

# Chinese Coins Down Under: Their Role on the New Zealand Goldfields

NEVILLE A. RITCHIE and STUART PARK

*The role of Chinese coins found in overseas Chinese sites has been the subject of many poorly substantiated inferences by archaeologists. In this paper the authors review the evidence from archaeological and historical sources and argue that it is highly improbable that cash were used as currency in any overseas Chinese community. On the contrary, it is argued that cash were principally imported for gambling purposes, notably as counters. Ritchie, now Regional Archaeologist, Waikato, Department of Conservation, has undertaken extensive research on Chinese miners sites in southern New Zealand. Park, is the Director of the Auckland Institute and Museum. He has published an earlier paper on a Chinese coin hoard, and was responsible for the reign and mint identifications.*

## INTRODUCTION

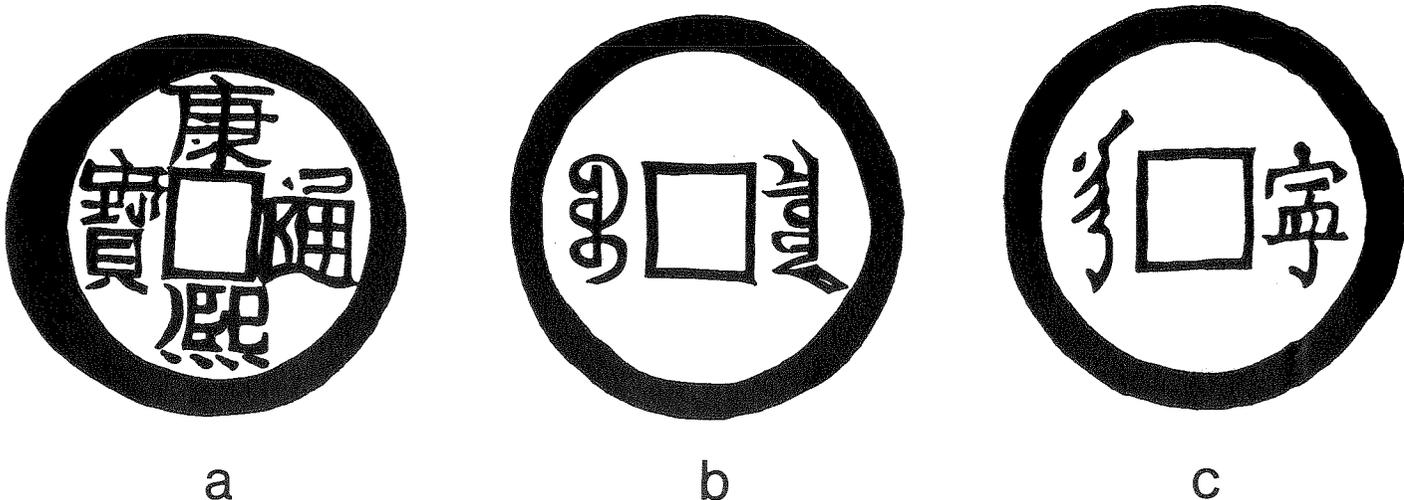
Distinctive coins are among the many artefacts of oriental origin found in overseas Chinese sites in New Zealand (and in other countries where Chinese migrants settled). The most commonly occurring coins are cast discs of copper alloy (probably brass) with a square central hole, known as *cash*. The name is ultimately derived from a Sanskrit word meaning 'copper' (Chinese *qian*). *Cash* were cast in a standard form and weight with only the legend varying, from about 200 B.C. until A.D. 1911.<sup>1</sup> A notable feature of Imperial Chinese *cash* currency (i.e. pre 1911) is that the coins minted during the reigns of various emperors remained in circulation indefinitely. As a consequence, *cash* found in overseas Chinese contexts usually considerably pre-date their date of deposition. The majority of those found in overseas Chinese sites were struck during the Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1644-1911) but occasionally specimens are uncovered which are up to 1000 years old.

Qing Dynasty *cash* are marked in a standard fashion (Fig. 1), which has changed little over the centuries (earlier coins have minor variations).<sup>2</sup> On the obverse side there are four Chinese characters, the two above and below the central hole

being the names of the emperor during whose reign the coin was struck. The other two are the *Tong Bao* or 'Universal Value', indicating that the coins were legal tender throughout China. The reverse of most Qing coins bears two characters, to the left and right of the central hole. One variety has the word *Bao* ('universal') in Manchu script on the right (the Qing Dynasty emperors were Manchu), and on the left the Manchu name for the mint at which the coin was struck. Another major variety has the mint name in both Manchu and Chinese scripts.

The recovery of 307 *cash* from nine out of twenty nineteenth-century Chinese mining sites, excavated by

*Fig. 1: (a) Obverse of cash of Kangxi (1662-1723). Top and bottom characters are Kang Xi, the emperor's name. Right character is Tong, left character is Bao. Tong Bao = universal value. (b) Reverse of cash from Quan mint, Beijing (Coole series 3). Left is mintmark in Manchu script, right is Bao (universal) in Manchu script. (c) Reverse of cash from Ning mint, Kansu (Coole series 4). Left is mintmark in Manchu script, right is name of mint in Chinese character.*



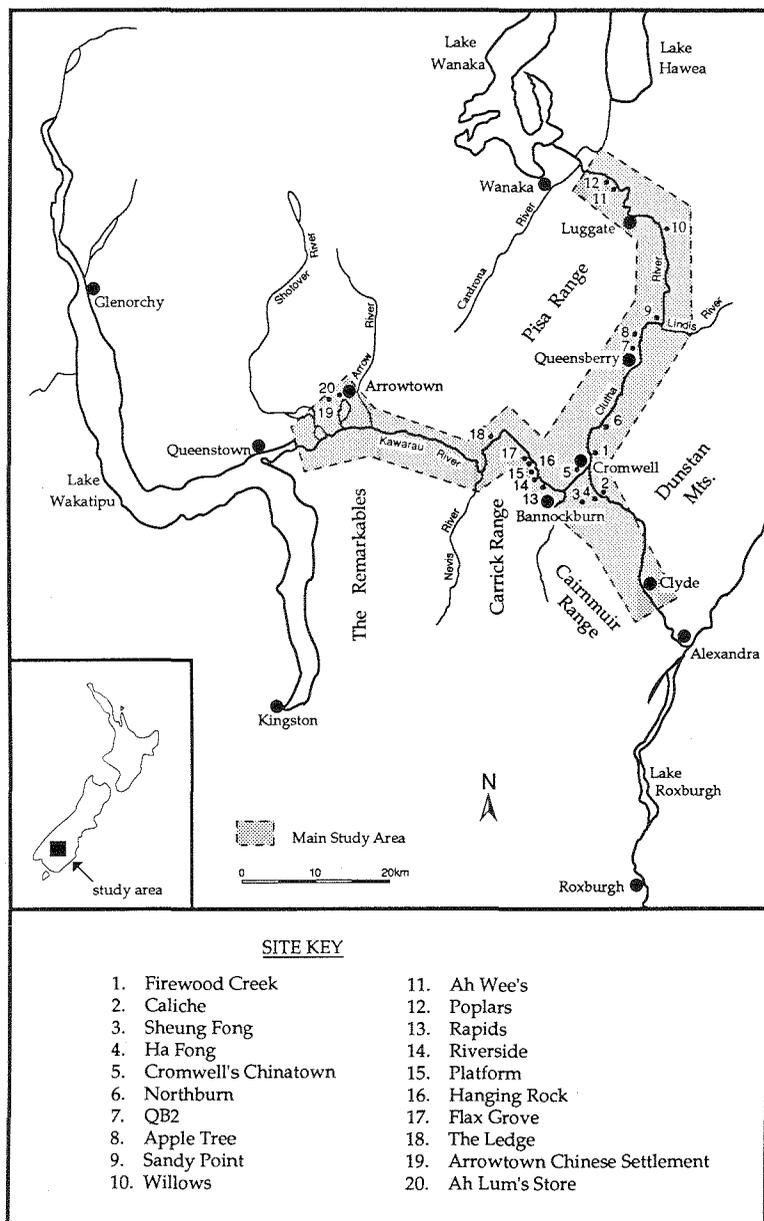


Fig. 2: Map of study area.

Ritchie<sup>3</sup> in Central Otago (Fig. 2), and an earlier study by Park<sup>4</sup> of a small Chinese coin hoard (34 *cash*) found under the floor of a building in Ranfurly, Central Otago, provided the stimulus for a more intensive examination of the role of Chinese coins in nineteenth-century New Zealand communities than has hitherto been attempted. The data base for the following discussion is provided by the coins from the Chinese sites excavated by Ritchie,<sup>5</sup> which comprised two Chinese miners settlements (Cromwell's 'Chinatown' and the Arrowtown Chinese settlement), a store (Ah Lum's at Arrowtown), and seventeen rural sites (eight huts and/or camps, and nine rockshelters). All the *cash* were specifically identified by Park to reign and mint, using Coole's authoritative reference work.<sup>6</sup> A summary listing is presented in Table 1. While our primary interest was in defining the socio-economic role of Chinese coins found in New Zealand sites, we believe our conclusions have wider applicability, as explanations for the presence and role of *cash* in other overseas Chinese communities.

As already stated, *cash* were found in nine of the twenty study sites, the majority being in the huts within the urban sites (263 or 85.7 per cent), and Ah Lum's store, where

fourteen (4.6 per cent) were recovered. Most of the *cash* were found singly (or occasionally in twos and threes) in and around the structural remains, suggesting that they were lost or misplaced. Each of the seven rural sites in which *cash* were found contained ten or less, the average being four per site (Table 1). Virtually all the *cash* were contained within the cultural deposits associated with each site, but a few (about ten) were found in nooks and crannies in the stone walls, or in the remnants of containers such as tins, a bowl, and a purse. Two notable concentrations were found, both in Hut 26 at Cromwell's Chinatown. The hut contained a total of 255 *cash*, of which 210 were found in a single fused mass in the middle of the hut floor. They appear to have been threaded on a string, a common practice with Chinese coins. Most of the other *cash* in the hut were on and immediately below a small wooden shelf in the north wall of the structure. The pile on the shelf contained eighteen 'standard size *cash*' (diameter: 24–28 mm), three 'small *cash*' (average diameter: 21–22 mm), and an 1891 English threepenny piece. The five *cash* scattered on the floor below the shelf, are believed to have fallen there as a result of the fire which destroyed the hut.

**Table 1:** The distribution of Chinese and Euro-coins.

**Key:** Ch. Cromwell's Chinatown; Ch/c, numbers in brackets = coins in the Hut 26 cache at Chinatown; ACS. Arrowtown Chinese Settlement; AL. Ah Lum's store; Pop. Poplars; AW. Ah Wee's; QB2 Queensberry; SF. Sheung Fong; FC. Firewood Creek; R. Rapids; C. Caliche; L. Ledge; \* = small size.

Reign & Mint	Ch.	Ch/c	ACS.	AL.	Pop.	Sites AW.	QB2	SF.	FC.	R.	C.	L.	Total
<b>SHUNZHI (Shun Chih)</b>													
Ning	—	(2)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Yuan	3	(3)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	7
Quan	2	(7)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Tong	1	(8)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Ho	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Gong	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Qi	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>(23)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>KANGXI (K'ang Hsi)</b>													
Quan	20	(88)	3	4	1	8	4	2	—	—	—	—	130
Yuan	9	(32)	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	43
Ning	1	(4)	1	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
Che	2	(22)	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	27
Xuan	—	(2)	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	4
Tong	1	(6)	—	3	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	11
Lin	3	(10)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	14
Ho	1	(6)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Yun	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Chang	—	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Qi	—	(3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Su	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Kuang	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
illegible	—	(2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>(179)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>YONG SHENG (Yung Cheng)</b>													
Quan	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Yuan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Yun	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>QIANLONG (Ch'ien Lung)</b>													
Quan	—	(4)	1	2*	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	10
Tong	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Yuan	—	(1)	1	1*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Che	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>JIAQING (Chia Ch'ing)</b>													
Zhi	—	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>GUANGXU (Kuang Hsu)</b>													
Kuang	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>(210)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>CASH</b>													
<b>EURO-COINS</b>													
½d	6	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	9
1d	1	—	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
3d	9	—	1	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	15
6d	5	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
1/-	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
2/-	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>EURO-COINS</b>													
<b>GRAND</b>													
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>(210)</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>350</b>

Notes:

1. For further details about the coins refer Ritchie 1986: 573-5, 709-11.

2. Province-locations of Chinese mints: Kung, Quan, Yuan, Qi, Xuan, Zhi (Hebei); Ho (Henan); Ning (Gansu); Tung, Lin (Shandong); Su (Jiangsu); Yun (Yunnan); Kuang (Guangdong); Chang (Jiangxi); Che (Zhejiang).

## THE ROLE OF CHINESE COINS

The role of Chinese coins in New Zealand (and other contemporary overseas Chinese communities) is not fully understood. They were, of course, legal tender in China. Some Chinese may have landed in New Zealand with the expectation that any *cash* they brought with them would be negotiable but several factors virtually preclude any possibility that they were used as currency in New Zealand (or probably elsewhere outside of China). Firstly, *cash* had a low intrinsic value. In 1907, approximately 10,000 *cash* were worth one pound sterling.<sup>7</sup> An economy using *cash* would require large numbers of the coins; in China they were routinely threaded together in strings of 100 or 1000, and discounted at variable rates.<sup>8</sup>

If the coins were being used as currency in New Zealand (or within other overseas Chinese communities), one would expect the presence of substantial numbers (thousands, if not tens of thousands) in archaeological sites, especially since the European banking system would not accommodate them. Yet the 307 *cash* found in the Central Otago study sites, represent the largest assemblage of such coins recovered archaeologically anywhere in the overseas Chinese world. Beals has discussed 101 *cash* found in six aboriginal sites in the American Northwest.<sup>9</sup> The yields of *cash* from reported Chinese site excavations (those known to the writers are all from excavations in the United States) include 62 *cash* from Ventura;<sup>10</sup> 38 from Lovelock;<sup>11</sup> one from Idaho City;<sup>12</sup> 141 from Yreka;<sup>13</sup> 24 from Old Sacramento;<sup>14</sup> 10 from Weaverville;<sup>15</sup> 84 from Tucson;<sup>16</sup> 7 from Woodland;<sup>17</sup> and 4 from Pierce.<sup>18</sup> Given the relative value of the coins, surprisingly low numbers have been found if *cash* were being used as currency.

The only large cache of Chinese coins, known to the writers, which was found in an overseas Chinese context, is a hoard of 30,000 reported to have been found c.1980 in an earthenware crock near Maytown on the Palmer River Goldfield, Queensland, Australia. This unique cache, which included two pieces of 'knife-money' dating from c.680–255

B.C. and coins of the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906), was sold off under the auspices of the Palmer River Historic Preservation Society.<sup>19</sup> The cache is quite anomalous in relation to other overseas Chinese discoveries. Discussion of its validity and interpretation are beyond the scope of this paper.

The existence of closed internal trading systems utilising Chinese coins was suggested, but by no means unequivocally demonstrated, by Kleebe,<sup>20</sup> Hattori,<sup>21</sup> Farris,<sup>22</sup> and Olsen<sup>23</sup> in their published studies of the Chinese coins found in the Ventura, Lovelock, Yreka, Sacramento, and Tucson sites. Farris<sup>24</sup> suggested, on the basis of a single report from an anonymous elderly Chinese informant, that an artificial or token value was assigned to *cash* in some overseas Chinese communities in the United States. However, if this were the case, local economies would have been under continual threat of debasement by the possibility of someone importing large volumes of *cash* from China at normal values. Indeed, Farris reports that his informant referred to the importation of large numbers of *cash*, which would have seriously corrupted any form of local economy which utilised *cash* as token coins.

Fig. 3: Examples of cash from the study sites: coins produced during the reign of Kangxi (1662–1723).

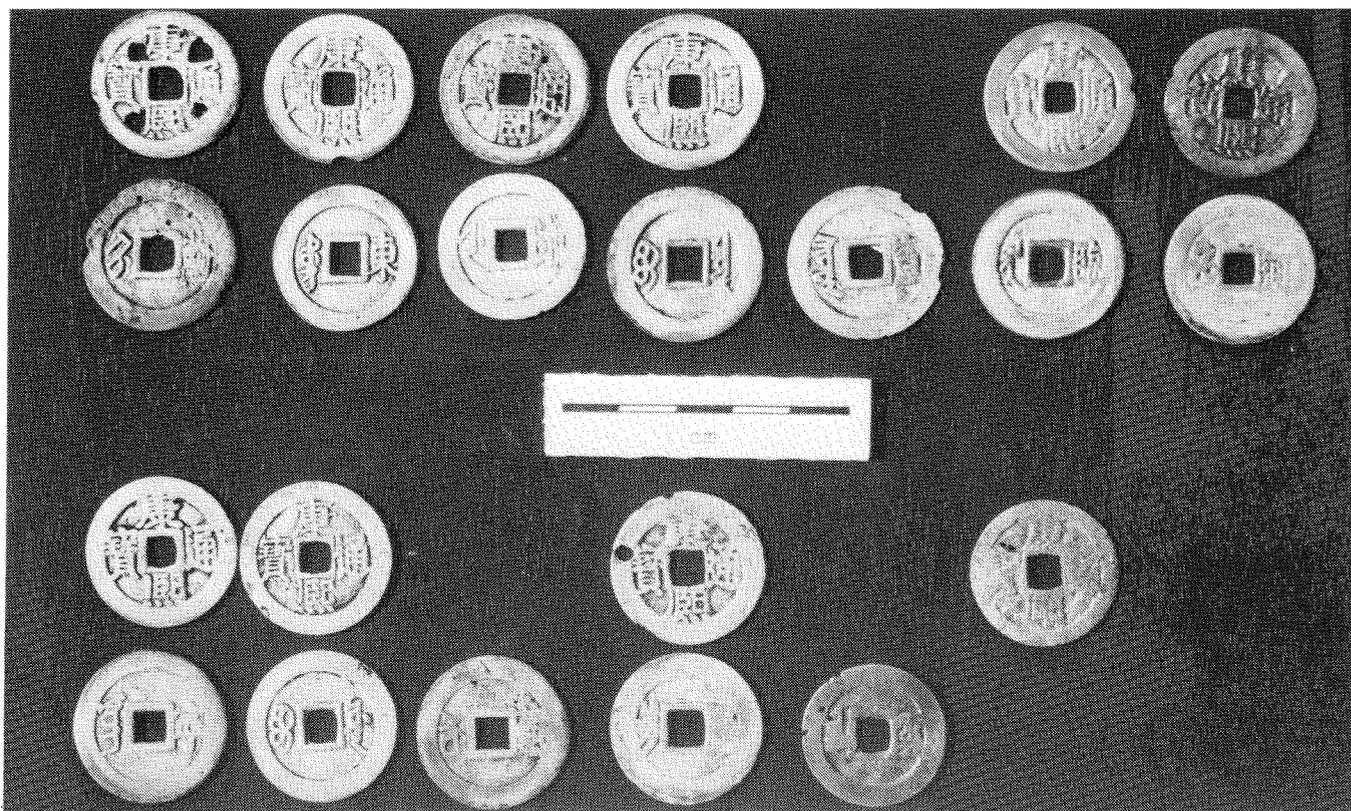
1st row, L to R.  
Obverse sides of cash from Qi, Tung, Che, Quan, Xuan, Lin, & Ho mints.

2nd row, L to R.  
Reverse sides of cash from above mints.

3rd row, L to R.  
Obverse sides of cash from Ning, Yuan, Su, Chang, Yun, & Kuang mints.

4th row, L to R.  
Reverse sides of cash from above mints.

N.B. The recovery of only one coin from a particular mint is denoted by its absence in either of the paired rows.



A further consideration concerns the complexity of the monetary system in China. It is unlikely in the extreme that any overseas Chinese community could have replicated the complicated system of checks and balances, which were an integral part of the mainland Chinese monetary system.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the various contemporary observers of the Chinese in New Zealand, notably the Reverend Alexander Don (a Presbyterian minister who extensively chronicled the activities of the Central Otago Chinese), make no reference to the use of *cash* as currency in New Zealand. It is inconceivable that the Chinese could have operated closed money systems within the goldfield communities without someone commenting on such practices. In fact, if there had been any evidence suggesting such practices, anti-Chinese agitators would almost certainly have used it to arouse further opposition to Chinese immigration.

For these reasons, there is in the writers' opinion no evidence that internal monetary systems using Chinese *cash* as regular currency, existed in the New Zealand Chinese communities. Although 'lost Chinese coins were quite common in areas where the Chinese lived',<sup>26</sup> they do not appear to be sufficiently common to support contentions that they were used as currency, or as trading tokens, within closed localised monetary systems, or that they were regularly hoarded in anticipation of returning home.

It seems much more likely that Chinese coins were imported into New Zealand, the United States, and elsewhere, for use as part of the equipment for playing *fan tan*,<sup>27</sup> or as gambling tokens.<sup>28</sup> According to Culin,<sup>29</sup> Qing dynasty coins were imported into the United States in large quantities expressly for gambling purposes. Only perfect pieces were selected and preferably lots from the same mint. Their wide distribution in Central Otago equates with the prevalence and location of Chinese gambling establishments on the goldfields<sup>30</sup> and associated artefacts;<sup>31</sup> the majority were uncovered in urban Chinese camps, where gambling shops are known to have been located. Although *cash* may have been used as gambling tokens, their principal role seems

to have been that of counters in the game of *fan tan*. Briefly, in the game, players bet on the number of *cash* (or other items such as beans or buttons) left in a pile placed under a metal cover (a cup was sometimes used), after groups of four were carefully counted out by the controller of each *fan tan* table. Although the rules of the game were quite simple, the betting procedures were much more complicated.<sup>32</sup> An observation by Don<sup>33</sup> that 'pence and small silver have supplanted the half-crown and half-sovereign stakes at *fan tan*', suggests that European currency was generally used for stake money. At about the time Don was writing, a half sovereign represented some 5000 *cash*.<sup>34</sup>

*Fig. 4: Examples of cash from the study sites: coins produced during the reigns of Shunzhi, Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Guangxu.*

*1st row, L to R.*

*Obverse sides of cash from Kung, Chi, Tung, Quan, Xuan, Ho, Ning and Yuan mints (reign of Shunzhi, 1644–1661).*

*2nd row, L to R.*

*Reverse sides of cash from above mints (reign of Shunzhi).*

*3rd row, L to R. Three coins on left.*

*Reverse sides of cash from Quan, Yuan, and Yun mints (reign of Yongzheng, 1724–1735).*

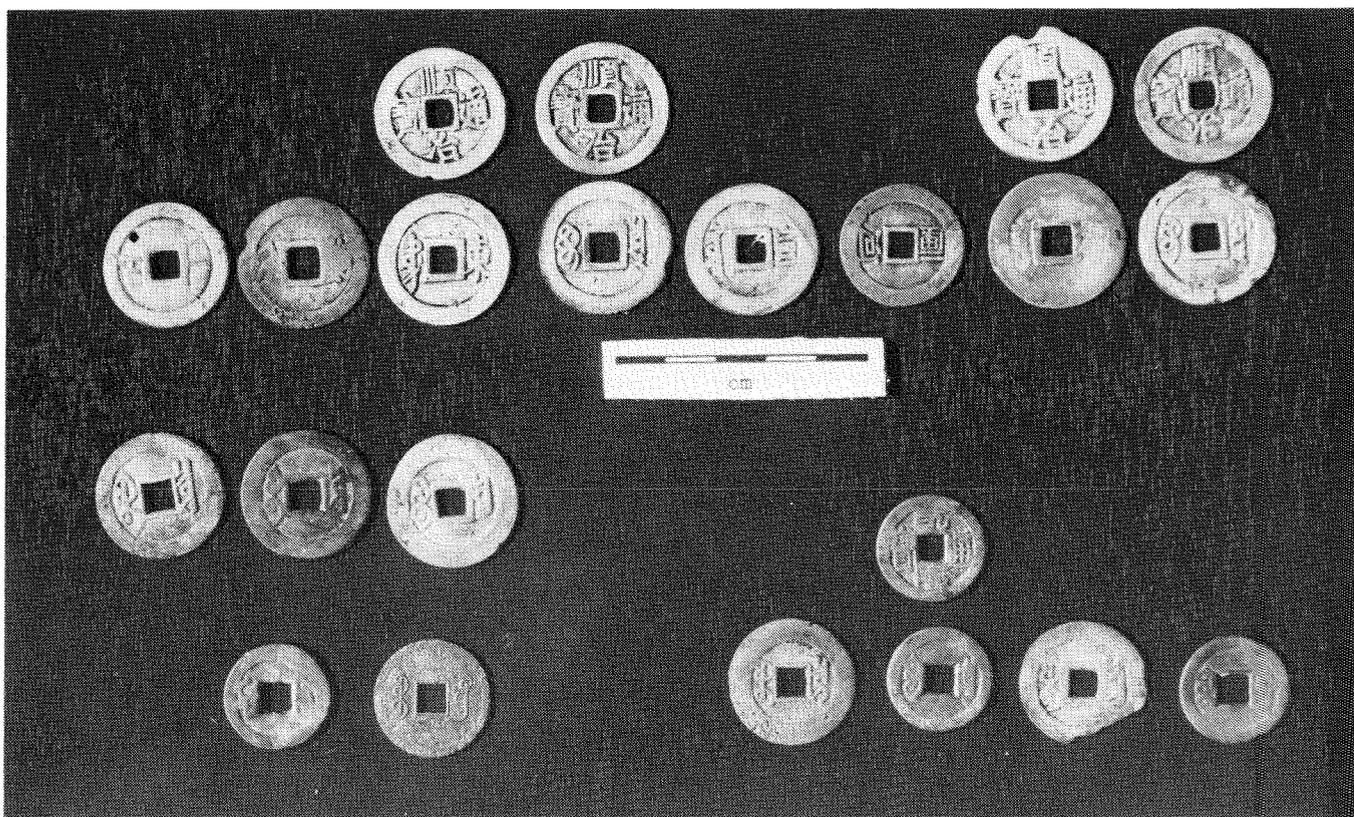
*4th row, L to R. Two coins on left.*

*Reverse sides of single cash from Chih mint (reign of Jiaqing, 1796–1820), and Kuang mint (reign of Guangxu, 1875–1908).*

*4th row, L to R. Four coins on right.*

*Reverse sides of two coins each from Quan and Yuan mints (reign of Qianlong, 1736–1795). The coin in row 3 above the small coin from the Quan mint is the obverse face of a similar coin from the same mint.*

*N.B. The recovery of only one coin from a particular mint is denoted by its absence in either of the paired rows.*



Only 43 non-Chinese coins (all British or New Zealand) were found in the study sites; their distribution being limited to the urban sites and the Caliche and Sheung Fong shelters in the Cromwell Gorge. The numbers and denominations of the European coins are detailed in Table 1. The low numbers, their random distribution, and the fact that the majority were found singly, suggests they were of value and were lost, misplaced, or left when a site was abandoned. The predominance of small-size and denomination coins, which were widely used last century, also suggests their presence is attributable to unintentional loss.

Relatively little can be said about the European coins. Taken collectively, they span the main period of occupation of the sites. They reflect the coinage of New Zealand at that time, and its adoption by the Chinese. British currency was used exclusively until New Zealand began minting its own coins in 1933. British coins remained legal tender until 1967.<sup>35</sup>

Nineteenth-century British coins were found in six huts in both Cromwell's Chinatown and the Arrowtown settlement but only those in Hut 26 at Cromwell's Chinatown are especially notable, because this hut also contained 255 Chinese coins. (As already explained, 210 of them were originally strung together, while another 21 were in a pile on a shelf built into the north wall.) The high incidence of both British and Chinese coins may indicate that *fan tan* was played in the hut.<sup>36</sup> In our opinion, the association of British and Chinese coins in Hut 26, is not proof or support of Kleeb's contention that the presence of mixed European and Chinese coin hoards may indicate that Chinese coins were used as currency.<sup>37</sup> In the situation outlined above, the Chinese coins are more likely to have been used as non-monetary game pieces or counters, rather than money. The European coins may represent lost stake money.

Two points may be made with regard to the distribution of the coins at Arrowtown. The association of British and Chinese coins in Ah Lum's store, is probably attributable to a gambling situation like that described above, and the higher-than-average number of coins might be expected considering the structure was used as a store and gambling venue for at least twenty-five years. Large numbers of dominoes and other Chinese artefacts, probably including *cash*, which were left in the store, are known to have been souvenired over the years prior to Ritchie's excavation. There was also a higher percentage of pre-1900 (especially pre-1880) British coins in the Arrowtown assemblage, compared with that from Cromwell. This may reflect the suspected slightly earlier establishment of the Arrowtown Chinese settlement.

The importation and use of small numbers of Chinese coins as good luck pieces, talismans, or ornaments, cannot be discounted, although there is no documentary evidence to this effect in New Zealand. Farris<sup>38</sup> states they 'also came to be used in fortune-telling' (as in the *I Ching*). In addition, *cash* were used to decorate sewing baskets and possibly other artefacts which were made in China and exported to overseas markets.<sup>39</sup> 'Chinese sewing baskets' were popular among Europeans in North America in the early 1900s,<sup>40</sup> but as there is no evidence that they were brought to New Zealand in large numbers, they would seem improbable sources of the widely dispersed *cash* frequently found in and around Chinese sites on the Central Otago goldfields. Another possible use of *cash*, and an explanation for their being scattered in Chinese sites, appears in a recent New Zealand historical novel. One of the characters, unable to sleep through worry, scatters *cash* on the floor of her room and spends the night searching in the dark for all the coins, to take her mind off her troubles.<sup>41</sup>

## ANTIQUITY AND MINTS OF ORIGIN

As mentioned in the introduction, a notable feature of Chinese coins is their age. The *cash* from Ritchie's study sites (Figs 3 & 4) were minted during the following reigns of the Qing Dynasty: Shunzhi (Shun Chih) 1644–1661; Kangxi (K'ang Hsi) 1662–1723; Yongzheng (Yung Cheng) 1724–1735; Qianlong (Ch'ien Lung) 1736–1795; Jiaqing (Chia Ch'ing) 1796–1820; and Guangxu (Kuang Hsi) 1875–1908. The majority (255 or 83 per cent) were minted during the reign of Kangxi (1662–1723). Their age is attributable to the inherent conservatism of the economic system of Imperial China.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, *cash* did not have an assigned token value. Their value was based principally on the value of the metal they contained. As a consequence, they tended to retain the same value over long periods of time. They were also allowed to circulate indefinitely, so that large numbers struck during the reigns of some emperors, such as Kangxi, stayed in the monetary system for centuries. The continuity and diversity of nineteenth-century Chinese coinage is amply reflected in the 210-coin cache found in Hut 26 at Cromwell's Chinatown. Of the twenty-nine 'reign and mint combinations' represented in the total assemblage (Table 1), only five were not represented in this sample, and only three were 'missing', if the forty-five *cash* found elsewhere in the hut are taken into consideration. Keddie documented two Chinese practices (from information provided by Canadian-Chinese informants) which would also account in part for wide variations in the antiquity of Chinese coins.<sup>43</sup> These were the practices 'of taking coins out of circulation, storing them for long periods of time, and then reintroducing them, as well as the practice . . . of keeping coins of certain reign periods as tokens of good fortune and passing them on to the next generation at the time of marriage'. While their age is of interest, *cash* understandably have little utility for dating nineteenth and twentieth-century archaeological contexts, except as a *terminus post quem*.

The mints of origin are also of interest, because of apparent anomalies in the distribution of the coins produced by each of the Imperial Mints. For example, the majority (173 or 67.8 per cent) of the 255 Kangxi reign *cash* found in Ritchie's study sites, were struck at the Quan and Yuan mints near Beijing,<sup>44</sup> whereas the majority of the Chinese who came to New Zealand came from Guangdong about 1900 km south of Beijing. Only two coins from the Kuang mint in Guangdong are present.<sup>45</sup> Some explanation is offered by the fact that considerably greater numbers of coins were produced by the mints in north China, than by those in the south,<sup>46</sup> but the predominance of northern coins is far greater than mint figures would suggest. The presence in Guangdong of large numbers of coins from northern mints may also be attributable to the mid-seventeenth-century movement of people into southern China. However, given the comparatively small numbers of coins involved, the importation of only a few strings of northern coins for gaming, perhaps by a professional gambler, would seriously distort the normal geographic distribution of the coins.

## CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated earlier, the writers contend that *cash* were not used as trading tokens, or in any form of closed localised monetary systems, within the Chinese mining communities in New Zealand during the last century. For the same reasons, we consider that it is highly improbable that they were used as currency in any overseas Chinese community. As we have argued, the evidence suggests that *cash* were imported from China principally for gambling purposes, and especially as counters in the game of *fan tan*. Long-standing superstitions and 'avoiding bad luck', may have been primary motivations for using *cash* in this fashion.

Other lesser reasons for their presence in overseas Chinese sites include coins which were inadvertently or deliberately imported in the belief that they could be used as currency, *cash* retained for spending on an individual's return to China, *cash* brought out for talismanic or personal reasons, and *cash* used as decorations on imported artefacts.

While the reasons stated above explain the importation and use of *cash* within the goldfield communities, their presence in overseas archaeological sites is attributable to other factors. These include the obsolescence of *cash* following the closure of gambling establishments, the abandonment of low-value possessions (which appears to have frequently included *cash*) when a miner moved and his hut was vacated, the complete abandonment of individual huts and their contents when owners died,<sup>47</sup> and *cash* (together with other possessions) which were lost in the rubble when a structure was accidentally or deliberately burnt down.

The presence of *cash* in an archaeological context does not automatically imply that the site was used for gambling purposes (particularly the playing of *fan tan*), but this possibility should always be considered. Gambling was an important recreational activity in nineteenth-century (and later) overseas Chinese communities, and a feature which often attracted censure from contemporary commentators. Archaeologists should be mindful of associated evidence and artefactual associations which could throw further light on the role of *cash* in overseas Chinese communities. A strong association between the presence of Chinese *cash* and gambling seems to be emerging from archaeological investigations of Chinese settlements in the western United States and southern New Zealand. It is likely that similar patterns will emerge from research in other countries where Chinese settled (including Australia), but thus far there have been few reported comparative studies.

## NOTES

1. Park 1980: 55.
2. Coole 1965.
3. Ritchie 1986: 566-72.
4. Park 1980.
5. Ritchie 1986.
6. Coole 1965.
7. Morse 1966: 83.
8. King 1965: 54-7.
9. Beals 1980.
10. Kleeb 1976.
11. Hattori 1979.
12. Jones et al. 1979.
13. Farris 1979.
14. Farris 1980.
15. Brott 1983.
16. Olsen 1983.
17. Farris 1984.
18. Stapp & Longenecker 1984: 41.
19. Jack 1982: pers. comm.; Courteney 1982: pers. comm.; advertisement in *T.A.* 7/2/1982.
20. Kleeb 1976.
21. Hattori 1979.
22. Farris 1979; Farris 1980.
23. Olsen 1983.
24. Farris 1979: 50; Farris 1980: 28.
25. King 1965: 51-68.
26. Wishart pers. comm.
27. Culin 1891.
28. *ibid.*: 4; Farris 1984: 148.

29. Culin 1891: 5-6.
30. Ritchie 1986: 38-41.
31. *ibid.*: 562-6.
32. See Culin 1891: 1-4; Harvie 1980: 12 for more detailed descriptions of the game.
33. Don 1894: 2.
34. Morse 1966: 83.
35. Hargreaves 1972.
36. Culin 1891; Park 1980.
37. Kleeb 1976: 507.
38. Farris 1984: 147.
39. Keddie 1978: 5.
40. *ibid.*
41. Kang 1985: 48.
42. King 1965; Morse 1966: 122.
43. Keddie 1978: 5.
44. Coole 1965: 66.
45. Cheung 1979.
46. See Bushell 1880: 195-308 for mint output figures.
47. Ritchie 1986: 50.

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