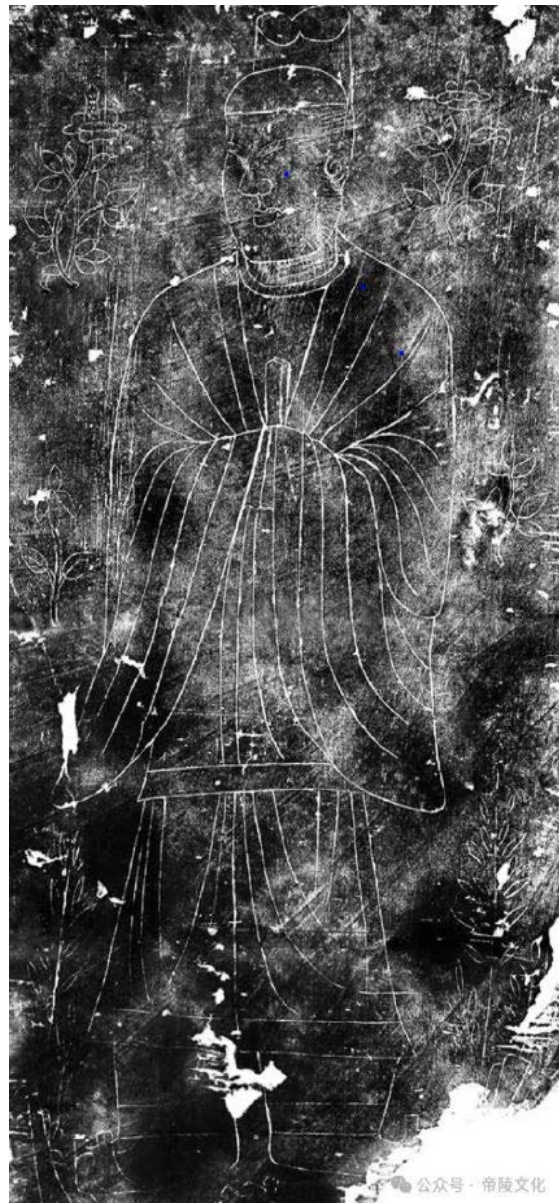


Fig. 3: Luoyang Municipal Institute of Archaeology. (1981). Portrait of tomb owner An Pu facing left.. (https://q8.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20240424/67151314f89847bf-9798385f644a5129.png).

inaugural Museum of Ancient Tomb Architecture. Through engineered conservation protocols, the Anpu couple's tomb complex and 23 additional mortuary structures were scientifically relocated in toto to the Mangshan necropolis (34°43'N, 112°28'E) within Luoyang's northern suburban periphery, preserving original spatial relationships and stratigraphic integrity.

The stone carvings excavated from the tomb, comprising the tomb door components, coffin bed edges, and epitaph, are all crafted from limestone. These artifacts feature intricate patterns created using line-drawn intaglio and reduced horizontal carving techniques. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, hundreds of Tang Dynasty tombs have been unearthed in Luoyang, among which the tomb of Shi Jun stands out as one of the larger-scale discoveries.

While many tombs excavated in the early stages had been previously looted, the intact tomb of the Anpu couple, containing a wealth of precious cultural relics, represents a significant first for Luoyang. This discovery marks a pivotal achievement in the archaeological study of cultural heritage within Luoyang city, providing invaluable insights into the Tang Dynasty's material culture and burial practices.

2. 2. Yu Hong's tomb is located in Shānxi Province

YuHong (Chinese: 虞弘) Northern Dynasty diplomat (533–592 CE), was a Jihu ethnic leader from Yu City-state in the Western Regions (present-day Yiwu County, Xinjiang Province). He served as a prominent official and distinguished diplomat during the Northern Wei to Sui dynasties period in Chinese history.

Historical records indicate that although Yuhong's ethnic origin might not have been Sogdian (RongXin jiang, 2001), his administrative role as Inspector of Sabao Province (a Tang Dynasty institution governing Sogdian settlements) strongly suggests cultural affiliation with Sogdian traditions. This positionality implies probable acculturation to Sogdian religious practices, particularly given the sarcophagus' material evidence. The artifact's iconography, notably its prominent canine depictions, provides archaeo-religious evidence supporting its interpretation within Zoroastrian mortuary contexts. These representations likely reflect characteristic Sogdian funerary practices involving ritual canine companions and sky burial customs (exposure of corpses to scavenging animals), consistent with Zoroastrian purity doctrines (Boyce, 2001; Compareti, 2009).



Fig. 4: Shanxi Museum. (1999). Yun Hong's stone coiffing [Photograph]. Baidu Images (<https://img1.baidu.com/it/u=1443729236,1283329415&fm=253&fmt=auto&app=120&f=JPEG?w=1200&h=800>).



Fig. 5: Shanxi Museum. (1991). Pictures on the stone coiffing in Yuhong's Tomb [Photograph]. (Baidu Images. <https://img2.baidu.com/it/u=4115801371,1668534488&fm=253&fmt=auto?w=1080&h=405>).

In July 1999, a significant archaeological discovery was made in Wang guo Village (Chinese: 王郭村 Wang guo cun), Jinyuan (Chinese: 晋源) District, Taiyuan (Chinese: 太原) City, Shānxi Province. A white marble sarcophagus featuring a gilded and polychromatic relief portrait was unearthed from the tomb of Yu Hong, dating back to the 12th founding year of the Sui Dynasty (592 CE).

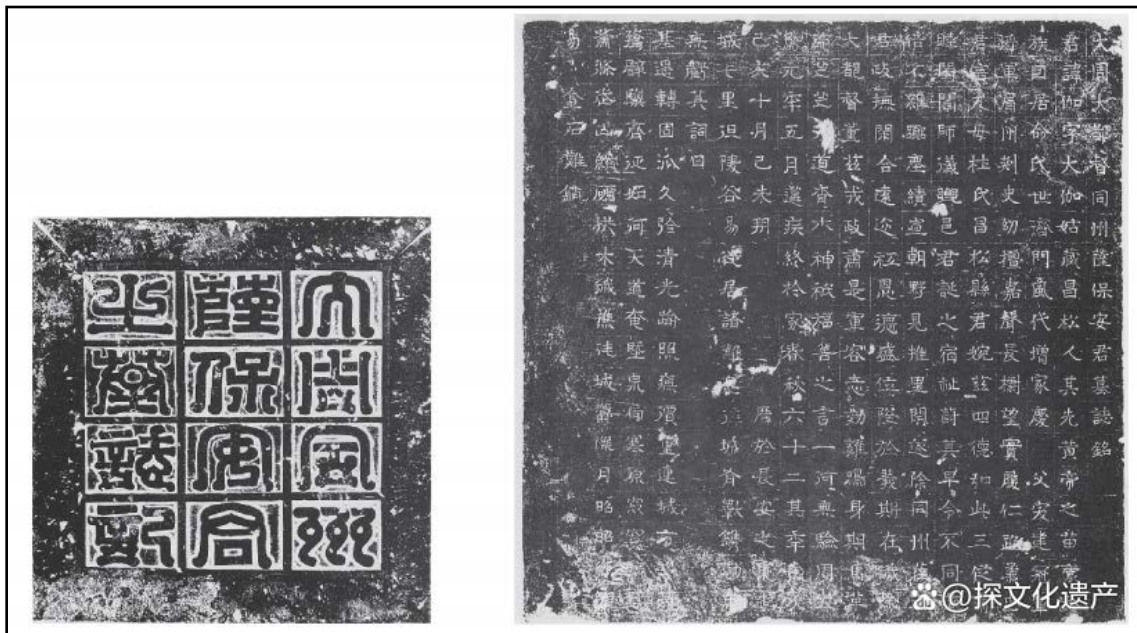


Fig. 6: Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology. (2003), (*The epitaph commemorates An Jia [Photograph]. Baidu Images.*<https://pic.rmb.bdstatic.com/bjh/240330/dump/e70e803cae360cd69d5c3bc8271dfcee.png>).

The Sogdians, renowned as skilled merchants, were primarily adherents of Zoroastrianism. Following the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, substantial migrations of Sogdians occurred into Xinjiang and mainland China. During the Northern Dynasties through the Sui and Tang Dynasties, an official position known as Sabao (also referred to as Sabao or Sabo) was established specifically for the administration of Zoroastrian and Sogdian affairs.

Regarding ethnic classification in Chinese history, particularly during the Wei and Jin dynasties, Chen Yinge (*Chen Yin ge's, 1987*), (Chinese: 陈寅恪) observed that ethnic distinctions were predominantly culturally determined. Notably, he emphasized that when Han Chinese individuals adopted the cultural practices of ethnic minority groups and assimilated with them, they were consequently classified as members of those minority groups.

Notably, the sarcophagus' artistic program demonstrates syncretic adaptation of Zoroastrian motifs within Chinese burial conventions, exemplifying cross-cultural transmission along Silk Road networks. This cultural hybridity manifests through the combination of Sogdian symbolic elements (e.g., fire altars, divine fravashis) with Han-style architectural features, suggesting localized reinterpretation of foreign religious iconography (*Grenet, 1984; Wu, 2004*).

This group of images deeply reflects the Zoroastrians' belief in the two main stages of the resurrection of the dead and their entry into heaven. "Last Judgement" and "Final Resurrection". It is shown in (Fig. 20), holding a white horse is held to sacrifice the god Mithras. The subject of this painting is a funeral. The subject of the funeral. The Zoroastrian god Zurvan's journey is related to animals (Figs. 9-20). In the picture, there is a dog chasing a horse, which shows that this painting is the subject of a funeral and after passing the final judgement and sacrifice to the garden of paradise.

2. 3. A stone bed and its image and the fusion of Zoroastrianism in Sogd

The epitaph commemorates AnJia, a scion of an illustrious family with a distinguished lineage spanning generations. His father, Tu Jian (Chinese: 突建), served as a general and governor of Meizhou (Chinese: 梅州), while his mother, Du Shi (Chinese: 杜氏), held the noble title of ruler of Changsong County, both celebrated for their unwavering moral integrity. From a tender age, AnJia displayed exceptional intelligence and virtue, achieving remarkable success. He ascended to the esteemed positions of governor of Tongzhou (Chinese: 通州) and commander-in-chief, where he governed with benevolence and managed the military with remarkable efficacy. Tragically, he succumbed to illness at the age of sixty-two and was laid to rest in the eastern precincts of Chang'an (Chinese: 长安) city. The epitaph extols his virtues and accomplishments, expressing the fervent hope that this inscription will endure through the ages, serving as an eternal testament to his legacy for generations to come.

In May 2000, the tomb of Saba Anjia from Tongzhou, who died in 579 during the Northern Zhou Dynasty, was discovered in Xi'an, Shǎnxi Province. The Shǎnxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology notes the description of an excavation from the Northern Zhou Dynasty in the outskirts of Xi'an (西安Xi'an Privence of Shǎnxi): Anjia Tomb is located in the city of Xi'an; It is 35 metres long and consists of a sloping tomb passage, 5 passage holes, 5 patios and two pits consisting of a heavy brick sealed door, a stone door, a brick archway, and a square brick domed tomb. An essentially complete but scattered petroglyph and skeleton of the tomb owner are placed in the middle of the corridor, and a stone couch with images is placed in the tomb. A total of 60 characters (Fig. 4) are carved on the stone gate and surrounding stone couches. The main lines

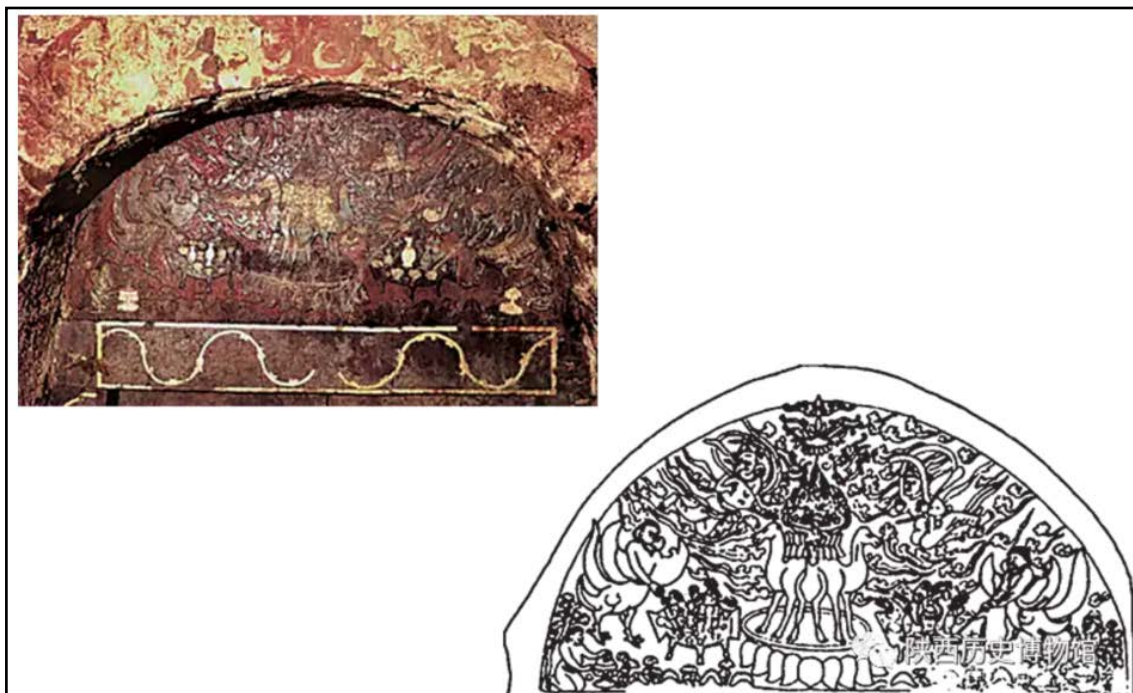


Fig. 7: Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology. (2003). (The stone gate front of Anjia tomb [Photograph]. China News Service Images. https://p7.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20220408/a24f6008292d482b9d0e397d2b5cd2d7.png).



Fig. 8: Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology. (2003). Religious element from Anjia tomb [Photograph]. Qianjing Photo. (<https://mulu.oss-cn-beijing.aliyuncs.com/00109111549124.png>).



Fig. 9: Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology. (2003). Stone couch from Anjia's tomb [Photograph]. Sohu News. (https://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/c_zoom,h_231/images/20190904/e23015a0172c460fb3c96b427a33d1dc.jpeg).



Fig. 10: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2004). Shijun's stone coffin [Photograph]. Shaanxi Daily (https://xzzsx.sxdaily.com.cn/app_if/getImage?path=%E5%9B%BE%E7%89%87%E5%AD%98%E5%82%A8;xy/202407/03/66185caf-9555-49ed-9bc7-690f7f1da9edcopy.jpg).

of the sash are carved with a pomegranate motif on a semi-circular forehead depicting a scene of Zoroastrian sacrifices, with a gilded relief in the centre of the front with three camels (one of which has its head straight ahead). is forward, the other two heads look to either side), with the feet on the base of the lotus and a small petal behind, the brazier is placed on the base of the lotus petal. The plant is placed on a lotus base with firewood.

This group of motifs is arranged in the middle of the lintel, indicating that the owner of the tomb was a Zoroastrian believer. It is used to determine the nature and religious affiliation of all patterns. He also noted: On both sides of the flame music is being played, the left hand is a pipa (a musical instrument), and the right hand is a Congo (a musical instrument) with red pants, bare feet and colourful clothes surrounded by clouds. The collar and bracelet of a man with a pipe are made of gold leaf. On both sides of the camel, human figures with eagle feet (Gods of Ahura Mazda) can be seen (Fig. 11).

Judging from AnJia's tombs, it was seen that the Sogdians used stone beds as a burial tool in China. Some images of Sogdians may have been depicted around a stone couch. The content of wall paintings mostly reflects the life of the Sogdian people. The ages of these tombs are mostly in the late Northern Dynasties. At that time, the Sogdians, who had entered China, had already been living in mainland China for a long time and slowly adopted the burial style of earthen cave

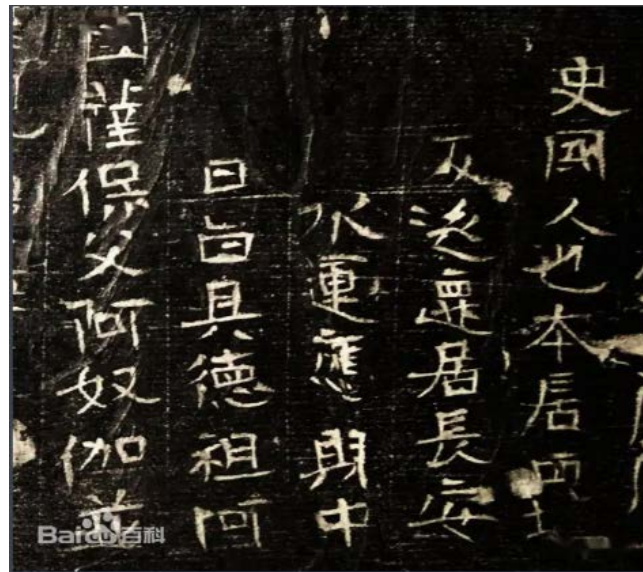


Fig. 11: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2004). Stone coffin with faint inscription [Photograph]. Bing Images (<https://ts4.tc.mm.bing.net/th/id/OIP-C.0Yni6ZtNrMMCAcXsUZQIeQHdID>).

tombs in the central plains. However, these Sogdian tombs are different from the tombs in the central plains of China. That is, there is no Ossuary in the Sogdian tomb. In the tomb, only a stone bed was present, which was seen more than the base of a stone bed and some images around it from the tombs. Among them, the body of the owner of AnJia' is placed in the tomb corridor. The middle of the corridor is the fire temple. This shaped tomb is not a traditional Chinese tomb. Also is not of the burial tradition of the Sogdian indigenous people. Rather, the results must have been Sogdian entering China and combining the earthen tomb structure of the Central Plain of China, Northern Han-style Ossuary's, and Sogdian relief Ossuary's. This type of stone bed is much larger than an ossuary. In total, there are 12 images around the stone bed base, three sides, and seven bed bases (Fig. 5).

2. 4. ShiJun (Chinese: 史君) tomb

Shi Jun, whose surname was Shi, held the position of Sabao in Liangzhou, a region corresponding to modern-day Wuwei in Gansu (Chinese: 甘肅) Province. The role of Sabao, which he occupied, was pivotal as it encompassed both religious and administrative duties. As the leader of Zoroastrianism, the Sabao was responsible for overseeing sacrificial rites and managing the affairs of Hu merchants residing in China. This dual role highlights the integration of religious and commercial governance in the context of ancient Chinese society.

In June 2003, ShiJun Tomb1 (Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute, 2004) an excavation uncovered the tomb of a Sogdian nobleman from the Northern Zhou Dynasty located in the northern suburbs of Xi'an. Now collected in the Xi'an Museum. The tomb contained a meticulously crafted stone coffin (Fig. 7) measuring 2.46 metres in length, 1.55 metres in width, and 1.58 metres in height. The stone coffin of the Shijun Tomb is a first-class cultural relic from the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581 AD).

The tomb of Shi Jun, containing a joint burial of a couple, is situated in Jingshang Village, Daming Palace Township, Weiyang District, Xi'an City. The stone coffin unearthed from the tomb features intricate carvings with rich iconographic content, reflecting a blend of Han cultural elements and Zoroastrian motifs. These artifacts serve as significant textual and material evidence, offering invaluable insights into the historical interactions along the Silk Road and the cultural exchanges between China and the West during that period. The findings not only enhance our understanding of the socio-religious dynamics of the time but also underscore the tomb's importance as a key archaeological resource for interdisciplinary research.

Designed in a hipped-roof palace style, the stone coffin featured intricate details such as a base, central wall panels, eaves, and ridges. Elements such as the rafter head, tiles, wooden arches, columns, and other components were adorned with gold. An inscription above the lintel of the outer stone coffin vaguely engraved the words "Shi countrymen also" (Fig. 5), suggesting that the tomb owner was a descendant of the ancient Western Regions and was known as Shi Jun. Shi Jun and his wife Kang, both of Sogdian descent, were originally from the Western Regions and later settled in Chang'an. Shi Jun was granted the title of Sabao in Liangzhou, as indicated by historical inscriptions.

The four sides of the stone coffin wall panel are embossed with patterns of four armed guardian gods, Zoroastrian gods, sacrifices, ascension to heaven, banquets, travel, and hunting. Painting or gilding on characters' faces, clothing, and animals. The carving content and style show obvious external characteristics. On the outside of the stone coffin, craftsmen used gilded, painted shallow reliefs to record the rich and legendary life of Shi Jun. In these reliefs are scenes of him and his friends gathering in Chang'an, toasting and enjoying drinks, as well as his posture of horseback hunting in Chinese-style bird cloud mountain trees and water wave decorations, reflecting the exchange and integration of Central and Central Asian cultures.

2. 5. The KangYe 's (Chinese: 康业) tomb

Kang Ye According to the epitaph, the tomb owner was a descendant of the Kangju King, who held various prestigious positions, including Grand Deity of Wei, Grand Commandant of Luozhou (Chinese: 罗州), Grand General of Chariots and Cavalry, and Hule of Yongzhou (Chinese: 雍州). He passed away in the sixth year of Tianhe during the Great Zhou Dynasty (571 AD) and was posthumously appointed as the Governor of Ganzhou (Chinese: 甘州). The discovery of the Kangye Tomb provides valuable insights into the social life, funeral customs, and cultural exchanges of the Sogdians in China during the Northern Zhou Dynasty.

On November 2004 (Reporter Lei Kai), the Xi'an Institute of Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology recently conducted a cleanup of a North Zhou Sogdian tomb in the northern suburbs of Xi'an, which dates back more than 1400 years: the Kangye Tomb of the Northern Zhou Dynasty. A complete screen stone collapse was unearthed, with ten exquisitely carved paintings on the inside of the screen. The only well-preserved North Zhou Sogdian skeleton in China found on the stone collapse. This archaeological discovery provides extremely valuable information for

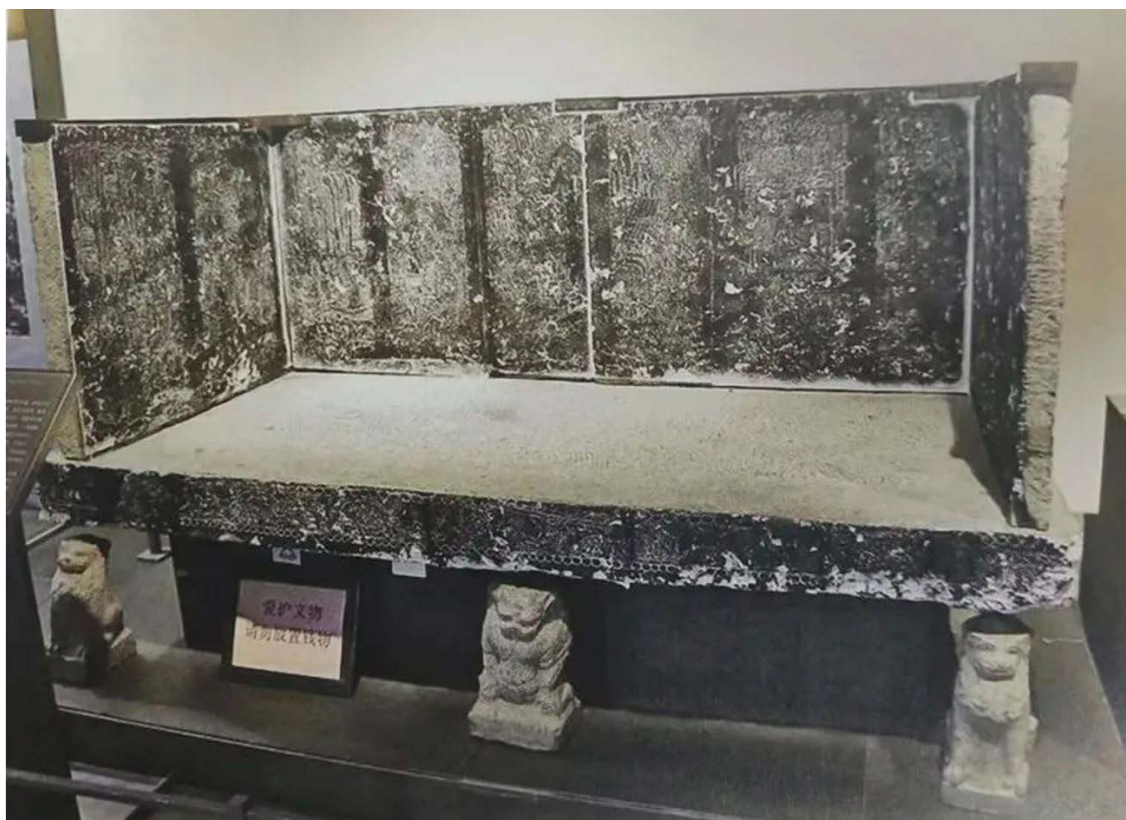


Fig. 12: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2008). Stone bed with Kangye motifs [Photograph]. Baidu Baike (<https://bking.cdn.bcebos.com/pic/b219ebc4b74543a98226db6bcf5c9d82b9014a90be4b>).

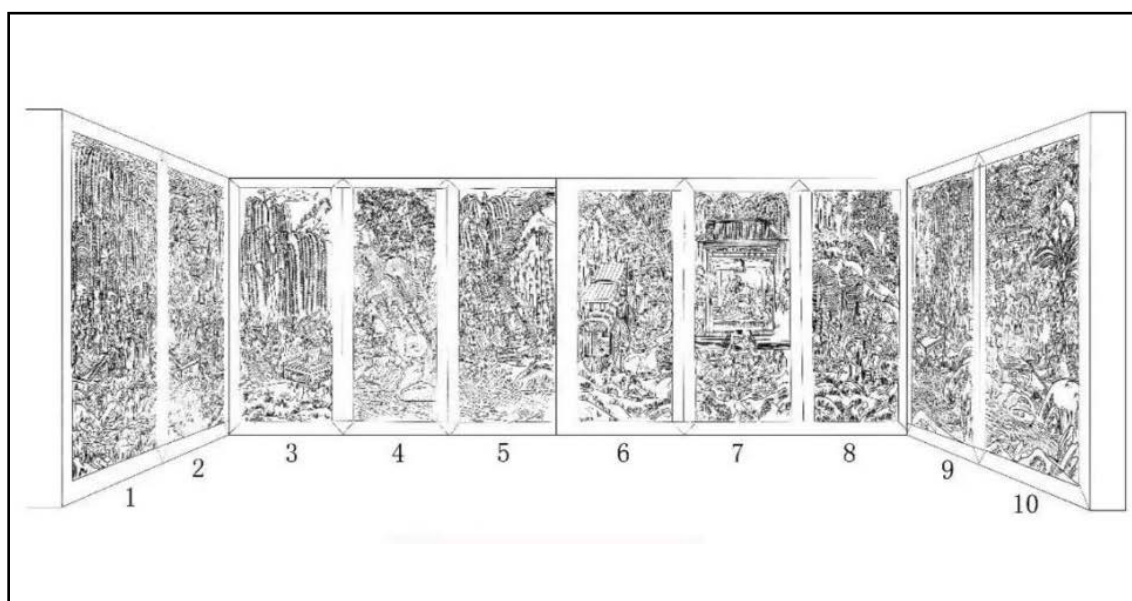


Fig. 13: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2008). Stone bed with Kangye motifs [Photograph]. WeChat Public Platform (https://mmbiz.qpic.cn/sz_mmbiz_jpg/GkLFebheyicTkAzfr1K4wibzCKX-HGAvoyhgOw4GmsiceRSu69WnVanREUMPiaUZ9rTO08yIpot5E7LpqSe25YZfYMQ/640).

studying the social life, funeral customs, and cultural exchanges of Sogdians in China during the Northern Dynasties. With the deepening of archaeological discoveries, the presence of a merchant caravan mainly composed of Sogdians active on the ancient Silk Road in China has gradually become clear ([Shānxi Institute of Archaeology, 2003](#)).

It was located north of Xi'an. To its north is the Anjia Tomb of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, and to its west is the tomb of the Shijun of the Northern Zhou Dynasty, further confirming that the northern suburbs of Xi'an are the location of the Sogdian tomb group. The tomb structure of the Kangye Tomb in the Northern Zhou Dynasty is the same as that of the Anjia Tomb in Xi'an, Shijun Tomb, and YuHong Tomb in Taiyuan, Shānxi. They all have a sloping tomb passage with a dome roof, a single tomb chamber, a corridor, and decorative murals on the inner wall. Except for collapsed screen stones and unearthened epitaphs, very few burial items were found. The unearthened epitaph shows that the tomb owner was named Ye, with a character base, and he was a descendant of the Kangju King. He died in the sixth year of Tianhe's reign in the Great Zhou of (571 AD) and was posthumously appointed governor of Ganzhou. The burial tool unearthened from the Kangye Tomb of the Northern Zhou Dynasty is a complete collapsed screen stone, which is the seventh Sogdian tomb discovered in China with a collapsed screen stone or stone coffin. According to experts, the use of Han Chinese seating arrangements and collapsed stone screens as burial objects was a unique burial custom of the Sogdians who lived in China during the Northern Dynasties. It was a result of the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, and no such burial system existed among the Sogdians themselves. On the unearthened collapsed fence stone, archaeologists discovered a well-preserved skeleton of a Sogdian. Due to the Sogdian belief in Zoroastrianism, their bodies are often disposed of by burning, resulting in relatively few complete Sogdian skeletons being preserved. This discovery is currently the only well-preserved skeleton of a Sogdian from the Northern Zhou Dynasty in China ([Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute, 2004](#)).

2. 6. Sogdian stone image from Miho Art Museum

The Miho Museum, in Shiga Prefecture, Japan, has a screened stone couch consisting of 11 rock images and double slabs. According to research by scientists, China should be the country. Sogdian burial objects during the northern dynasties, including the third stone couch numbered from right to left, is a famous burial chart of social etiquette ([A. L. Juliano and J. A. Lerner, 2001](#)).

Consists of the upper and lower fields and the face composition. Top centre, standing a man wearing a long white robe, a coloured mask (padam) of Zurvan, a priest of the Sayyad, facing the altar of the sacred fire. A dedication ceremony takes place in the open air. A puppy is on his right. Looking at the altar of fire and sacrifices, this means that what is found must be a Zoroastrian burial. There is an image of "cutting the face" at the top (Fig. 14) of the Miho stone image screen. According to historical records, during the medieval period of China, most nomadic peoples, such as the Huns and Turks, had the custom of "cutting their faces" during funerals. When the Huns heard that someone had died, the whole of the country wailed, and some people cut their faces and



Fig. 14: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2008). Panoramic view of Kangye's tomb [Photograph]. Shaanxi Library Digital Collection (<https://www.sxlib.org.cn/dfzy/sczl/wwgjp/wwgjdk/yz/201808/W020180807421459986017.jpg>).

bled. When a person (Turkish) dies, they park the body in the tent; most of the family members and relatives slaughter cows and horses for the sacrifice, cut their faces loudly around the tent, and shed blood and tears together. This behaviour should be performed seven times before stopping. In Suishu, "History of the Western Regions" in the State of Kang (Book of Sui, 1849). The reports that the system of marriage and funeral is similar to that of the Turks. This shows that the Turks invaded Sogd in the sixth century after occupying AD. Sogdiana was influenced by the Turks' wedding and funeral customs. When discussing the customs of the nine surnames of Zhaowu, Mr. Cai Hong sheng (Cai Hongsheng, 1998) .pointed out that the customs of cutting the face have long been common among the Northern and Western Hu people and have become one of the main features of the ancient funeral culture of Inner Asia. This view is supported by evidence from local archaeological sites in Sogd. Images of male and female faces in a mourning ceremony with cut ears and faces are carved on the surface of an Ossuary vessel discovered in the Tok Kala region of Khwarezm (not the last name of Huo Xun (Chinese: 火寻) . Sogdian people practice the custom of cutting noodles not only during funerals but also during ancestor worship. According to 11th-century external writing: It is written that the Sogdians held a ceremony of worshipping ancestors at the end of December of the Sogdian year and mourned, cried, scratched their faces, and fed the dead. Even in China, the Sogdians still follow the traditional funeral ceremony of "cut face". For example: In May 649, when Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty died, he wrote in Zizhi Tongjian (Chinese: 资治通鉴), Hundreds of foreigners from all over the states who

had come to China to serve as officials and pay tribute wept with great grief. I heard the funeral sound, and blood was splattering all over the ground. This way of expressing condolences through self-mutilation is very different from the Chinese tradition of mourning and the cultural concept of filial piety. After the Sogdians arrived in China, they began to cut their faces at funerals. For example, when the people of An Xingwei died, his son An Yueshu left his job for his father. He was so sad that he cried and bled. His children are Shishinfu, his son was so sad that he cried and cut his face, and his daughter did not eat during her mourning days. The relatives are very sad and mournful. Since Yanmian cremation is mostly performed during funeral ceremonies, we have no way of knowing. It is the real situation at that time, and we can only rely on documents and pictures to describe it.

The image of the Sogdian-Turkish union (Fig. 15), length 62.3 cm, width 35.2 cm, thickness 6.2 cm is an image of the Sogdian union, on which a strong man is sitting, on the left and right of three people, Two people are sitting, and one is standing. With the person standing in a servant position. The two people below are sitting around a plate of food, and each person has a servant, and another person is standing behind the plate. Juliano and Lerner and Lu Zhongdi mainly believed (Juliano & Lerner, 1997) that it was a banquet image, based on the above image. Jiang Bo in believed that the plan was a Sogdian alliance (Jiang Boqin;2000), and the person standing in the middle was the person who confirmed the alliance. Marshak believed (Marshak, 2001) that this image represented a banquet during an inheritance ceremony, with the heir sitting in the middle and a sad expression on his face. This image is almost identical to the image on the right



Fig. 15: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute. (2008). Panoramic view of Kangye's tomb [Photograph]. (Zhihu. https://pic2.zhimg.com/v2-beaab3af3d420d2138b28d81fb3b093d_b.jpg).

of the centre of their sarcophagus. It seems that the two sides who read Sogd here in Miho were the Sogdians on the left and the Turks on the right, and the person in the middle may have read Sogd, according to Mr. Jiang Boqin, not the son of the tomb.

The picture of a Sabao couple (Fig. 16) having a feast, the stone bed (length 61.6 cm, thickness 34.6 cm) depicts a banquet with the host and hostess seated on top of the dome, dancing together in front, with bands on either side. Juliano ([Juliano and Lerner, 1997](#)), Lerner, and Lu Zhongdi believe that the scene is a wedding banquet, where the man is a Central Asian and the woman is possibly Chinese. Marshak believed that this scene was a feast for the owner of the tomb and his wife in real life or in heaven. The owners of the Sogdi tomb and his wife are Han and Jianbei. In the reconstructed form now seen, the image of this stone tablet is the second from the left on the reverse, offset from the centre of the reverse. According to the official archaeological excavation of the Yuhong Tomb Stone Ossuary, the middle Ossuary was the site of a couple feasting.



Fig. 16: Rong, X. (2002). MIHO Museum Sogdian stone sarcophagus panels .Funeral procession for a deceased Sogdian Sabao (<http://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20190831/f96af5836ff94ea1b20396290574794c.jpeg>).

This image (Fig. 17) L 60.8 cm, W 53.4 cm, D 4.7 cm, this is a square stone couch carved with two images separated by designs that show originally two. The images were independent (I used J-1 and J-. respectively) 2 marks, probably because the stone was extracted from a larger piece, the two images were carved on the same stone couch.

Three people also ride on horseback. See the opposite of the three horses below, a woman with long buns and a servant behind. This image of a horseman is opposite to the third image of a funeral. Marshak's tool diagram suggests that the hero on horseback may be the Sogdian king, but the image that appears in China must be Sabao, the leader of the Sogdian settlement in China

This image (Fig. 18) can be divided into two parts. Above it is a four-armed goddess seated on a panel decorated with lion heads peering out from either end, which Li Giuliano, Lerner, and Zhongdi named after the goddess holding the sun and moon. The goddess Anahita is gone. Below are two female musicians standing on a lotus flower and playing pipes and harps. Below is a picture of music and dance in the centre of which is a woman dancing with bands sitting on the floor on either side. Juliano, Lerner, and Zhongdi believed that the upper part represents heaven and the lower part represents the human world. Mr. Jiang Boqin also held the same view. Marshak confirmed (Marshak: 234) the above decision based on the Sogdian wall materials, but he considered this image the temple of the goddess Anahita. The statue of Anahita is only half-height, with a stone platform underneath it. The two deities responsible for performing music and dance may have originally been on the left and right sides of the statue, as the slab was made in a long strip, and they were carved on the bottom. The dancers below are much smaller and must represent dancing and worship in front of a shrine or temple.

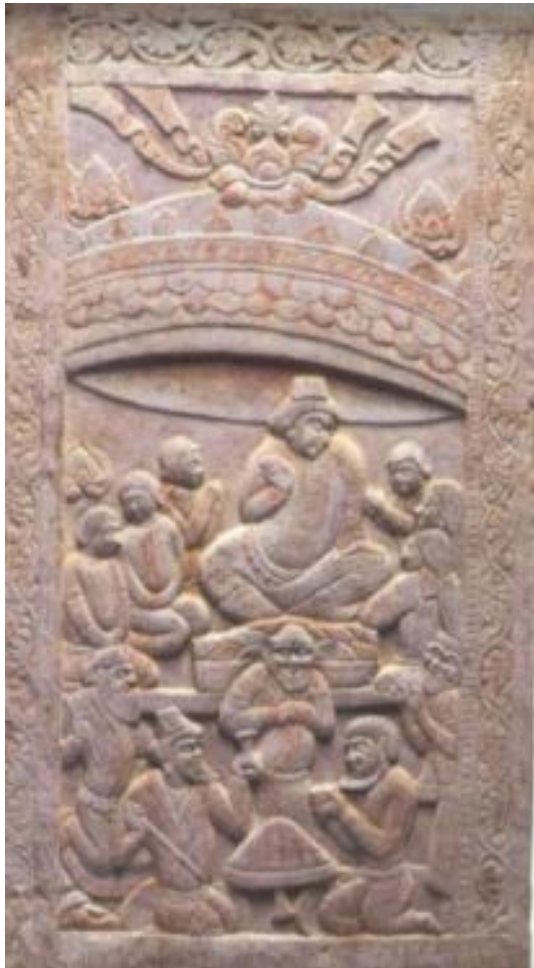


Fig. 17: Rong, X. (2002). MIHO Museum Sogdian stone sarcophagus panels .Depiction of Sogdian-Turkic alliance ceremony [Digital image]. (<http://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20190831/640cb421a73c47c69faec03d50e9e60a.jpeg>).

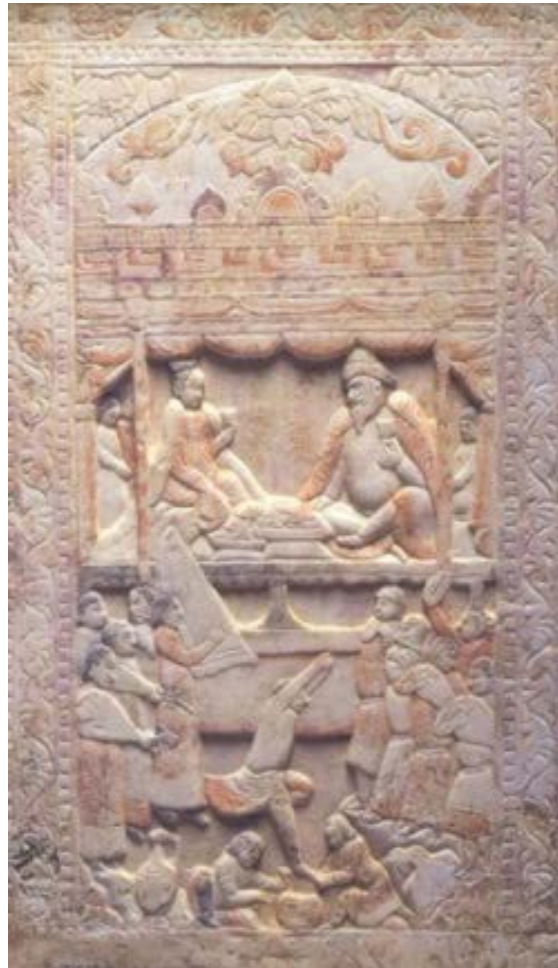


Fig. 18: Rong, X. (2002). MIHO Museum Sogdian stone sarcophagus panels .Banquet scene of Sogdian Sabao and his wife [Digital image] (<http://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20190831/986185cb09cb407092ae61e0b5ecd3db.jpeg>).

2. 7. Shi Jun (Chinese: 史君) Tomb Group, Ning Xia (Chinese: 宁夏)

Tomb epitaphs were unearthed from six tombs. The tomb owners were Shi Shewu (Chinese: 史射勿), the commander of the Northern Zhou Dynasty and the general of the Sui Dynasty's cavalry, and his descendants, as well as Shi Suoyan's (Chinese: 史索言) uncle and nephew. It was revealed that this location was the burial site of the Shi family, a member of the "nine surnames of Zhao Wu (Chinese: 昭武)" who originally lived in Central Asia.

The Shi Jun Tomb Group includes the tombs of the descendants of the Sogdian people during the Sui and Tang dynasties. National key cultural relics protection unit. Located in Kaicheng Town, Yuanzhou District, Guyuan, Ningxia. Eight tombs were excavated from 1982 to 1987. The tombs are arranged in an east-west manner, facing north and south, with long tomb passages and multiple brick chambers in the courtyards. The tomb owner was an official of the Northern Dynasties and the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and the tomb was large to scale. The tombs were often painted with murals and had a rich collection of burial objects. The sealed soil of the tomb of Shi Shewu is about 4.7 metres high and has a circumference of about 78 metres. Thirteen murals depicting warriors, attendants, and horse-drawn horses were unearthed in the tomb passage and chamber walls.

Eight relics were found: white porcelain plates, vases, ink stones, celadon jars, glass bowls, painted warrior figurines, sapphire seals, gold coverings, crescent-shaped gold ornaments, Eastern Roman gold coins, Sassanian gold coins, Persian silver coins, and more. Among them, the sapphire seal is engraved with a medieval Persian Pali inscription, and the gold overlay and crescent shaped gold jewellery have Zoroastrian colours. This cemetery has a high value for studying the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures. The theme of the murals in the tombs of the Sogdian people surnamed Shi in Guyuan follows the old system of the Northern Wei Dynasty. Present the identity, status and life of the deceased before their death, in the hope of remaining like in the underworld. Enjoy a life of glory and wealth, just as before death. Smooth and rough drawing techniques: Crazy and lifelike, reflecting the funeral culture of the northwest region during the Sui and Tang dynasties. The state of social development. However, there is no mention of Sogdians in the mural content about local religious and cultural customs. Burial customs are the most distinctive feature of a nation-social phenomenon, compared with burial customs in the Sogdian region during the same period, as can be seen from the occupancy. The Sogdians named Shi from Guyuan (Ma Caihong, 2014) were deeply influenced by Middle Eastern culture and have reached a high level of influence Sanitisation.

2. 8. Shi Ma ping (Chinese: 石马坪) Tomb

The stone coffin tomb in Shrimping, Tianshui is on the top of Wenshan Mountain, Shimaping, Qinzhou District (Gansu Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau). In June 1982, during the construction of the Shangshui Engineering Command Centre in Tianshui City, it was discovered that after cleaning and organising by the Tianshui Cultural Centre, an excavation report was published in 1992. The epitaph is made of cinnabar, but due to the inability to distinguish the tomb owner and

age, and considering various factors such as the stone bed screen painting, the excavators believed that the tomb owner's identity belongs to the aristocratic class, and the tomb age is approximately between the Sui Dynasty and the early Tang Dynasty. With successive excavations of the tombs of Sogdian aristocrats such as Yu Hong, An Jia, Shi Jun, and Kang Ye, it was found that the problems with the Shimaping Stone Coffin Tomb were similar. Therefore, the problems with the Shimaping Stone Coffin Tomb were re analysed based on the above tombs, mainly focusing on the stone coffin screen and Zoroastrian faith, as well as specific tomb dates and tomb owner identities.

The tomb is a single-chamber brick tomb with a vertical shaft and a tomb passage. The tomb door stands at 1.58 metres high, and the upper part of the tomb passage features an arched top. The tomb chamber is square in plan, and the stone bed is positioned in the centre-south of the chamber. The stone bed is composed of sandstone and shale, which are relatively soft. It has a height of 1.23

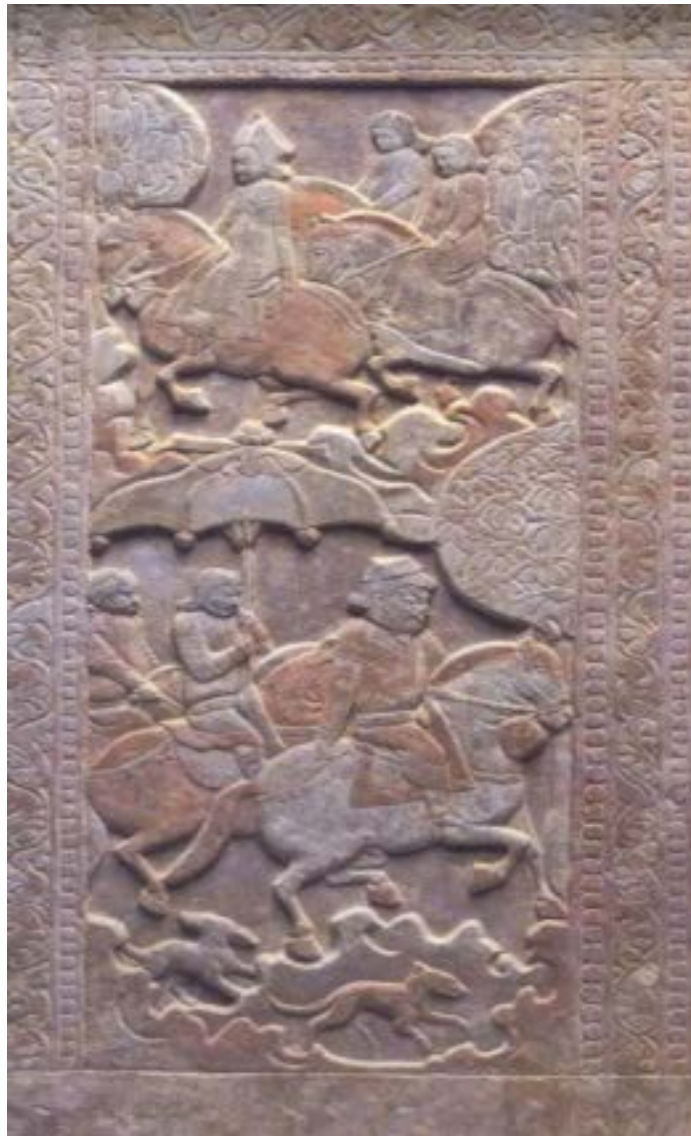


Fig. 19: Rong, X. (2002). MIHO Museum Sogdian stone sarcophagus panels .New sarcophagus burial scene. (<http://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/images/20190831/688a5bcfe25546ec826ec2b0ae3f60c1.jpeg>).

metres, a width of 1.15 metres, and length of 2.18 metres. The bed seat, bedboard, and screen were composed of 26 portrait stones and plain stone strips. Among them are 17 portrait stones. The left and right sides of the stone bed, as well as the back seat, are composed of plain 9-square stone strips. The front of the bed seat comprises two portrait stones with two sets of concave carved pot doors corresponding to the upper and lower layers. The upper pot door is carved with six round bottomed lotus petal-shaped male musicians, while the lower pot door is carved with six identical divine beasts. The bedboard comprises four equally sized stone slabs, with child and mother buttons connected. The front edge of the bed is engraved with a continuous honeysuckle pattern and decorated with gold. The screen is composed of 11 painted stone reliefs with a height of 87 cm and a width of 30-46 centimetres. The front face is 5 squares, with 3 squares on each side. The bottom is embedded in the groove on the edge of the bedboard. Although screen paintings have



Fig. 20: Rong, X. (2002). MIHO Museum Sogdian stone sarcophagus panels (<https://img1.baidu.com/it/u=4099256364,3974186654&fm=253&fmt=auto&app=138&f=JPEG>).

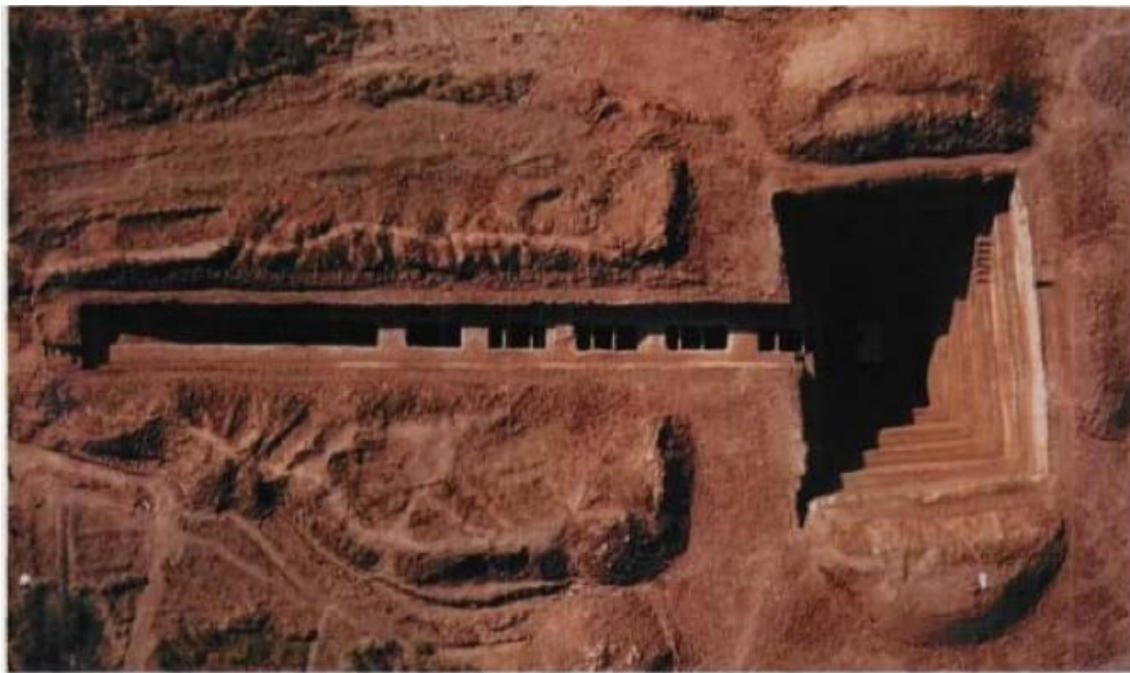


Fig. 21: Xi'an Cultural Relics Protection and Archaeology Institute., (2004) Panoramic view of Shi Jun's sarcophagus tomb [Archaeological photograph] (<http://dingyue.ws.126.net/2021/1126/8d357238j00r35ms2004bd-000h000o6p.jpg>).

gone through thousands of years and most of the golden colours have peeled off, it is not difficult to see the magnificent scene of flowing light and golden splendour from the remaining colours in the picture at that time. On the front of the bed, there are two stone beast divine dogs at each foot, squatting with their heads held high and their backs supported under the two feet of the bed board. The stone beasts are all painted in gold and bear the bedboard. On the right side of the two beasts, one appears to be a large and powerful male dog; The animal on the left is slightly smaller and gentle in size, and is a female dog. On the left and right sides of the front of the bed, there are 5 seated musicians with a height of 32-33 centimetres. They wear a flat-topped cross-cornered headscarf, a round necked tight-sleeved left lapel robe, and a waistband; High nose, deep eyes, and thick eyebrows, resembling the image of a Hu person. Among them, there are three musicians on the right side of the bed, one playing the horizontal flute, the other holding the Beili, and the other playing the panpipes; On the left, there are two musicians, one holding the sheng and the other playing the pipa. This uniquely shaped screen stone bed was the first unearthed stone in Tianshui. At that time, due to limited resources for reference and analogy, as well as limited conditions, the inscriptions on the tomb epitaphs fell off and could not be recognised. The excavators only preliminarily determined the tombs from the Sui Dynasty to the early Tang Dynasty based on content, style, architectural art, character modelling, and portraits. The excavation report was not made public until 10 years after the tomb excavation. The Tianshui screen stone coffin bed did not receive enough attention at that time. It was not until 20 years after the discovery of the stone bed that this “national treasure level” discovery began to attract people’s attention. Around 2000, a batch of stone coffin beds and similar portrait materials were unearthed in Taiyuan, Shānxi, the



Fig. 22: Ma, C.,(2014).Mural depicting sword-wielding warriors on the eastern wall of the tomb passageway (https://q0.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20250708/4657d4c0851e4e73956ad2279ced-be13.jpeg).



Fig. 23: Ma, C., (2014). Mural depicting attendants holding hu tablets on the eastern wall of the tomb passageway [Archaeological photograph]. (https://q8.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20250708/00340c-68291544cfbc55e0505aff3f44.jpeg).



Fig. 24: Ma, C., (2014). Mural depicting female attendants on the western wall of the burial chamber [Archaeological photograph] (https://q6.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20250708/5b58ea726b5244caae-aeb62398482edf.jpeg).

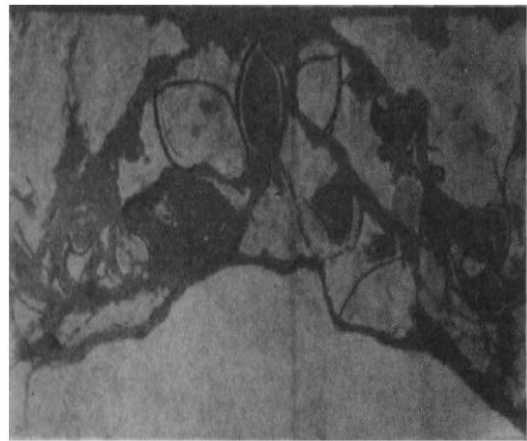


Fig. 25: Ma, C.,(2014).Floral motif mural in the second corridor passage of the tomb [Archaeological photograph] (https://q7.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20250708/5182f98416024916aa8661951f9202bc.jpeg).

tomb of Yu Hong from the Sui Dynasty, the tomb of An Jia from the Northern Zhou Dynasty, the tomb of Shi Jun, and the tomb of Kang Ye from Xi'an, Shānxi. Especially after the epitaph clearly recorded that they were all Sogdian tombs, this astonishing discovery began to attract people's attention. Therefore, the Tianshui Pingfeng Stone Bed was identified as a noble tomb of the Sogdian people from the late Northern Zhou Dynasty to the Sui Dynasty; Its cultural value and

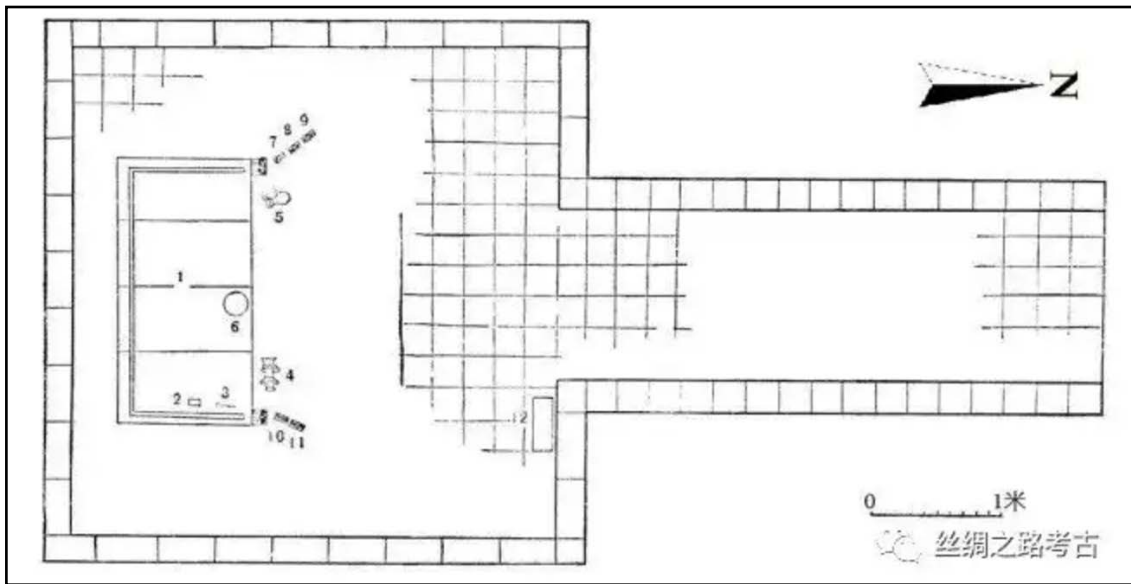


Fig. 26: Ningxia Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. (2020). Plan of the stone funerary bed tomb at Tian-shui Shipaping [Archaeological drawing] (<http://www.nxkg.org.cn/uploadfile/2020/0507/20200507110616923.jpg>).

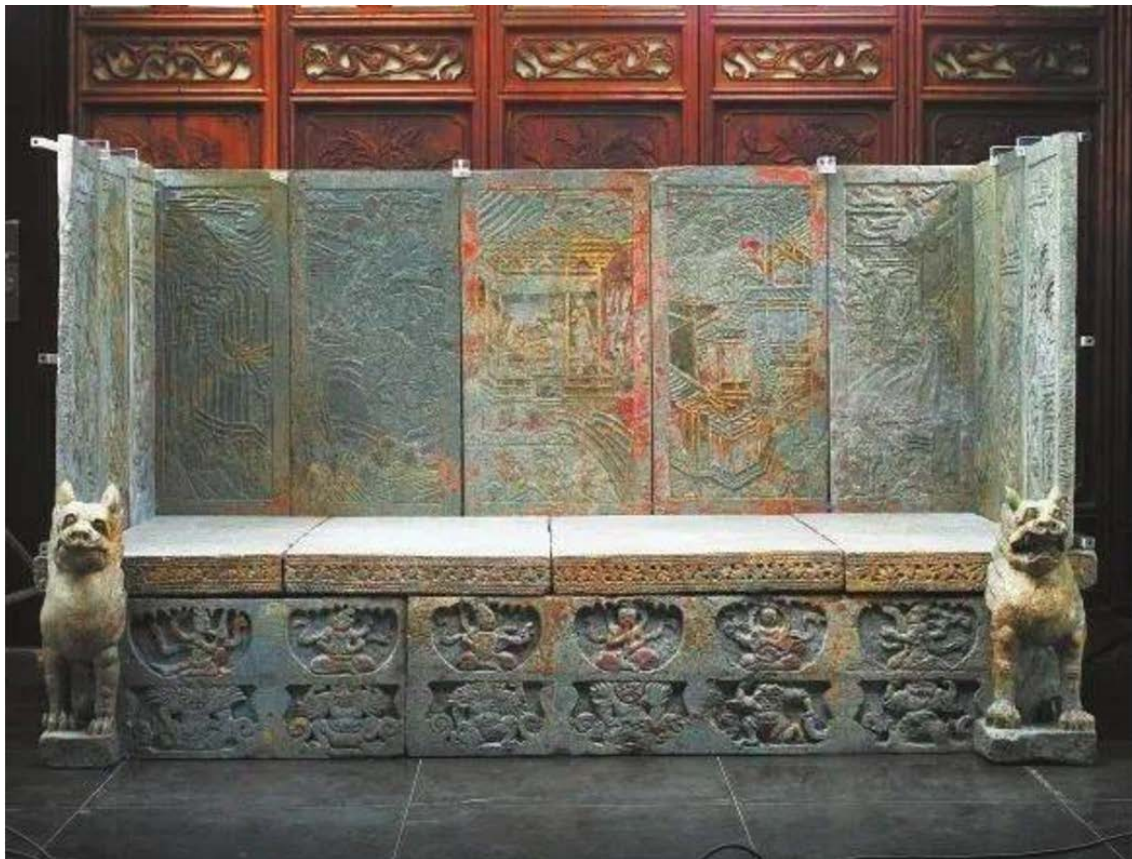


Fig. 27: Xi'an Museum. (2022). Frontal view of a shaped stone bed from the Northern Zhou dynasty (https://p9.itc.cn/q_70/images03/20220224/3ca80af63b154d10b69e7d8e3d585700.jpeg).

unique significance in various aspects, such as culture, religion, art, ethnicity, and communication, have gradually been recognised by people. With the completion of the protection and restoration of the stone coffin bed by the Tianshui Museum in 2010 and further confirmation of its painted content, the hidden screen stone coffin bed in the deep chamber finally revealed its true face 30 years after its excavation.

3. Conclusion

1. Artistic Techniques and Tomb Imagery: The Sogdian people, regardless of the dynasty, depicted the tomb owner as both a performer and an audience. However, the application of artistic techniques in these depictions did not surpass the boundaries of traditional Sogdian painting. Sogdians who migrated to China partially adopted Chinese burial techniques, particularly in tomb painting, design, drawing, and carving. According to tomb stone bed maps, the tomb owners, who had lived in foreign lands for extended periods, often displayed scenes of their anticipated afterlife and their longing for their homeland. This is evident in the tombs of Anjia, Kangye, Shijun, Yuhong, and the Shi family in Ningxia, where the content primarily focuses on their careers, lifestyles, and aspirations for the afterlife. These depictions are mostly rendered in simple forms of painting and carving, emphasizing their yearning for the external world.

In contrast to Han tombs, which typically portray the living conditions of the deceased, Sogdian tombs reflect the status and identity of the tomb owners. While Sogdian tombs, like those of the Han Chinese, often depict various scenes of daily life, the awareness of intentions towards the afterlife has become less pronounced. This distinction highlights the differing cultural priorities: Han tomb imagery emphasizes the continuity of life and social roles, while Sogdian tomb imagery focuses on the individual's identity and their connection to their cultural roots. Additionally, the artistic techniques used in Sogdian tombs, such as the use of vibrant colors and intricate carvings, demonstrate a blend of Sogdian and Chinese artistic traditions, reflecting the cultural syncretism that occurred during their settlement in China.

2. Function of Tomb Imagery: Faith, Worship, and Identity: The imagery in Sogdian tombs serves to express the relationship between faith, religious worship, and the interaction between humans and deities. Zheng Yan posits that the images of tomb owners during the Han Dynasty and earlier were transient, often revolving around one or two central figures. These images typically highlight specific aspects or details of the tomb owner's life, serving as a standard representation and a lasting memory. For the deceased, these images function as both a memory and a regret. For their descendants, they provide a means of commemoration and a connection to family traditions.

The differing emphasis on the main imagery functions in Sogdian and Chinese tombs reflects the distinct attitudes of the Hu (Sogdians) and the Han Chinese towards the relationship between humans, deities (or spirits), and tombs. In Sogdian art, the depiction of deities is often positive, influenced by Zoroastrian and Buddhist traditions, while the image of the donor is more commonly seen in secondary roles. This contrasts with Han tomb imagery, which often emphasizes the social hierarchy and the deceased's role within the family and community. The Sogdian tombs' focus on

individual identity and religious symbolism underscores their unique cultural perspective, which prioritizes personal faith and the connection to the divine over communal or familial obligations.

3. Cultural Traditions and National Mentality: Integration and Adaptation: The differences in tomb imagery between Sogdian and Chinese traditions can be attributed to various factors, including environmental and regional influences, cultural traditions, historical conditions, lifestyle, ideology, and ethnicity. Historically, the Sogdians entered the Central Plains as immigrants and were often marginalized within the social structure. The cultural traditions and lifestyles they brought to China were markedly different from the Confucian customs that dominated Han culture. Through the excavation of Sogdian tombs across different dynasties and regions in China, it is evident that each tomb has unique characteristics, reflecting diverse attitudes towards life and religious worship.

This reveals that the Sogdians, after a prolonged and stable presence in China, gradually absorbed and integrated local cultural elements. Thus, Sogdian tombs provide valuable insights into how the Sogdians preserved Iranian cultural heritage, disseminated their own culture, and assimilated into the local culture, forming a unique cultural identity as Sogdian immigrants in China. The cultural style of the Sogdians was inherently open, contrasting with the more restrained Han culture. The process of cultural integration for the Sogdians in China was lengthy and complex. Despite this, their core beliefs and thoughts remained rooted in Sogdian cultural traditions.

The function of tomb imagery is reflected in two primary aspects: as idols and as monuments, with the latter primarily serving as an idol. Notably, most Sogdian funeral imagery does not adhere strictly to a chronological narrative, further distinguishing it from Chinese tomb art. This non-linear approach to tomb imagery reflects the Sogdians' emphasis on symbolic representation rather than historical accuracy. Additionally, the inclusion of Zoroastrian and Buddhist motifs in Sogdian tombs highlights their religious syncretism and adaptability, as they navigated the complexities of living in a predominantly Han Chinese society.

In conclusion, the study of Sogdian tombs not only sheds light on their artistic and cultural practices but also provides a deeper understanding of the processes of cultural exchange and integration in ancient China. The unique characteristics of Sogdian tomb imagery, from its artistic techniques to its symbolic functions, underscore the Sogdians' ability to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to their new environment. This dual focus on preservation and adaptation makes Sogdian tombs a fascinating subject for exploring the dynamics of cultural interaction in early medieval China.

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Conflict of Interest

Author declared no conflict of interest.

Resources

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تحقیقات جدید درباره کشف قبرهای سغدی در چین

یوان چی ژائو^۱

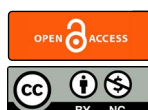
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چکیده	تاریخچه مقاله
شغدی‌ها یکی از قدیمی‌ترین دولت‌شهرهای شرقی در ایران باستان است که در جاده ابریشم باستانی واقع شده بود. براساس مدارک تاریخی و مواد باستان‌شناسی، مقبره‌های سغدی زیادی در نقاط مختلفی از چین غربی کشف شده‌اند و گویا این مقبره‌ها توسط سغدی‌ان مقیم این منطقه ساخته شده‌اند. بررسی این آثار نشان از آن دارد معماری ایرانی-چینی در این سازه‌ها به کار رفته است. مطابق اسناد تاریخی و متون چینی گویا این حقیقت است که سغدی‌ان به عنوان مقامات دولتی، بازرگانان و... وارد چین شدند و در این بخش از سرزمین‌های چین کسب و کارهای خانوادگی-تجاری برای خود ایجاد کرده و از این طریق در فرآیندهای تجارت، فرهنگ، تاریخ، دین و غیره، نقش مهمی ایفا نمودند. کشفیات باستان‌شناسی در منطقه دشت‌های مرکزی چین به طور قابل توجهی جایگاه استراتژیک و نقش سغدی‌ان و شهرهای سغدی را در این تبادلات تقویت کرده است. با توجه به اهمیت این موضوع و اطلاعات غنی موجود در ادبیات چینی، این پژوهش به جمع‌آوری مقبره‌های کاوش شده چینی پرداخته و قصد دارد، این داده‌ها را تحلیل کند؛ این‌که چگونه سغدی‌ان توانستند در گذر زمان در جوار سایر شهرهای چین غربی به یکی از تأثیرگذارترین گروه‌های قومی در تغییرات سیاسی، اقتصادی، اجتماعی، مذهبی، زبانی و فرهنگی سلسله‌های چینی تبدیل شدند.	صص: ۲۳۷-۲۶۵ نوع مقاله: پژوهشی تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۳/۰۷/۱۷ تاریخ بازنگری: ۱۴۰۳/۱۱/۰۱ تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۳/۱۱/۰۲ تاریخ انتشار: ۱۴۰۴/۰۵/۰۱

کلیدواژگان:

هنر و فرهنگ سغدی،
سغد، ساختار معماری،
شهرهای غربی چین،
تحولات مذهبی.

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