

New Shades of Old Materials Changing Roles of Transparent Glass Artefacts in the Barbarian States of China

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The 5th-6th centuries are regarded as a transformative period of Chinese history, where an intensity of cultural metamorphosis can be detected. Changing patterns of roles of specific materials with particular cultural values attached – such as gold and silver vessels or transparent glass objects – were important elements of this era. From the late 3rd to the 6th century, North China was partially or fully ruled by non-Han people, belonging to various barbarian tribes. As a result of social and cultural interactions and the dual presence of nomadic and Chinese lifestyles, a reinterpretation of non-local objects can be outlined. While precious metal artefacts became more popular, transparent glass items gradually lost their prestigious feature and unique role. In light of such complex transformations of taste and culture, these relics can be regarded as examples of changing receptions. The paper not only aims to provide a historical and archaeological outline of this turbulent period but also focuses on the (re)adoption and (re)adaptation of precious metal and glass artefacts in 5th–6th century Northern China.

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Since the late 3rd up to the 6th century, North China was partially or fully ruled by non-Han peoples, belonging to various barbarian tribes. As a result of social and cultural interactions and the dual presence of nomadic and Chinese lifestyles,² a reinterpretation of non-local objects can be outlined. While pre-

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² On this matter, see C.-Y. Tseng “The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei: Constructing material cultural expressions in the Northern Wei Pingcheng Period (398–494 CE)” In: *British Archaeological Reports International Series* 2567 (2013).

cious metal artefacts became more popular, transparent glass items gradually lost their prestigious feature and unique role.

Considering such complex transformations of taste and culture, these relics can be regarded as examples of changing receptions.

The present paper not only aims to give a historical and archaeological outline of this turbulent period but also focuses on the (re)adoption and (re)adaptation of one specific group of these precious items, namely the transparent glass artefacts of the 5th–6th centuries in Northern China.

Historical outline

After the fall of the Han, corrupt officials increasingly gained control of the state, while family feuds tore the dynasty apart. As the power of the emperor weakened, military commanders acted more independently and attempted to secure power for themselves. Although it is important to note that none of these families were able to hold the power for more than a few generations, some of them maintained their influence for centuries. New social places and organisations between families and the elite were formulated and the relations between the new elite and the court changed.³ This period between the Han and the Tang dynasties, the Six Dynasties period (3rd – 6th centuries), is often recognised as an age of disunion and, to a certain degree, of chaos, but it is also marked by political, cultural and technical innovations.⁴ Furthermore, it is the age of uprising of non-Han people. The era of the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589) is often regarded as a transformative period. A cultural and religious metamorphosis can be detected with emerging significance of the Non-Han elite. Sinicization, or more precisely a dual presence of nomadic and Chinese lifestyles, is an important characteristic of the period. The dual presence of Han and nomadic elements can be clearly detected in arts, especially in mural paintings, such as paintings from Cexian, Hebei province⁵ or in the case of human clay figurines discovered in various tombs of the period.⁶ Although Confucian values still played an important role, Buddhism, along with more practical behaviour, became widespread.⁷

Rulers of the Northern dynasties belonged to the various tribes of the Xianbei, such as the Tuoba nomads who had a different attitude towards precious

³ M. E. Lewis, *China between empires. The Northern and Southern dynasties*. Cambridge–London 2009, 28.

⁴ A. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*. Yale University Press 2007, 1.

⁵ Tangchi 汤池, “Dongwei Ruru gongzhu mu bihua shitan.” 东魏茹茹公主墓壁画试探 [Inquiry into the Murals in the Eastern Wei Tomb of Princess Ruru] *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 4 (1984), 10–15.

⁶ E.g.: Yang Hong, “From the Han to the Qing,” In: *Chinese sculpture*. ed. A. Falco Howard, Li Song, Wu Hung, Yang Hong, 105–198. Yale University and Foreign Language Press 2006, 113–115.

⁷ For more details, see e.g.: Lewis, *China between empires*, 196–220.

metals and Western imports. In the following pages, case studies from the Northern Yan and the Northern Wei dynasties will be utilised to indicate the change in this concept.

The Northern Yan dynasty

The short-lived Northern Yan dynasty provided only three emperors. The history of the dynasty starts with Gao Yun, a descendant of the royal house of the Korean Koguryo Kingdom. In 397, he started his career as a middle level official of the Early Yan state. However, his military successes meant that he was soon adopted by Murong Bao, emperor of the Later Yan (384–407/409), who also assigned him the position of Duke of Xiyang. It was around this time that he became close friends with the Han general, Feng Ba. In 407 the two friends, Gao Yun and Feng Ba along with the latter's brother, Feng Sufu and their uncle Feng Wannu rebelled against the cruel emperor Murong Xi. Soon after Gao Yun claimed the throne. Depending on the historian's characterisation, Gao Yun was either the last emperor of the Xianbei state Later Yan, or the first emperor of its succeeding state Northern Yan. However, Gao Yun was assassinated in 409 and Feng Ba, enjoying complete support from the officials, took the throne. As one of his first actions, he appointed his brother, Feng Sufu, prime minister. His reign between 409 and 430 can be considered as a short period of prosperity. After a long and serious illness, Feng Ba died in 430 and Feng Hong, his new prime minister, took the throne. During Feng Hong's short reign, attacks by the neighbouring rival Northern Wei became more frequent and in 436 the Northern Wei occupied all territories of the Northern Yan. Without lands, the Northern Yan was at its end.⁸

Feng Sufu's burial and the unique glass objects of his tomb

Feng Sufu, the brother of Feng Ba and prime minister of the Northern Yan, died in 415. His family was originally from Hebei province and was technically Han, but the brothers were acculturated by Murong Xianbei. Feng Sufu's tomb is located in Liaoning province at Beipiao, Xiguanyingzi site, approximately 60 km from the place of his childhood.

The tomb was discovered in 1965.⁹ It illustrates the dual presence of Han and nomadic richness of the period.¹⁰ He was placed in a well-designed stone

⁸ Liu Ning 刘宁, "Wuyanlishiyaolu" 五燕历史要录 [Historical outline of the five Yan dynasties] in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆 (编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyang Feng Sufu*, [Feng Sufu Couple's Tombs of the Northern Yan] Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 322–351.

⁹ Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyang Feng Suofumu" 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯素弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi] *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973) 2–19.

sarcophagus and was furnished with writing utensils commonly found in tombs of Han official-scholars, storage jars and cooking vessels in Han style, an enormous steppe-style bronze cauldron and three gold hat ornaments interpreted as symbols of his status. Moreover, special luxury imports from the West can also be found, such as transparent glass vessels which are possibly from the Roman and Sassanian Empires.¹¹ (Fig. 1)

Both the number and condition of these precious glass items are remarkable. These rare objects are the following: An intact greenish dish with straight mouth and ring foot. Its height is 4.3 cm and its rim diameter is 13 cm. (Figs. 2-5) Since the shape of this vessel is common among both Roman and Sassanian glass assemblages, it is difficult to define its provenance without chemical composition analysis. Another find was an intact deep blue bowl with everted rim and round bottom. Its height is 8.8 cm and its rim diameter is 9.3 cm. (Figs. 6-9) It might be Sassanian, while the bluish fragmented foot of a glass cup(?) could be either Roman or Sassanian.¹² (Fig. 10) Another item is a greenish transparent deep bowl with spherical body and round bottom. Its height is 8.7 cm and its rim diameter is 9.5 cm. (Figs. 11-14) According to the chemical composition analysis, the slightly fragmented object is Sassanian.¹³ It is important to note that regardless the above results, the Chinese glass expert An Jiayao interpreted all these vessels as Roman artefacts, even in her recent study.¹⁴

¹⁰ Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*, 104–105.

¹¹ Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, “Di yihaomu” 第一号墓 [Tomb no. 1] in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆 (编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyan Feng Sufu* [Feng Sufu Couple’s Tombs of the Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 8–99.

¹² K. Hoppál, *Contextualizing the comparative perceptions of Rome and China through written sources and archaeological data*. (PhD dissertation) 2015, 116–118. – Thesis abstract published in *Dissertationes Archaeologicae* Ser. 3. No.3 (2015) 285–302.

¹³ Gan Fuxi 干福熹, “Sichouzhi Lu Cujin Zhongguo Gudai Boli Jishu de Fazhan” 丝绸之路促进中国古代玻璃技术的发展 [Ancient glasses from the Silk Road in China] In: *Zhongguo Gudai Boli Jishu de Fazhan*, 中国古代玻璃技术的发展 [Ancient Glass Art of China] ed. Gan, Fuxi 干福熹 Shanghai 上海 2005, 247; Gan Fuxi 干福熹, “Sichouzhi Lushangde Gudai Boli Yanjiu 丝绸之路上的古代玻璃研究 [Study on ancient Glass along the Silk Road] ” 2004 nian Wulumuqi Zhongguo Beifang Boli Yantao Hui he 2005 nian Shanghai Guoji Boli Kaogu Yantao Hui Lunwen Ji 2004 年乌鲁木齐中国北方古玻璃研讨会和 2005 年上海国际玻璃考古研讨会论文集 [*Proceedings of 2004 Urumqi Symposium on Ancient Glass in Northern China and 2005 Shanghai International Workshop of Archaeology of Glass*]. 上海 Shanghai 2007, 93.

¹⁴ An Jiayao 安家瑶, “Zhongguo de zaoqi boliqu min” 中国的早期玻璃器皿 [Early Glass Vessels in China] In: *Kaogu Xuebao* 考古学报 [Acta Archaeologica Sinica] 4 (1984) 414–447; An Jiayao, “The Art of Glass Along the Silk Road,” In: *China. Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–700 AD*. ed. J. C. Watt, New York 2004, 60, 132; An Jiayao 安家瑶, “Feng Sufumu chutu de boliqu,” 冯素弗墓出土的玻璃器 [Glassvessels of Feng Sufu’s tomb] in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆 (编著 ed.) *Beiyan Feng Sufu* 北燕冯素弗 [Feng Sufu Couple’s Tombs of the Northern Yan], Wenwu

One of the most frequently cited items is an unusual bluish duck-shaped vessel with long neck, bulging body and long slender tail. It has a flat, open mouth, similar to a beak. Its length is 20.5 cm and its body diameter is 5.2 cm. (Figs. 15-18) The bowl might be comparable with the glass crocodile, probably from the collection of the Corning Museum of Glass in Egypt.¹⁵ (Fig. 19) However, according to the catalogue, the crocodile dated to the 1st century is an appliqué not a vessel.¹⁶ Moreover, the artistic and detailed features of the duck-shaped glass might be comparable to the glass finds of Begram (the boat-shaped flask in particular), dated to the 1st century as well.¹⁷ (Fig. 20) At any rate, while the duck shaped glass has analogies from the 1st century (or the 3rd if we accept other dates of Begram), the owner of the tomb lived in the 5th century. This situation indicates the problems of hoarding or treasuring as a long-lasting act.

At the same time, regardless of the problems of dating and provenance, the number and quality of glass objects found in Feng Sufu's tomb suggests a transformation of the role of transparent glass vessels of the period.

Glass objects from burials of the Feng clan

Other examples of changing reception of transparent glass vessels can be found in tombs of the Northern Wei. The powerful and long-lived dynasty was founded by Tuoba tribesman and unified the North in 386. Their capital was Pingcheng or – as it was called earlier – Datong until the court was transferred to Luoyang in 495. The rule of the dynasty was characterised by strong militarism. They were able to improve and stabilise the economy through effective land reforms and forced deportations of peasants.¹⁸ The Weis did not only use the Han administration but also imposed Chinese manners and customs. They

Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 227–233.

¹⁵ H. Kinoshita, "Foreign glass excavated in China from the 4th to 12th centuries," In: *Byzantine Trade 4th – 12th Centuries. The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange. Papers of the Thirty-eight Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies. St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004.* ed. M. Mundell Mango, Farnham – Burlington 2009, 253–254.

¹⁶ D. Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass*. Vol. 2. New York 2001, 238.

¹⁷ Examples are the following items: Inv. nos. MG 19087; 19091; 21276 and MG 21840. <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mg/begram.html> [Accessed: 2015.06.07.] On Begram e.g.: P. Cambon, "The Begram glasses from Afghanistan" In: B. Zorn, A. Hilgner (eds.), *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 B. C. to 1000 A. D. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* 9 (2010), 82–85; R. H. Brill, "A Laboratory Study of a Fragment of Painted Glass from Begram" *Afghanistan* 25/2 (1972), 75–81.

¹⁸ J. C. Watt, "Art and History in China from the Third to the Eighth Century" In: *China. Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–700 AD*, ed. J. C. Watt, New York 2004, 21–24.

also took control of trade routes to Central Asia.¹⁹ The Wei rulers were great patrons of Buddhism which soon became a state religion.

Significant transparent glass vessels were unearthed in tombs of the Feng clan that were discovered near Hongtuncun site, Hebei province.

The tombs were discovered in 1948 and are therefore poorly documented. The unearthed objects were simply arranged into find-groups without any detail or description being provided.²⁰ The tombs were connected to five known members of the Feng clan. All of them were important military and administrative officials of the Northern Wei. The furnishings included more than 300 objects: 11 bronze vessels, 195 clay figurines and transparent glass vessels again.

One of these peculiar items was discovered in Feng Monu's tomb.²¹ The official died in 483/484 but was reburied in 521. Therefore, it is a matter in question whether the bowl was placed right after Feng Monu's death or only after his exhumation. Moreover, its shape is also quite common. It is a greenish bowl with yellowish irisation and it has a straight mouth, rounded rim and short foot ring. Its height is 4.4 cm and its mouth diameter is 11.4 cm. An incised pattern below the rim can be found. (Fig. 21)

Although it is problematic to define the origin of Feng Monu's glass bowl,²² another transparent glass object from Lady Zu's burial might help to provide a possible solution.²³ The greenish cup has a slightly everted mouth, spherical body and foot ring. Its height is 6.7 cm and its mouth diameter is 10.3 cm. (Figs. 22-23) Its net pattern is similar to the Sassanian glass bowl from the collection of Corning Museum of Glass.²⁴ However, more remarkable analogies can be

¹⁹ C. Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History" *Early Medieval China* 19 (2013), 1–38.

²⁰ A short report was published in 1957: Zhang Li 张季, "Hebei Jingxian Fengshi mujun diaocha ji," 河北景县封氏墓群调查记 [Examination of the Feng family tomb groups at Jing county Hebei] *Kaogutongxun* 考古通讯 [Archeological Newsletter] 3 (1957), 28–37. More recent data: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/418774.htm> [Accessed: 2013.04.04.]

²¹ The Chinese report also mentions another glass bowl, but it has been lost. See: An Jiayao 安家瑶, "Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao shiqi de bolijishu," 魏、晋、南北朝时期的玻璃技术 [Glass art of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties] In: *Zhongguo Gudai Boli Jishu de Fazhan* 中国古代玻璃技术的发展 [Ancient Glass Art of China] ed. Gan, Fuxi 干福熹, Shanghai 上海 2005, 116–117.

²² An Jiayao recognised it as a Roman product, but her evidences are not convincing. An Jiayao, "Glassvessels and Ornaments of the Wei, Jin and Northern Dynasties" In: *Chinese Glass: Archaeological Studies on the Uses and Social Context of Glass Artefacts from the Warring States to the Northern Song Period*. ed. C. Braghin, Firenze 2002, 50–51. For more details, see K. Hoppál, *Contextualizing the comparative perceptions...*, 122.

²³ Two glass objects were originally discovered but have subsequently been destroyed, see Zhang Li, *Hebei Jingxian Fengshi mujun diaocha ji*

²⁴ D. Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass*, 23.

found in the capital of the Korean Silla Kingdom, Gyeongju.²⁵ According to the chemical composition analyses, some of these Korean glass finds were made in Western Asia.²⁶ (Fig. 24) The literary sources from the 5th century indicate that the glass making technique of transparent vessels was not only known in Western Asia but was also introduced to the Chinese court.²⁷ It is also important to consider that China became acknowledged with its glass-blowing technique in the 6th century, the period when Lady Zu, wife of Feng Longzhi, had died.²⁸ Therefore, it is possible that glass vessels of the Feng clan were locally made or at least originated from Asia rather than from the Roman or Sassanian Empires.

The new shades of old materials

To get a better understanding of the changing role of transparent glass vessels, it is important to be familiar with their perceptions before the 5th–6th centuries. Due to the fact that a detailed study of the subject was recently published by the author, only a short summary will be presented below.

Compared to the later periods, a relatively small number of imported western glass objects dated before the 5th–6th centuries were discovered in the eastern coastal part of China.²⁹ Among them, two main groups of transparent glass vessels – previously interpreted as Roman – can be formed on the basis of date and localisation: the Ganquan Region and the Nanjing Region.³⁰ (Fig. 25)

²⁵ An Jiayao, *The Art of Glass Along the Silk Road*, 157; I. Lee, “Early Glass in Korean Tombs – Cultural Context” In: B. Zorn, A. Hilgner (eds), *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 BC to AD 1000. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* 9 (2010), 213.

²⁶ M. J. Koh, H. T. Kang, N. Y. Kim, G. H. Kim, “A Comparison in Characteristics of Chemical Composition of Glass Vessels Excavated from Neungsalli Temple in Buyeo, Korea, from Baekje Period” *Bulletin of Korean Chemical Society* 33.12 (2012), 4173–4179. However, archaeological evidence of glassmaking in the region is very poor; therefore, the possibility that the object was produced in the Sassanian Empire cannot be excluded. J. W. Lankton, B. Gratuze, G. H. Kim, L. Dussubieux, I. Lee, “Silk Road in Ancient Korea. The Contribution of Chemical Composition Analysis” In: B. Zorn, A. Hilgner (eds), *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 BC to AD 1000. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* 9 (2010), 234–236.

²⁷ Beishi quan jiushiqi Dayuezhi chuan 北史卷九十七大月氏傳. See: Li Yanshou 李延寿, *Beishi* 北史 [History of the Northern Dynasties]. Zhonghua Shuju chubanshe 中华书局出版社, 1974.

²⁸ An Jiayao, *The Art of Glass Along the Silk Road*, 58.

²⁹ Although this number is quite remarkable in comparison with other Roman objects discovered beyond India in Antiquity.

³⁰ There is a third group, the Xinjiang one. However, it is important to take into account that the social context of the Roman (and Roman-influenced) glass finds that were discovered in Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region, regarding the

All the glass vessels of the above groups were discovered in the burial sites of emperors and their closest men: a well-defined and limited stratum of Chinese aristocracy, with not only considerable wealth but also prestige.

Besides archaeological records, references to transparent glass vessels in histories, poems, discourses, biographies and other works also help us to learn more about how they were perceived in the contemporary Chinese society.³¹ These sources present the glass vessels as being exotic, rare, jade-like materials, although in their place of origin i.e. the Roman or the Sasanian Empire, they can be regarded as common items of glass manufacture. As the archaeological evidence shows, the technique of glass blowing was unknown in China until presumably the 6th century, while some early texts assume that the method of glass making was misunderstood by the Chinese society.³² Due to the lack of glass blowing and confusion regarding glass making techniques, transparent glass vessels were considered to be mysterious. As a result of their transparency and jade-like features, they might have been considered as having a ritual role as well. Based on the archaeological data, we might assume that these vessels were prestige goods, cherished and possibly treasured for their rarity, transparency, mystical and ritual features. Moreover, due to being imported from distant places, they might also be symbols of foreign connections and were being used for advertising social power.³³

In contrast, the role of the transparent glass vessels changed after the 5th–6th century. A practical explanation of this metamorphosis can be found in Chinese historical sources. According to the *Bei Shi* (History of the Northern Dynasties compiled during the Tang dynasty 618–907), the glass blowing technique was introduced to the Chinese court by Western Asian Yuezhi 月氏 traders during the 5th century.³⁴ As it was recorded “from this time on (i.e. the rule of Tuoba Tao between 424 and 452) glass became cheaper in China and people no longer regarded it as precious.”³⁵ The *Wei Shu* (Book of the Wei compiled during the Northern Qi dynasty, 550–557) also states that an imperial edict was then issued to use glass for decorating an audience hall which was

cultural-ethnic diversity of the area, differs from the background of glass objects that were discovered in the eastern coastal part of China.

³¹ A great summary is displayed by An Jiayao. See An Jiayao., *Glass vessels and Ornaments of the Wei, Jin and Northern Dynasties*, 56–59.

³² Namely the *Baopuzi*, ‘The master who embraces simplicity’ written by the taoist philosopher, Ge Hong 葛洪 (283?/284?–343). Ge Hong *Baopuzi neipian juan er lun xian* 葛洪抱朴子内篇卷二论仙. An Jiayao, *Glass vessels and Ornaments of the Wei, Jin and Northern Dynasties*, 46.

³³ For a more detailed bibliography, see: K. Hoppál, “Contextualising Roman-related Glass Artefacts in China. An Integrated Approach to Sino-Roman Relations” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 67 (2016), 99–114.

³⁴ *Beishi quan jiushiqi Dayuezhi chuan* 北史卷九十七大月氏傳. See: Li Yanshou 李延寿, *Beishi* 北史 [History of the Northern Dynasties]. Zhonghua Shuju chubanshe 中华书局出版社, 1974.

³⁵ An Jiayao., *Glass vessels and Ornaments of the Wei, Jin and Northern Dynasties*, 64–65.

capable of accommodating over a hundred people.³⁶ These reports can be regarded as the earliest records on the greater practical value of glass vessels and also describe the presence of West Asian glass manufacturing in the vicinity of the Northern Wei capital i.e. present day Datong. Although it would not be wise to place faith in the overall factual reliability of the above accounts, it is a fact that the increasing number of glass discoveries after this period is conspicuous. Besides the previously described vessels, another widely known and cited example must be mentioned: the case of the Datong vessels. A remarkable number of transparent, free blown glass bowls, bottles and other fragments were unearthed from sites located in the Datong area. While finds with artistic features were mainly imported from the Sassanian Empire,³⁷ some of the undecorated objects along with other finds from Dingxian pagoda were made regionally according to An Jiayao's assumption.³⁸

From the 6th century onwards, transparent glass vessels became even more popular among the Chinese elite and started to spread across China. A great majority of locally produced glasses were discovered in burials and Buddhist temples of the Sui and Tang dynasties. These objects typically have a greenish colour, asymmetric form, thin wall, rough surface and visible bubbles; additionally, their shape is identical with the porcelains and ceramics of the Sui and Tang dynasties.³⁹ Although imported glass objects still had a remarkable place in the nobles' treasuries – as can be seen in examples such as through the Islamic wares of the Famen temple, Shaanxi province⁴⁰ or the West Asian vessels

³⁶ In the *Weishu* “世祖时，其国人商贩京师，自云能铸石为五色琉璃，于是采矿山中，于京师铸之。既成，光泽乃美于西方来者。乃诏为行殿，容百余人，光色映彻。观者见之，莫不惊骇，以为神明所作。至此中国琉璃遂贱，人不复珍之” 《魏书·西域传·大月氏国传》 For translation, see e.g. E. H. Hsu, *Patronage, Kiln Origin, and Iconography of the Yixian Luohans*, Leiden-Boston 2016, 39–40.

³⁷ Wang Yintian 王银田, “Sashan Bosiyu Beiwei Pingcheng,” 萨珊波斯与北魏平城 [Persia of the Sushan Dynasty and Ping Cheng, Capital City of the Northern Wei Dynasty] In: *Dunhuang Yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 2 (2005), 53–54.

³⁸ An Jiayao, “Glasses from the Northern Wei dynasty found at Datong,” In: *Ancient Glass Research along the Silk Road*, ed. Gan Fuxi, R. H. Brill, Tian Shouyun, Singapore 2009, 379–385.

³⁹ E.g.: Wang Xiaomeng, “On glass ware from tombs of the Sui and Tang dynasties,” In: B. Zorn, A. Hilgner (eds), *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 BC to AD 1000. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* 9 (2010), 163–175. It is important to take into account that in some cases there is some debate regarding where the glass was made. An example of this is the eight transparent glass objects that were found in the tomb of Li Jingxun of the Sui dynasty. See e.g.: Wu Jui-man, “Exotic Goods as Mortuary Display in Sui Dynasty Tombs – A Case Study of Li Jingxun's Tomb”, In: K. Linduff (ed.) *Silk Road Exchange in China. Sino-Platonic Papers* 142 (2004), 49–64, 53.

⁴⁰ An Jiayao, “Shitan Zhongguo jinnian chutu de Yisilan boliqi” 试探中国近年出土的伊斯兰玻璃器 [Approach to the Islamic glasses unearthed in China in recent years] *Kaogu* 考古 [Archaeology] 12 (1990), 1116–1126.

of the Kang Mausoleum, Guangzhou province⁴¹ – Chinese high-quality glass wares also became frequent in tombs of prominent members of the society.⁴²

In addition to practical reasons, a more abstract motive might also have played a role in the changing reception of transparent glass vessels: the altered taste of the non-Han elite. Although Han traditions (or Sinicization in many aspects) had an important impact on the culture of the nomadic dynasties of the 5th–6th century China,⁴³ customs and trends connected to their previous lifestyle were also introduced. Attraction to luxury vessels is one of the many examples. As B. I. Marshak has observed, objects made of bronze and jade were traditionally associated with wealth and prosperity while western imported metal works and their replicas only became fashionable between the 3rd and the mid-8th centuries when nomadic peoples, along with Central Asian traders, started to play an important role in the Chinese society.⁴⁴

The strong existence of the nomadic attitude can be clearly detected in the Northern Wei court and it increased when the capital was moved to Luoyang and the Xianbei was divided into two groups after 495. Those who remained in the north became Xianbei-ized and even some of the ethnically Hans gained Xianbei identity.⁴⁵ As C. Gosden has revealed, there was concurrently a necessity of destabilising older values in order to create new material forms.⁴⁶ In accordance, old practices were in some ways sidelined or were simply incorporated into the new synthesis.

⁴¹ An Jiayao, "Glass Vessels of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties found in Guangzhou," In: *Ancient Glass Research along the Silk Road*, ed. Gan Fuxi, R. H. Brill, Tian Shouyun, Singapore 2009, 387–395.

⁴² Lu Chi, "The inspiration of the Silk Road for Chinese glass art," In: *Ancient Glass Research along the Silk Road*, ed. Gan Fuxi, R. H. Brill, Tian Shouyun, Singapore 2009, 270–272.

⁴³ Debates on this with further bibliography: Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei*, 12–16.

⁴⁴ B. I. Marshak, "Central Asian Metalwork in China" In: *China. Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–700 AD*, ed. J. C. Watt, New York 2004, 47.

⁴⁵ Holcombe, *The Xianbei in Chinese History*, 28.

⁴⁶ C. Gosden, *Archaeology and Colonialism*, Cambridge, 2004. Also: Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei*, 14.

Chin-Yin Tseng suggested that the result of this was as follows: “By combining old traditions/objects with new practices/applications, visual representations and material forms were (re)created and (re)interpreted”.⁴⁷ As was illustrated through the above cases, the changed perception of transparent glass vessels fits into this pattern. Due to the spread of the glass blowing technique, transparent glass vessels became more frequent and easily available. They were still regarded as expensive and precious items but because of the more practical attitude of their (non-Han) owners they were lacking mystical features. As they became effortlessly accessible, they were used more widely, not only as tomb furnishings and treasures of emperors but common utensils of Buddhist rituals as well.

⁴⁷ Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei*, 13.

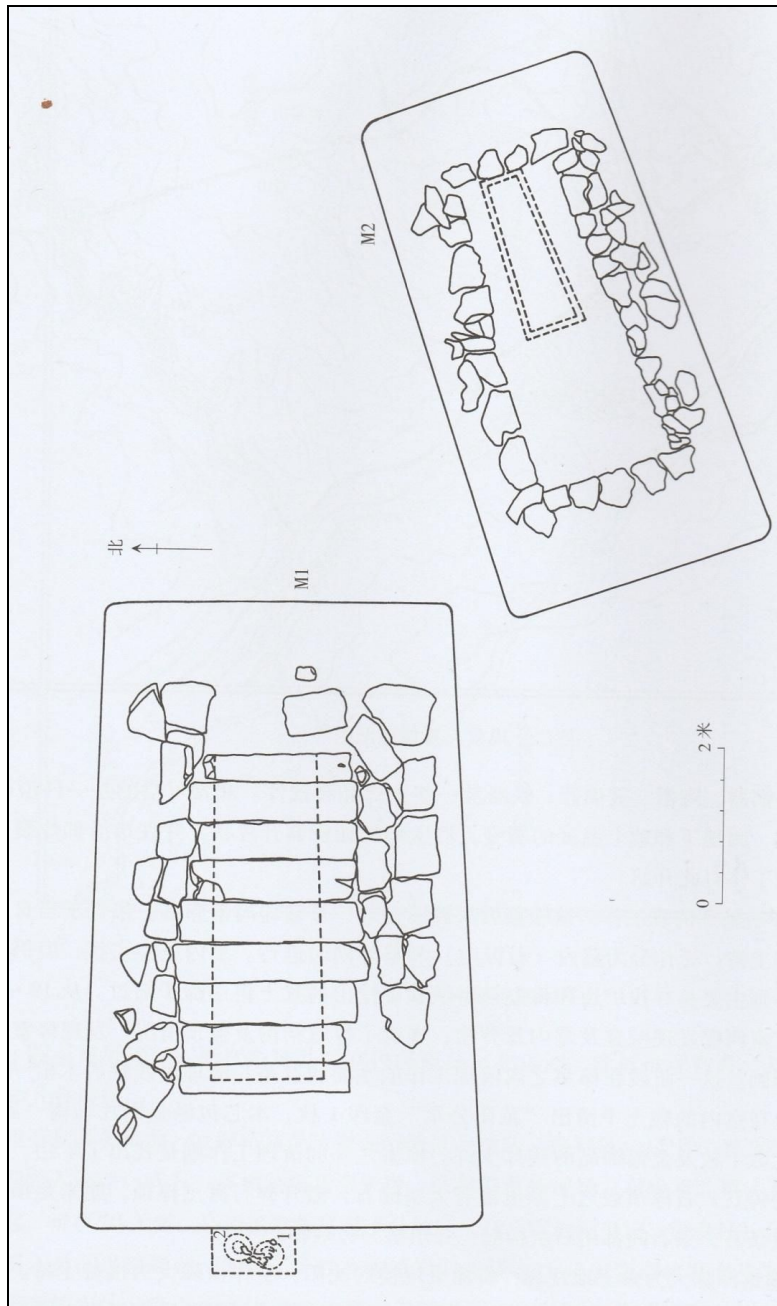


Figure 1. Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, “Di yi hao mu 第一号墓
Di yi hao mu [Tomb no. 1]” in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆
(编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyān Fēng Sùfú* [Feng Sufu Couple’s Tombs of the
Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 6.

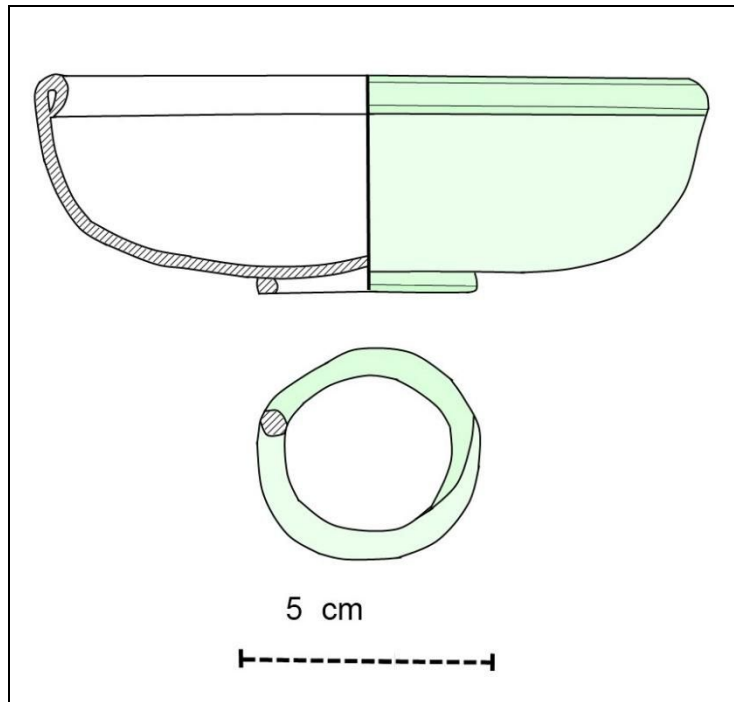


Figure 2. Based on Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyang Feng Suofumu 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯素弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi]" *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973)



Figure 3. Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, "Di yi hao mu 第一号墓 Di yi hao mu [Tomb no. 1]" in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆 (编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyang Feng Sufu* [Feng Sufu Couple's Tombs of the Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, Plate 29. (Fig. 3-5.)

NEW SHADES OF OLD MATERIALS...



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

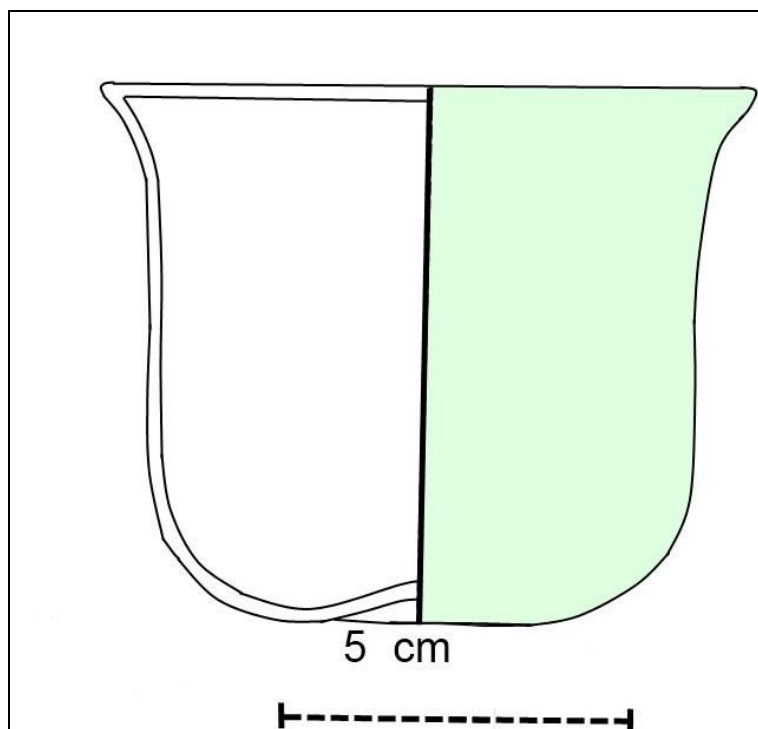


Figure 6. Based on Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyen Feng Suofumu 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯索弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi]" *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973)



Figure 7. Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, “Di yi hao mu 第一号墓
Di yi hao mu [Tomb no. 1]” in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆
(编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyān Fēng Sūfū* [Feng Sufu Couple’s Tombs of the
Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015,
Plate 31. (Fig. 7-9.)



Figure 8.



Figure 9.

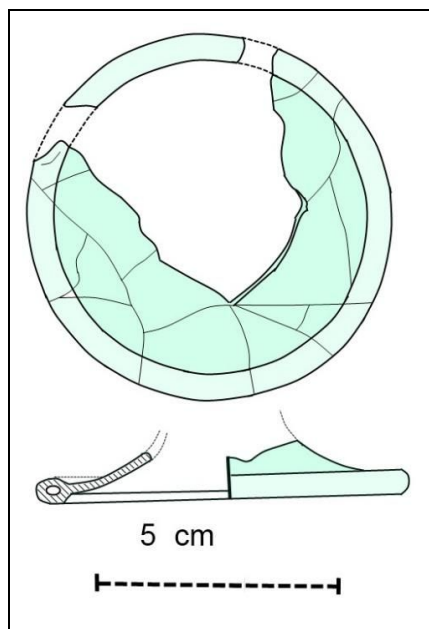


Figure 10. Based on Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyang Feng Suofumu 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯索弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi]" *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973)

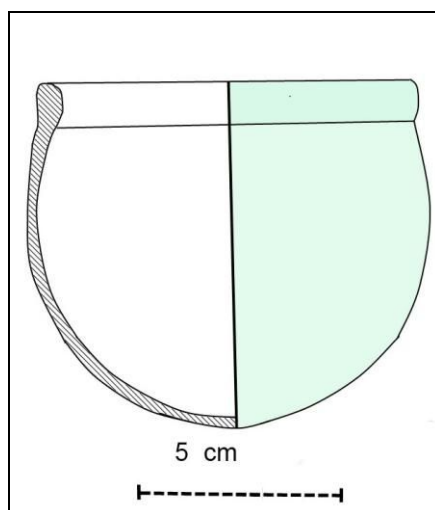


Figure 11. Based on Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyang Feng Suofumu 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯索弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi]" *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973)



Figure 12.

Figure 13.

Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, "Di yi hao mu 第一号墓 Di yi hao mu [Tomb no. 1]" in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆 (编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyan Feng Sufu* [Feng Sufu Couple's Tombs of the Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 32. (Fig. 12-14)



Figure 14.

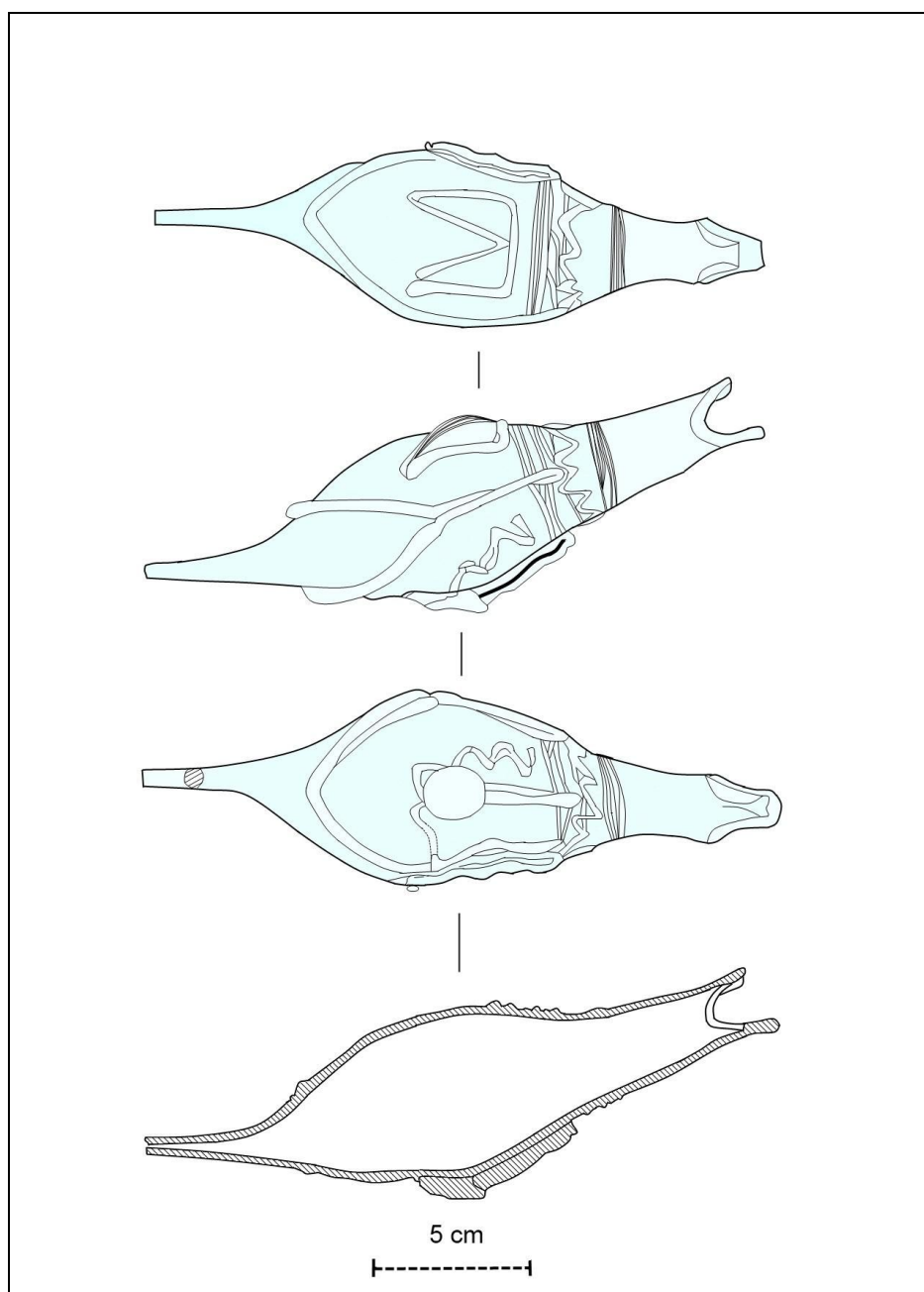


Figure 15. Based on Li Yaobo 黎瑶渤, "Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi Beiyang Feng Suofumu 辽宁北票县西官营子北燕冯索弗墓 [Feng Sufu's tomb from Liaoning Beipiaoxian Xiguanyingzi]" *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics] 3 (1973)



Figure 16. Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆, "Di yi hao mu 第一号墓
Di yi hao mu [Tomb no. 1]" in Liaoning Provincial Museum 辽宁省博物馆
(编著 ed.) 北燕冯素弗 *Beiyan Feng Sufu* [Feng Sufu Couple's Tombs of the
Northern Yan], Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 [Cultural Relics Press] 2015, 30.
(Fig. 16-18.)



Figure 17.



Figure 18.



Figure 19. D. Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass*. Vol. 2. New York 2001, 238.



Figure 20. <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/mg/begram.html> [Accessed: 04.01.2017.]



Figure 21. Gan Fuxi 干福熹, "Sichou zhi Lu Cujin Zhongguo Gudai Boli Jishu de Fazhan 丝绸之路促进中国古代玻璃技术的发展 [Ancient glasses from the Silk Road in China]" in: 干福熹 Gan, Fuxi (著 ed.), *Zhongguo Gudai Boli Jishu de Fazhan 中国古代玻璃技术的发展 [Ancient Glass Art of China]*, Shanghai 上海 2005, xv.

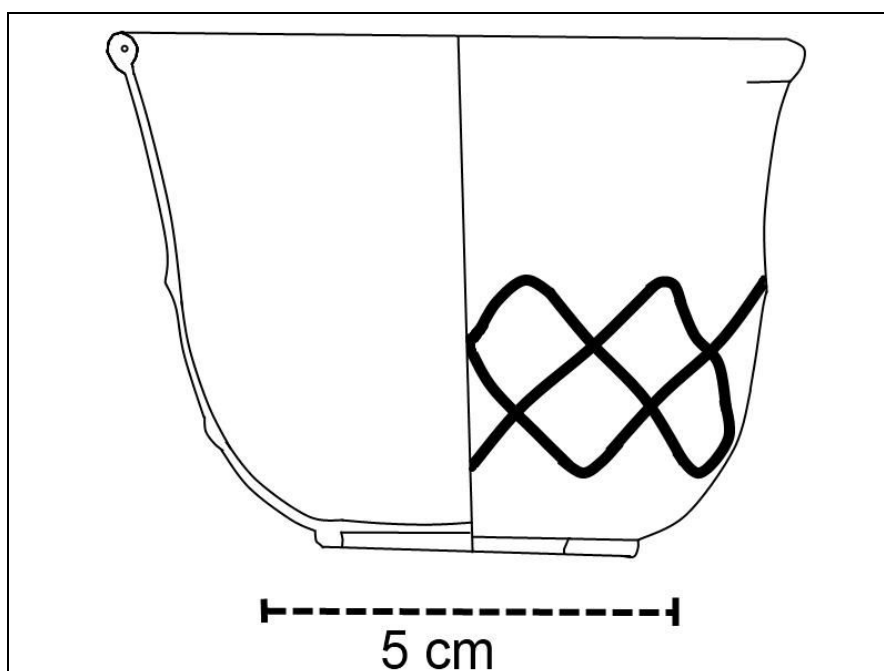


Figure 22. Based on Zhang Li 张季, "Hebei Jingxian Fengshi mujun diaochaji 河北景县封氏墓群调查记 [Examination of the Feng family tomb groups at Jing county Hebei]" *Kaogutongxun* 考古通讯 [Archeological Newsletter] 3 (1957)



Figure 23. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_12c553c2c0102vruh.html
[Accessed: 04.01.2017.]



Figure 24. I. Lee, “Early Glass in Korean Tombs – Cultural Context” in B. Zorn – A. Hilgner (eds), *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 BC to AD 1000. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie* 9 (2010), 213.

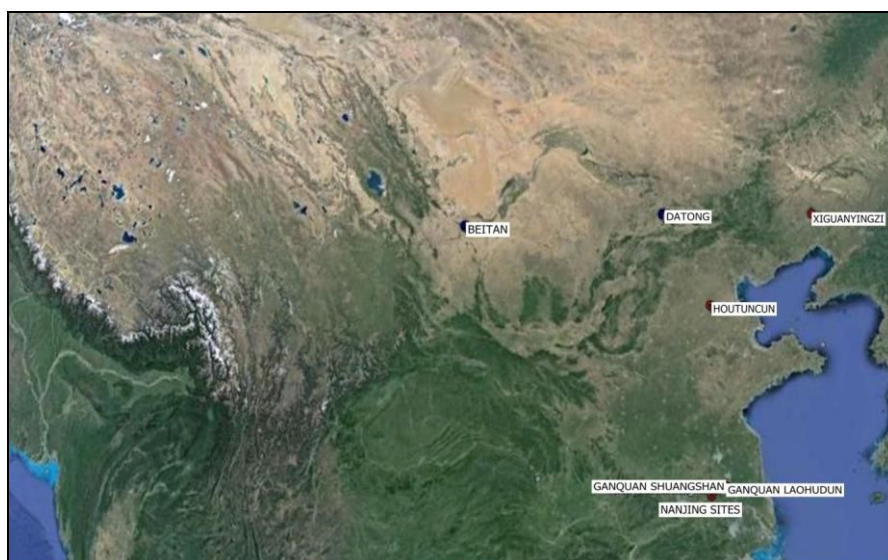


Figure 25. Based on Google Earth