CHINESE JADES

The role of jade in ancient China: an introduction to a Special Exhibition at the University Museum

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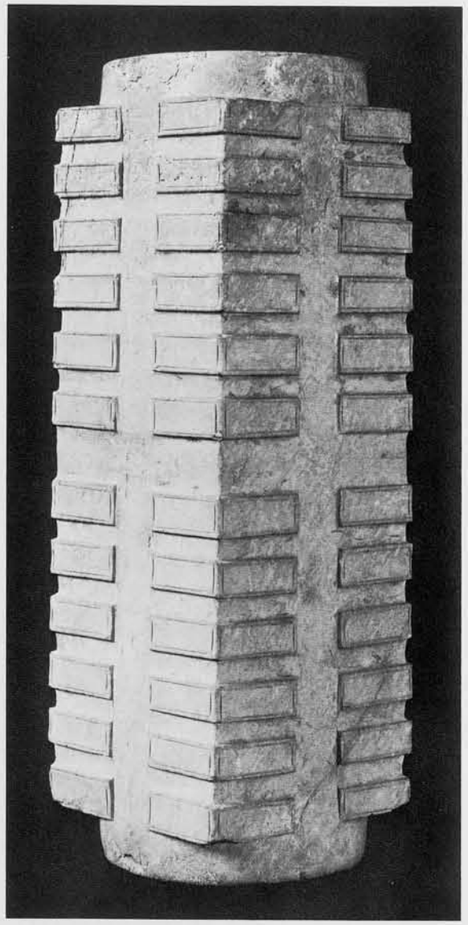
For some four thousand years, the Chinese have considered jade to be a unique substance and have held it in higher esteem than gold or jewels.

During the first two millennia of Chinese culture, jade was thought to be of supernatural origin, an emanation of streams and mountains, something created by the forces of nature, born within the earth and endowed with transcendental qualities.

The first jade objects of probable ritual use appear in the late Neolithic, roughly 2,000 B.C. or a bit earlier. In Shang and Chou, the repertoire of ceremonial implements expands and changes, and the quality of craftsmanship for this intractable material is unsurpassed.

The early Chinese Classics, cryptic in style and mostly written somewhat after the fact, give us certain names of the jade insignia and some description of their usage and the rites. Specific jades were necessary for the emperor to pay homage to Heaven and Earth, from whom he derived his mandate to rule. By using other jades like a seal of office, he enfeoffed his feudal nobles; with still others he could bribe the unfriendly, reward faithful service, give royal passports and military orders.

Toward the end of the Chou period, perhaps by 500 B.C., jade takes on a more worldly use and the religious significance begins to diminish. Although the Classics tell us that the musical chime of the courtier's jade girdle pendants is meant to remind him of virtue and thereby banish unworthy thoughts, the wearer must also have taken a purely aesthetic delight in the charm and intricate carving of those small objects, and also of his jade belt hook, the inlay on his dagger or scabbard or knife handle.



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Ts'ung. Late Chou. Described as a tube within a cube and considered to be a symbol of the earth. Short and plain surfaced ones have been found in both Shang and Late Chou tombs, but none of this type have been excavated. The supposition is that they were important state ceremonial objects and not a personal possession. Cream-colored jade, bored from both ends, the perforations meeting in a central ridge. H. 11-5/7". The University Museum.

2
Pi. Probably Neolithic period. A slightly irregular disk with the center perforation bored at a slight angle. Dull yellow, with greenish encrustations. Similar to those found with neolithic pottery in Kansu graves. Diam. 11-3/16". The University Museum.

But along with its ornamental use, jade also retained its aura of a magic substance. Powdered and ingested it was thought to combat illness and promote longevity. A corpse whose orifices were stopped with jade was not supposed to decay.

Between the 3rd and 7th centuries A.D., or from the end of the Han to T'ang, the use of jade seems to be sharply reduced. This can probably be attributed to the acceptance of Buddhism in which jade had no ritual role, and also to curtailed imports of the raw material during a long period of political and economic instability. The relatively few objects that can be dated within these centuries are mainly cups, fantastic animals and ornaments.

Certainly, jade did not then, or at any time in the future, lose its special appeal. It continued to intrigue the Chinese consciousness as a material which appears to have a soft, waxy glow and yet is of obstinate hardness, requiring extraordinary labor and patience to produce an object in which the mineral and the design, or nature and art are blended. Also, some of the ancient ancestral reverence for the material lingers; jade is the only proper medium for gifts of great homage, or emblems of merit, or for the Seals of State used until the last Emperor of China. And the ordinary citizen prizes his jade ornaments and jewelry, and even the poorest usually manages to have an amulet.

Both the visual beauty of jade and the spiritual quality of virtue it was once believed to possess are reflected in the language. *Yü li,* standing like jade, i.e. pure, chaste, handsome, would probably be familiar to the ancestors of Western culture as *kalos kai agathos,* good and beautiful. Or, a man whom we describe as having a heart of gold, would have a jade heart in China. Poetry's golden boys and girls are Chinese beautiful, talented youths, and they may become adults with lofty and pure aims, said to have bones of jade.

The Western term, "jade" comes from the French, through the Spanish "piedra de ijada," stone of the loins, referring to the dark green jadeite amulets which the Conquistadores reported the Mexicans used as a treatment for kidney disease. Sir Walter Raleigh is supposed to have brought the mineral to European attention, and alluded to its presumed medical value by calling it nephrite, derived of course from *nephriticus* or *nephros* (kidney).

The Chinese term for jade is *yü* which actually refers to any very hard and finely grained stone which will take a high polish, such as agate, quartz, serpentine, although in later times the Chinese referred to these as "false jade" as opposed to "true jade." In the West, only two minerals, nephrite and jadeite, are considered jade. Nephrite is a silicate of calcium and magnesium with a fibrous structure; jadeite is a silicate of sodium and aluminium, granular in composition.

Neither nephrite nor jadeite is found in China proper. Nephrite, the mineral worked since the prehistoric age, came from the rivers and mountains of Turkestan and Siberia. The Yüeh-chih tribe seem to be the intermediaries who brought it to China in the form of river pebbles and boulders, or blocks crudely mined from mountain veins. Jadeite was not used in China until the 18th century when it was imported from Burma through Yunnan.

Both minerals are found in an almost infinite range of colors with green, white, black, grays and browns predominating. Jadeite is often more vivid and glassy in appearance, but the only reliable way to differentiate between the two minerals is by X-ray diffraction.

Both are extremely hard substances. Nephrite is 6 to 6.5, and jadeite is 6.5 to 7 on the Mohs scale of hardness (quartz is 7). Obviously they can not be worked by metal tools, but only by the few minerals harder than themselves, and, in essence, the technique consists of patient cutting, scraping and rubbing with the aid of an abrasive. At first, thin laminae of sandstone or slate with quartz sand must have been used to saw the jade. Finer cutting was made possible somewhat later by a harder abrasive of emery sand or crushed garnets held in grease instead of water. Tubular drills, originally of bamboo, were used to make the perforations. Hansford, who has written extensively on the subject of jade technique, feels that a rotary disk knife was known at least by the Late Chou period, but it may have been used earlier, as Cheng Te K'un reports an Anyang jade which appears to show the marks of a circular saw.

In the Neolithic period, jade was the material par excellence for implements used for grinding or for sharp edged tools, or for a special object which may have some cult significance. However, it was never a common material and excavated specimens are not numerous. No doubt, its rarity combined with its qualities of color, lustrous surface, translucence and sonority helped create the ritual and metaphysical significance it soon acquired.

In A.D. 100 Hsü Shên, in his dictionary, defined jade as ". . . the fairest of stones. It is endowed with five virtues. Charity is typified by its luster, bright yet warm; rectitude by its translucency, revealing the color and markings within (does not conceal faults); wisdom by the purity and penetrating quality of its note when the stone is struck; courage in that it can be broken but can not be bent; equity in that it has sharp edges which injure none."

This is drawn from the answer Confucius gave when he was asked why jade was esteemed. Confucius also said that jade was a white rainbow . . . a thing of heaven, and it was also of earth because it emanated from mountains and streams, and it was of the way of virtue because everyone honored it.

For many centuries before and after Confucius (551-479 B.C.), jade was considered to be of supernatural origin, and to contain the essence of life, virtue, and eternity. It was believed necessary for the rulers to use certain emblems made of it in order to communicate with the heavenly powers, and the possession of these jade objects invested the owner with rank and authority.

A great body of Chinese literature has been written about jade, and there are many references to it in the earliest classics, the *Chou Li, I Li, Li Chi, Shih Ching, Shu Ching.*

These works also contain the names of the ceremonial jade emblems and notes on their usage, but unfortunately, the descriptions of the objects were made by later commentators in the Han period, after the rites had changed, or in some cases disappeared.

During the period of Buddhist fervor, there was little interest in the archaic rites or the jade insignia, but as Buddhism lost its appeal for the intellectual class, Sung scholars turned back to study Confucius and the ancient history, and to investigate the old rituals. These diligent gentlemen reviewed the texts, and set up a classification of bronzes and jades, illustrating their arguments with drawings based on the imaginative Han descriptions; some of the fanciful illustrations continued to be used until the present century.

Although Chinese porcelain had long interested Western collectors, the ancient bronze vessels and jades were not to Victorian taste and were not seriously studied until the early part of this century. When Western scholars did turn their attention to these artifacts they were faced with a large number of objects which were the products of tomb robbery, and for which the provenance was unknown, or might have been concealed or falsified to protect the source. For the first half of this century there was only one semi-scientific excavation in China to provide any reliable archaeological evidence; this was conducted at Anyang, the historic capital of the Shang dynasty, by the Academia Sinica from 1928 to 1938.

In spite of the obstacles, scholars like Yetts, Pelliot and Salmony established a feasible chronology for jades by comparing their design motifs with the decoration on a number of dated and inscribed bronze vessels. The method seemed to work, but when the Chinese began to excavate in the 1950's and to publish the results, there was much speculation on how the old dating system would be affected. Spectacular revelations were predicted.

The excavations are an on-going process, and nearly every issue of the Chinese archaeological publications reports finds of jade. Perhaps the most remarkable result is how well the findings support the earlier theories. They also expand the repertoire of shape and design, create a few new puzzles, and explain at least one long-standing mystery.

The texts have occasional references to jade cases/boxes/covers associated with the corpse, but until the grave of Prince Liu Shêng and his wife was opened, no one fully realized that the term might allude to a complete suit of jade placques fitted to the body.

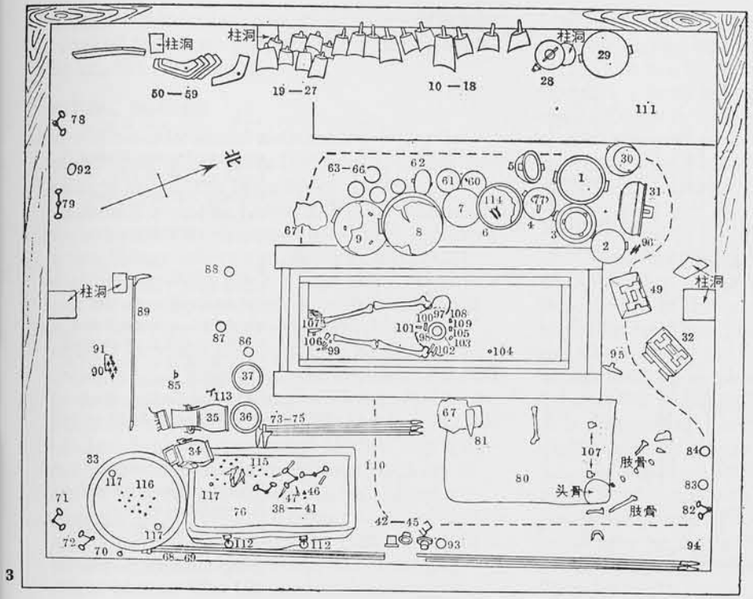
As a matter of fact, it was probably a lack of imagination on the part of the researchers that prolonged the mystery because one of the first Western scholars, J. J. M. de Groot, in his *Religious Systems of China* published in 1894, translates a description of the jade boxes as looking like coats of mail. And another text (Han chiu yi), given by Bielenstein in *Bulletin Museum Far Eastern Art (BMFEA)* #48, says very clearly, "One makes a tunic from jades resembling the appearance of armour. In joining them, one uses threads of real gold. From the waist down one uses jade as slips, 1 ch'ih long and 2½ tsun wide. They are plates and reach down to the feet."

Jade shrouds were the prerogative of royalty and imperial tombs were always the target for looters. Han histories report several instances such as the pillaging of the royal graves of Ch'ang-an in A.D. 26, or the robbery of Emperor Wu's and Emperor Wen Hsüan's tombs. After the gold and obvious valuables had been removed, the grave might be forgotten for centuries, and when re-found would probably contain little but some pottery and a shapeless mass of jade placques. Many of these small pieces have found their way into Western collections and, with no clue to their use except the perforations at each corner, have been given the label "appliqué," one of those handy terms, like "finial," in every curator's vocabulary.

The object in Figure 6 was always called a shoe sole by its Philadelphia owner, merely because it looked like one, but without the slightest belief that it actually did come from a jade boot.

The names of the important jade ceremonial objects as given in the classic texts are: the *kuei,* an oblong flat blade, the *ts'ung,* a tube within a cube, the *chang,* which is a half *kuei,* the *pi,* a ring with an open center, a *huang,* a half *pi,* and the *hu* described as being in the design of a tiger.

Also of a ritualistic nature are the jade weapons: axes, daggers, knives, spearheads,



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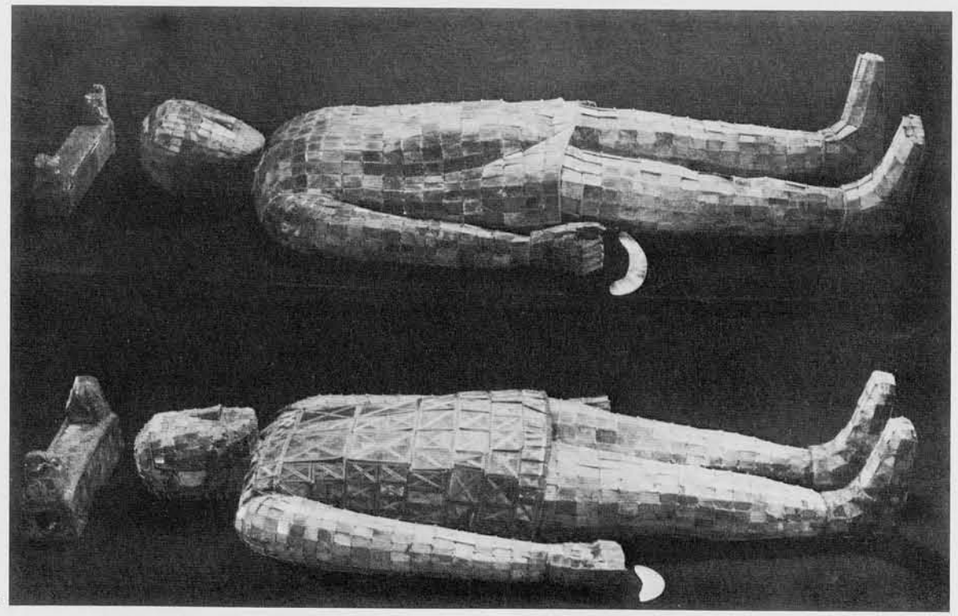
DATES

Neolithic	ca 5,000 - 2nd millennia B.C.
Shang	ca 1557 - 1050 B.C.
(Anyang, chief capital)	ca 1301 - 1050 B.C.
Chou	ca 1049 - 256 B.C.
Early Western Chou (Middle Chou, a style period, not a political division)	ca 1049 - 771 B.C. 800 - 650 B.C.
Late Eastern Chou (Capital moved from Shensi, near Sian, to Loyang)	770 - 256 B.C.
Spring and Summer Annals Period	772 - 481 B.C.
Warring States (Periods of political chaos)	480 - 221 B.C.
Ch'in	221 - 206 B.C.
Han	206 B.C. - A.D. 220
Three Kingdoms, Six Dynasties	A.D. 221 - 581
Sui	A.D. 581 - 618
T'ang	A.D. 618 - 906
Five Dynasties	A.D. 907 - 960
Sung	A.D. 960 - 1279
Southern Sung	A.D. 1127 - 1279
Yüan	A.D. 1260 - 1368
Ming	A.D. 1368 - 1644
Ch'ing	A.D. 1644 - 1912
K'ang-hsi	A.D. 1662 - 1722
Ch'ien-lung	A.D. 1736 - 1796

3
Plan of the Eastern Chou tomb #269 at Fen-shui-ling, in Ch'ang-chih, Shansi Province. The jades are numbered 97 through 102, placed around the body. From *Kaogu Xuebo* 1974 #2.

4
Jade burial suits of Prince Liu Shêng and his wife, Princess Tou Wan. The early Han history reports Liu Shêng as saying his brother, the King of Chao, worked like a clerk; a real king should listen to music and delight himself with beautiful sights and sounds. His brother answered that Liu Shêng spent his days in sensual gratification instead of helping the Son of Heaven. Liu Shêng died in 113 B. C., his wife about 104 B.C. They were buried with 2800 objects, many of them precious and rare. Photo *Wen-wu* 1972 #1, Pl. 2.



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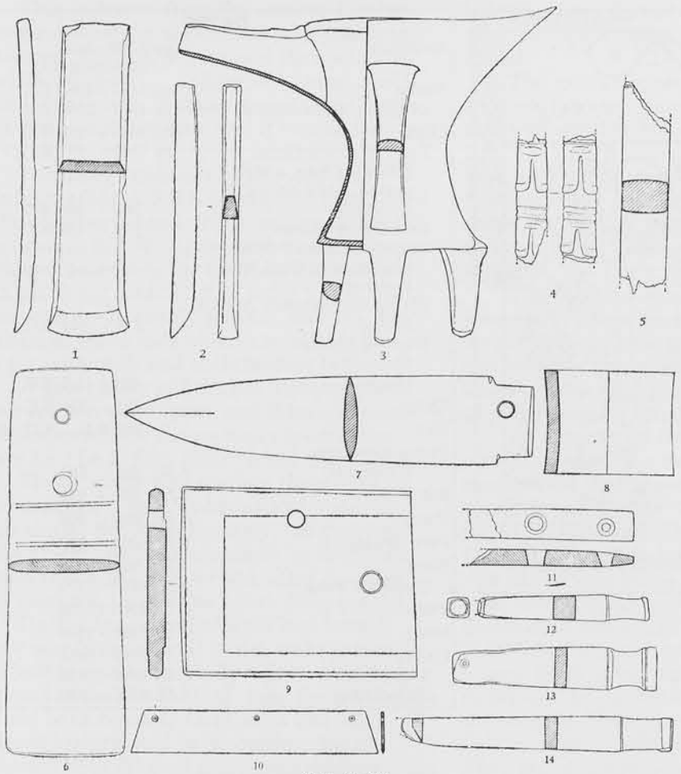

图四 钺、玉器

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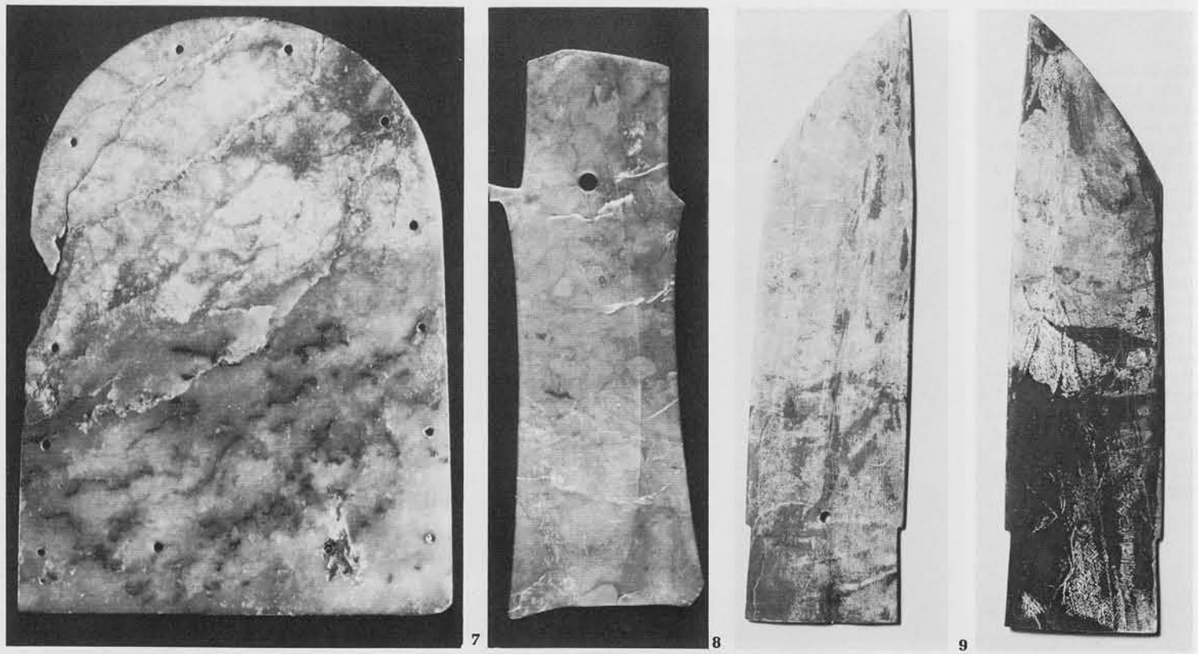
5
Objects from a Shang tomb at Erh-li-t'ou, Honan. All are jades except Nos. 1, 2, 3. From *Kaogu* 1975 #5.

6
Shoe sole. Han. Considered to be an object of unknown use until recent excavations identified it as part of a jade burial suit. H. 7". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.

7
Scepter: kuei. Early Western Chou Period. An emblem of rank, a symbol of enfeoffment. Very thin, polished grey green nephrite. L. 9⅜". The University Museum.

8, 9
Knife. Shang. Finely made, very thin ritual insignia. Has traces of red pigment and shows imprint of textile on which it was laid in the grave. L. 9-7/16". The University Museum.



either in miniature form or so thin and finely worked that their purpose is obviously symbolic, not functional.

RITUAL BLADES

The ceremonial jade most frequently mentioned in the texts is the *kuei*, called an oblong tablet, the insignia of the ruler. A comment adds the Emperor's jade tablet has no ornament on its upper part; that there are some things where simplicity is a mark of distinction. With such a vague definition it is not surprising that there is no general agreement among scholars as to which of the oblong or blade shaped forms should be called a *kuei*. Salmony, who believed that the prototypes of jade ritual emblems were neolithic tools, classifies the oblong forms as hoe blades, flat axes, trapezoid blades, and scepter shaped blades. Lohr defines the *kuei* as chisel shaped and differentiates it from a ceremonial blade, *hu*, a broad blade, *chang*, and axe heads, *yueh*. Jenyns prefers to call such pieces halberds, scepters, or simply ritual blades. The Chinese archaeologists seem to designate them all as *kuei*, which Matthews' Chinese dictionary says is a jade baton conferred upon feudal princes by the emperor, and that it varied in shape with the rank.

At least, it is clear that the *kuei* is an insignia of the ruler, one of the symbols of his right to rule. The Emperor also uses the *kuei* to tender homage to the East, and in a sacrificial ceremony.

When an envoy is sworn in for an official mission he is given a *kuei* which is offered to him on a plank covered with skin and attached by ribbons. He must present himself at the foreign court or outpost with this jade tablet, evidently serving as his credentials, in his hand.

Such use of an oblong wand or tablet as a sign of rank persists through the Han dynasty. On countless tomb reliefs or monuments of the period one sees officials with this badge tucked into their belts or held formally before them with both hands. However, as no jade *kuei* are found in Han tombs, these batons are probably *hu*, long narrow wands of wood or other perishable material which had become an insignia for the proliferated bureaucracy.

The type with an elongated, pointed blade and a tang, usually called a *ko* dagger, may have been made exclusively for burial. They are found in Shang tombs, and in many of the Middle Chou period tombs of the Kuo cemetery were placed on the cover of the coffin. The dagger also exists in miniature, usually pierced for suspension as an amulet, perhaps a symbol of the courtier's obligation to defend the ruler.

The forms of other jade ceremonial blades are derived from utilitarian tools such as the hoe, axe and scraper. One knife or scraper in the University Museum's collection has a worn groove from a perforation to the end edge indicating it had been fastened to a handle and probably long used. Most, however, are obviously symbolic, and many exist in miniature.

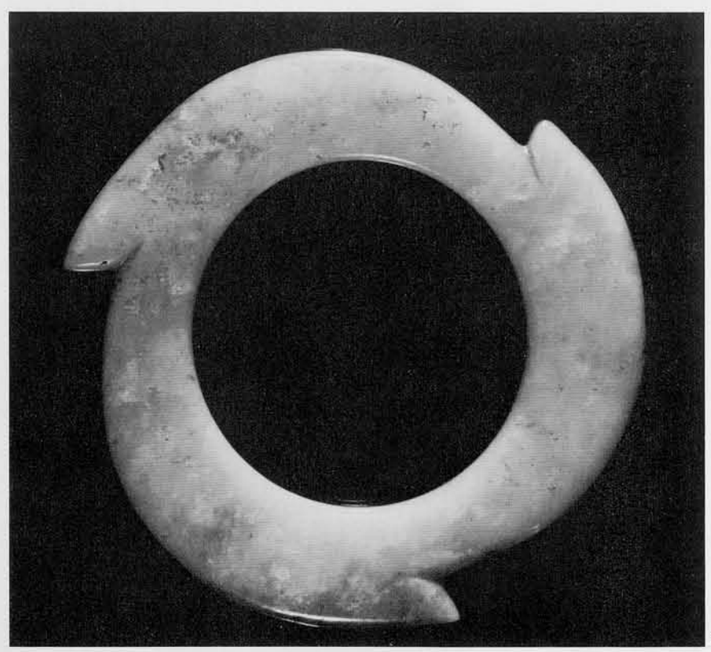
TS'UNG

The *ts'ung* is one of the more mysterious of the early ritual jades. There is no explicit description in the texts; the Chou Li merely says that with the yellow *ts'ung* the Emperor pays homage to the Earth, that it is a symbol of authority. The identification of the cubed tube as the *ts'ung* is based on a 2nd century A.D. commentary remarking that the *ts'ung* is eight cornered (four on each end of the tube).

Ts'ung seem to range from a height of around two inches to more than a foot. In the Neolithic graves of Kansu, Andersson found what may be a primitive form, a circle with a roughly squared outside rim. Low *ts'ung* have been found in Shang graves: Tomb 1, Liu-ch'eng-ch'iao, Changsha has an example, also Yi-tu, Su-p'u-t'un, Shantung.

On the other hand, none of the tall *ts'ung* have been reported from Chinese excavations. A number of these, similar in material and execution to the low, excavated examples, are in collections around the world. It is believed that they were important and restricted ceremonial objects and not normally buried.

10
Notched disk. Shang. Usually dated in the Western Chou period, identical pieces have been reported from a Lungshan site at Shih mao, Shensi, with pottery similar to that from the Chi chia culture, Kansu, C-14 dated 1725 ±95 and 1695 ± 95 B.C. (*Kaogu* 1977 #3). Diam. 4⅞". The University Museum.



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11, 12
Screen for scholar's desk. Ch'ien Lung. Thin, translucent, green clouded with lavender, jade screen. The obverse (Fig. 12) shows the Eight Immortals paying homage to Shao Lao, god of Longevity. The reverse is a scene of phoenix, peony and rocks. The poem reads, "On top of tall pine trees/ layer upon layer are hanging shadows, although we are unable to see the Plum River flowing/ we indeed enjoy being together with a group of immortals." Signed with the Imperial Autograph seal of Ch'ien Lung. H. 9¾". This screen and the jade figures, Nos. 21 and 22 are a gift from Eldridge R. Johnson to the University Museum as part of the George Byron Gordon Memorial Collection.

RING DISKS

There are three types of ring disks explained in the Erh Ya dictionary as follows: "If the jade substance is double the width of the perforation it is called a *pi*, if the perforation is double the width of the jade it is a *yuan*, and if the perforation and jade are equal it is a *huan*." Most of the annular jade objects fit roughly within these categories, and of the three types, the *pi* is the most important.

Hentze thought the prototype was a mace, and Salmony believed it was a throwing disk, but neither of those types can be clearly identified in the Neolithic period excavations. The *Li Chi* says the disk form is an emblem of circular movement and perseverance in virtue, and if such forms must evolve from the tools of an agricultural people, the stone spinning whorls frequently found in early graves would seem likely candidates.

Although *pi*-form disks are not reported in recently excavated prehistoric graves, Andersson found three in his 1923 investigation of the Kansu (Pan Shan, Ma Ch'ang) tombs, one of them lying on the chest of the skeleton. They remain a rare object throughout the Shang period, and we can not be at all sure of their meaning at that time. The *pi* may be generally accepted as the symbol of heaven, but no text earlier than a commentary on the 4th century B.C. *Chou Li* specifically applies that connotation, and too many other uses are cited to accept this as the only symbolism.

The disk was used to pay homage to heaven, to pray to the spirits of hills and rivers, was laid in the mouth of a dead prince, and was buried under the back of a corpse. Perhaps its most important role was as a symbol of enfeoffment; princes of the Fourth and Fifth ranks were granted jade *pi* as an official token. In the Chou wars between feudal states the surrender of a prince was marked by the handing over of this emblem to the victor. The *Tso Chuan* tells of such a ceremony in which the conquered prince came to surrender, "his arms bound behind him, his *pi* in his mouth, and followed by officers pulling a coffin. The king loosed his bonds, received the *pi*, and burned the coffin." Ssū-ma Chien, the famous historian, recounts a similar story.

Whatever the *pi* disk meant, it was placed in the grave near or under the body. In a late Shang royal tomb at Wu Kuan Ts'un, near Anyang, it was found with a jade knife between the coffin and the chamber wall. In a Western Chou tomb at Hsiang hsien, Honan, it was beside the body. In two late Chou tombs, one at Ch'ang-sha the other at Ch'ang-chih, Shansi, it was under the body. In. Ch'ang-sha tomb #406, pairs of disks flanked the head and the knees, a fifth *pi* was in front of the skull, and a sixth between the inner and second coffins. Other pairs are known in Late Chou, and may symbolize the sun and moon. Chuang-tzu, an official and a Taoist who died around 300 B.C., said that heaven and earth would be his inner and outer coffins, the sun and moon his twin *pi* disks, the stars and planets his beads, and therefore all the articles required for his burial were at hand.

The earliest *pi*, Neolithic and Shang, is unornamented, its inner perforation bored from both sides and leaving a little ridge in the middle; sometimes the aperture is a bit slanted. The technique improves throughout the Chou period, and by the fifth or fourth century B.C. the surface is often carved with small raised dots. In a few utterly splendid examples, certainly the insignia of royalty, the disk may be surmounted by beautifully carved dragons whose sinuous forms curve around the outside rim.

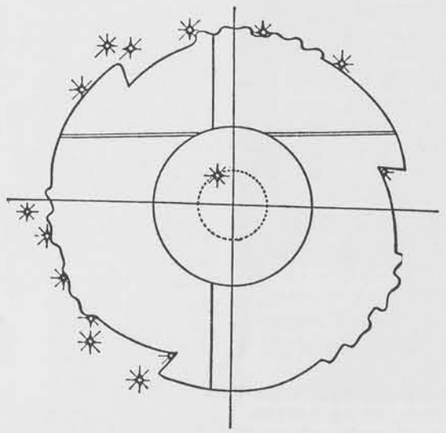
In the Han painting from the Ma Wang Tui grave of the embalmed dowager, these fluid dragons, inhabitants of Chinese clouds, are intertwined through a *pi* disk to which a chime is tied with ribbons. The old woman, leaning on her cane, stands on heaven's platform directly above the *pi*.

Not much in the texts helps us to explain the jade rings, *yuan* or *huan*, which are the most common jade objects found in the tombs. We are told that rings were sacrificed to the Spirit of the Yellow River, and to the fertility of the soil. Once, in a series of lean years such a ceremony completely exhausted the supply of jade rings.

In general, the smaller rings and disks are not important ritual objects, but are prized as tokens and gifts. They may often have been used in the fashion of a medal awarded for service or loyalty. The *Li Chi* says that jade disks were placed on rolls of silk as a homage rendered to virtue. The silk, itself, was a favorite royal gift or reward to worthy subjects. The Empress Wu is said to have sent for Shen Pei, a Confucian teacher, with presents of silk and jade circlets.

From the numerous references to jade rings it is apparent that there was considerable two-way traffic in them, between friends, from ruler to subject, and from subject to ruler. In the reign of Kao-tsu, it was ordained that nobles must come to the court and present offerings of furs, leather and jade circlets at the dawn of the New Year.

An unusual form of the jade ring is the object called *hsüan chi*, a perforated disk with a serrated rim of grouped notches. The *Shu Ching* says it is an instrument for observing the constellations and that it can be rotated. A Han commentator adds, "Turn the *chi*, look through the *heng* (a tube) to know the planets



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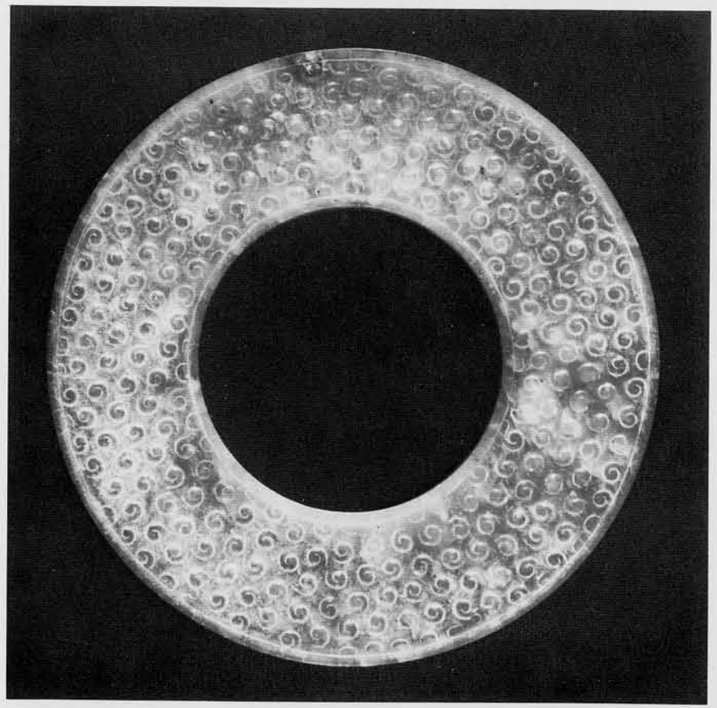
Drawing of the hsüan chi, or astronomical disk. Stars in Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Cepheus and Draco are on the outer perimeter. Ursa Minor, a star that revolves around the pole, is on the inner perimeter of the sighting tube. From W. Willetts, *Chinese Art*, New York, 1958, Fig. 12.

14
Ring disk: huan. Late Eastern Chou. Typical example in clear greenish white jade with "sprouting grain" pattern. Diam. 5⅛". The University Museum.



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and the celestial houses."

Certainly, Chinese interest in astronomy goes back, through legend, to an age before the historic dynasties. The first chapter of the *Shu Ching* tells of the mythical Emperor, Yao, who commissioned two astronomers, Hsi and Ho, to calculate the passage of the sun, moon and stars, establish the solstice, publish a calendar, etc. Other references in the *Chou Li* show the importance of astronomy in the earlier dynasties. Needham says that the Chinese, apart from the Babylonians, "were the most persistent and accurate observers of celestial phenomena anywhere in the world before the Arabs."

In graves from Shang to Han there are several examples of a small jade ring with a narrow slit from the rim to the central perforation. Excavations show this type used in two different ways. In Ku Wei Ts'un, near Hui Hsien, a late Chou grave yielded a large and handsome belthook inlaid with three jade slit rings. Glass beads were set into the centers of the rings, and a gilt flange covered the slit.

In the Kuo State cemetery, 243 tombs of Western Chou and Middle Chou date were excavated. In some of the graves, two slit rings were found, one on each side of the skull near the ears, and are, presumably, earrings. There are representations in relief or full round of human or deity heads wearing large, circular earrings. Similar slit disks of bronze or gold, of pre-history to early A.D. date are found throughout Southeast Asia.

BURIAL JADES

Jade was supposed to have the magical property of preserving the body from decay. It is difficult to determine when this belief began but it is such a part of Taoist lore that it was probably not widespread before that cult became popular in the Han dynasty. The Taoist philosophers taught that jade when swallowed under certain physical and ritual conditions could affect the body so as to produce immortality. If this result was not easily evident to the population, the number of burial jades would suggest that many of them did support the theory that the corpse could be preserved from disintegration by blocking the passages of the body with jade.

No doubt there was considerable envy of the most royal nobles who had the privilege of being completely encased in jade shrouds. One would not have believed that Prince Liu Shêng would become dust within his jade suit, and that the dowager of Ma Wang Tui would be perfectly preserved without benefit of jade.

The most common jade burial amulet and perhaps the earliest is one placed in the mouth. The texts do not mention the form except for one reference to the *pi*, which

would seem awkward in this usage considering its size and shape. Whatever the early shape of the mouth amulet, it must have been the most important of the burial jades since it was often a royal gift, and was supposed to be inserted into the mouth by one of the same rank as the deceased.

It is not easy to tell from the excavation reports what, if anything, was in the mouth; many of the skeletons are fragmentary, many of the graves have been disturbed. However, a jade in the form of a cicada has always been thought to be the mouth jade, and one was found near that position in a Han grave excavated at Loyang.

The cicada is probably the symbol of resurrection because it reappears from the earth after a long subterranean existence. They are generally of a stylized and rather mechanically rendered form, and usually have holes for suspension, or for tying around the head.

Another burial jade is a pig or boar of stylized and blocky form. These come in pairs, either with holes for sewing to the sleeve, or as solid forms to be held in the hands, as they were found in an Eastern Han tomb at Hsu-chou, Kiangsu.

Other burial jades are eye covers, shaped to fit over the eyesockets, and a variety of tubes and plugs.

PENDANTS, AMULETS

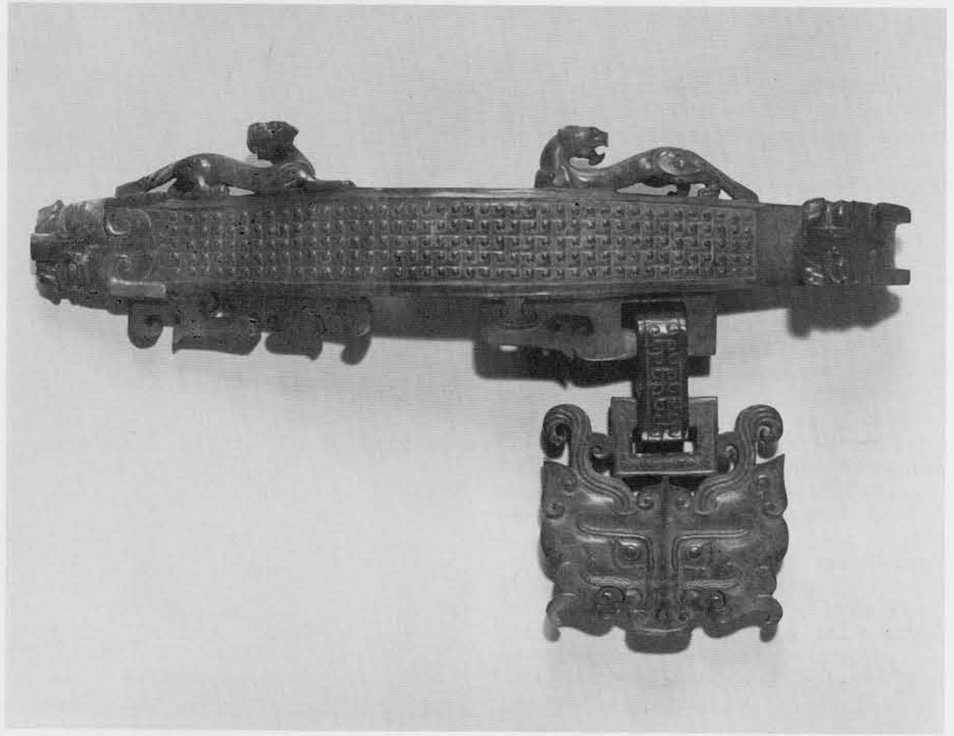
We are often told in the texts that the courtiers wore girdle ornaments of jade suspended on chains, and when they walked, the clear notes made by the jades striking together would remind them of virtue. Other pendants hung from the ceremonial headgear; some objects were worn as amulets, others sewn to the bonnet as a sign of rank, and some were used in the coiffeur.

The *Chou Li* says the Emperor had hairpins and earrings of jade. When he made an offering to his ancestors he wore a bonnet with six jade pendants in front and six in back. And one of the Odes describes the wife of a prince as wearing two pins and six pieces of jade on her head.

Often these small jades, frequently in the form of birds, fish, or animals, were gifts between friends, sometimes good luck tokens, or puns, such as deer (*lu*) meaning prosperity (*lu*). Among the 1300 jade and hard stone objects found recently in a Western Chou tomb at Ju-chia-chuang in Shensi were a variety of small carvings including representations of deer, bull or buffalo, tiger, rabbit, fish, cicada, silkworm, etc.

The tiger is one of the most important of the animal motifs, and one of the oldest as it is found in early or pre-Shang graves (and its bones are found in the Shang layer at Anyang). In Shang and Western Chou it is

15
Belt hook. Late Chou. An intricate belt hook with a movable pendant. Carved from one piece of jade. The central bar has a tiger head on each end; two tigers in the round crouch on the upper edge; the hanging pendant is a tiger mask. Length 7½". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.



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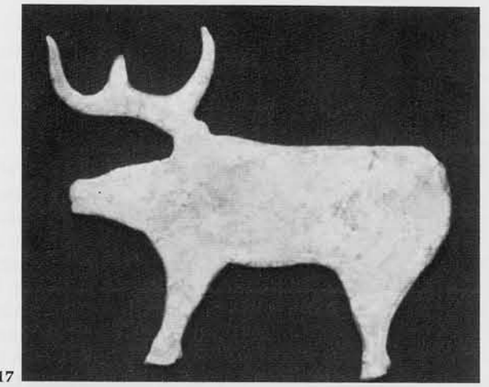
16
Drawing of jades from tomb #5 at Yin-hsü in Anyang. Shang period. The tomb was that of Fu-Hao, consort of Emperor Wu-ting. She was buried with sixteen human sacrifices, six dogs, 1500 objects of which 500 were jade. From *Kaogu Xuebao* 1977 #2.

17
Deer. Early Chou. Among the 1300 jade or stone objects in a Western Chou tomb at Ju-chia-chuang, Shensi Province were representations of deer, cow, silkworm, rabbit, tiger, fish, cicada and buffalo. Length 3". From *Wen Wu* 1976 #4. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.

18
Pendant or appliqué. Middle Chou. Carved and incised design of two dragons. L. 2½". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.

19
Pendant. Shang. A one-legged tiger-like animal with capped horns. L. 2⅜". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.

20
Bird. Shang–Early Chou. A well-feathered bird, the carving somewhat more fluid than a similar one from a royal tomb at Hsiao-t'un. H. 2½". (*Kaogu* 1977 #3.) Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bull.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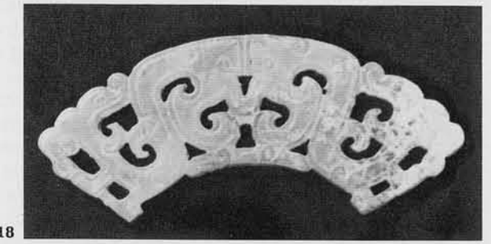
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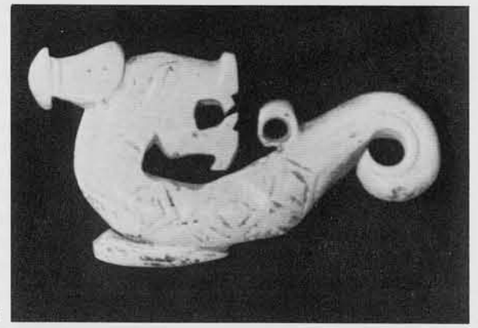
19


20

usually a silhouette pendant with details or a complicated design incised on both sides. A few full round ones exist, and also a few front view heads, which gives support to the theory of Salmony and others that the *t'ao-t'ieh* or monster mask found on many bronzes is derived from this particular feline.

Nothing from the recent excavations helps us identify the ritual jade, *hu*, described as being in the form of a tiger. The pendants are too small and varied for consideration as important ritual objects, and there are no significantly larger models. If it is a late Han invention, it is strange that it does not occur in Prince Liu Shêng's tomb which was equipped with the other symbols.

The bird is as early a motif as the tiger, and more frequently depicted. In Shang, it is often a profile silhouette of a plumed and crested bird with a hooked beak. Such birds of prey, along with the owl, are protective spirits for they destroy the small animals who harm the crops.

The handsome marble owl from Anyang and the bronze vessels in the form of owls are witness that this bird was an honored creature in Shang and Early Chou. In later periods, it goes out of favor and becomes a bird of inauspicious and unfilial omen who kills its own young.

Birds may be represented in a very stylized form, overlaid with pattern and parts of other creatures, or they may be simplified and natural. Both types occur in a royal tomb at Hsiao-t'un, one a fantastic, hooked-beak bird with an elaborate crest, and the other a simple, realistic, cormorant.

In view of the wide use of birds as a motif in early Chinese art, it is curious there are so few references to them in the texts. Birds, of course, are the only creatures able to soar into the sky and thus be considered as messengers to the spirits and the living link between heaven and earth.

And as birds sing as well as fly, one might note that in the *Ode*, II,II,5, the Emperor says that birds sing in harmony and men should cultivate harmonious friendship between themselves.

Another favorite form for pendants is the fish. The fish was used fresh or dried as a ceremonial sacrifice and was a symbol of fertility and abundant harvest. As with animals and birds, the fish may be depicted with naturalism or may be merely a slim, slightly tapered rod with only an eye and a gill mark to identify it.

The fantastic or composite animal also plays a large part in the jade repertory, and in this field the dragon rules. He is the *k'uei* dragon who lives in the clouds and is connected with rain. In Shang, he is usually depicted in profile with a gaping mouth, one leg showing under his jaw. He may have

different types of horns, or wings, or feathers. He is quite stubby at first, gradually becoming more sinuous, but is never confused with a snake. The dragon changes but never disappears, and when he grows whiskers and a beard and shows his three to five claws on porcelain vessels or mandarin squares, he becomes for Westerners the most familiar symbol in Chinese art.

Another fantastic animal is the one-footed, tiger-like creature often with capped or bottle horns and an upward coiled tail. Still another had a rolled snout and a pointed semicircular body. This shape has always been called a knot-picker, but recent excavations show that they come in pairs and are somehow inserted in the tip of the bow.

Human figures are rare in Shang and Western Chou. Some small ones of jade and larger ones of marble have been found in Shang tombs, a few others in Western Chou, including a charming little bronze acrobat from a tomb at Ju-chia-chuang, Shensi.

Many of the figures are kneeling, some are naked and may represent attendants or slaves. With less than a handful of exceptions, the figures are male. China is one of the few ancient civilizations that does not have a female fertility cult, not a flourishing or well represented one, at any rate. The only female figurine published from a recent excavation comes from a royal tomb at Hsiao-t'un (*Kaogu* 1977 #3).

In the Late Chou period, around the fifth century B.C., the human figure becomes more significant. Perhaps human life does also, as the practice of human sacrifice, never a popular practice with the general citizenry, is abandoned, although not abruptly; a Late Chou tomb at Lang-chia-chuang contained 26 male and female sacrifices. An ode, close to that time, in referring to a Prince who buried 167 people in the tomb of his father, protests that birds are free to perch in trees and men should be free to live in their own fashion.

With the Han, figures of clay populate the tomb, but there is no corresponding multiplication of figurines in jade. Until the more recent centuries they remain small and rare.

OTHER USES

Handles, sword fittings, appliqués, and ornamental objects have mainly a utilitarian or decorative purpose, but one can never put any early Chinese jade completely into that category because some degree of symbolism is always inherent in the material. As an example, jade would be a very satisfactory substance for a handle; it is strong, waterproof, slow to conduct heat, more beautiful than bone or wood, but it was said to be used for ceremonial ladles because its divine origin would attract the attention of the spirits to the ceremony performed in their honor.

Throughout the Shang and Western Chou periods, the main use of jade was a ritual one with symbols of prescribed form. Only the small pendants and amulets have some feeling of individuality.

From around the sixth century B.C., the old beliefs begin to weaken and a new spirit of individualism appears. With it comes an increased personal use of jade. Often called the Age of the Goldsmith, Late Eastern Chou is also the Age of Jade. Iron tools and better abrasives gave the craftsman more technical freedom, and the demands of individual patrons challenged his imagination and skill. Many of the jades of this period are sheer perfection, being a combination of fine workmanship, flawless, lustrous material and a sophisticated design of subtle intricacy and charm.

Among the items created for personal use were fittings for a man's sword, small intricately carved pieces of jade for the pommel, scabbard slide and chape.

At least by the Warring States period, the belt hook makes an appearance in jade or metal, or the two combined. There is a wide range of style from a simple hook and button form to a miniature sculpture of figures or animals.

Other personal objects were coiffeur or bonnet pins, placques of different shapes strung together for necklaces or girdles, simple or elaborate beads. Among the pendants hung from a girdle would be a knot-picker of jade, bone or ivory. It was a common instrument, perhaps as early as Shang, and is often in the form of a fantastic animal with a long, sharply hooked tail.

* * *

This discussion of the use of jade in China and its importance in Chinese cultural history has been concerned with the archaic jades—from before the third century A.D. One reason is that there is so little jade known after the end of Han until fairly modern times. This may be partly because not many tombs after the Han period have been excavated; perhaps they are not as easy to locate as the earlier tumuli. In any case, they would not be expected to yield anything like the riches found in the Shang–Han graves. Human and animal sacrifice was replaced by clay sculpture and by figures painted on the tomb walls, and, to a large extent, replicas or miniatures took the place of more precious things.

From the fall of Han in A.D. 206 until 581, China consisted of several mutually hostile states, a precarious economy, and no central power. The widespread acceptance of Buddhism gave the people a new spiritual belief and assurance, and the temples became

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Jade figure. Ch'ien Lung Period. A woman stands by a peach tree (reference for brides); she holds a branch laden with peaches and stands on a rock from which a sacred fungus grows (longevity); a rather large parrot is by her side (warning not to chatter). This is probably a wedding gift and the rebus would read, "May you live long, have wedded happiness and be a faithful wife." H. 8¾", W. 8½". George Byron Gordon Memorial Collection in the University Museum.

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the new patrons of artists and craftsmen. An occasional image of jade is mentioned in historical or religious records, but jade had no particular ritual use; also, the material must have been scarce because there was little trade with Central Asia, the area of its source.

The country was unified in 581 under the Sui, and they laid the foundation for the prosperity and international prestige of the T'ang (A.D. 618-906). The T'ang had extensive commercial and diplomatic relations with a large part of the known world, and the larger Chinese cities were made cosmopolitan by their colonies of foreigners, particularly Persians, many of whom came as refugees after the invasion of their country by the Arabs in 638.

The early 8th century tomb of Princess Yung T'ai, daughter of Emperor Chung Tsung, had murals depicting foreigners and attendants wearing what was undoubtedly the newest fashion of dress derived from foreign styles. Her tomb had been robbed and little was left except the paintings and over 700 clay figures.

Also recovered by Chinese archaeologists was the horde of the Prince of Pin, buried in the mid-8th century. It contained gold and silver vessels of superb workmanship, some of Persian style, and a large number of coins, including Persian, Byzantine and Japanese.

After T'ang there was another troubled period of warring and short lived dynasties, five major ones between 907 and 960 when the Sung revived the economy and the arts. In 1127 a powerful northern tribe, the Jurchen, took over the northern part of the country, even capturing the Sung Emperor, Hui Ts'ung, more famous as a bird and flower painter than as an able administrator. His brother established a government in the south at Hangchow and the court, the artists and poets, followed him. One can view the beauty of Southern Sung paintings and ceramics as a kind of Hellenistic blooming while waiting for Genghis Khan's harsh Mongols to appear (Yüan period, 1260-1368).

Wei–Sung jades have been, and still are, largely dated by guess and comparison. If they are clearly not of Shang–Han style, for which we have reliable models, and are not as intricate, baroque or occasionally tasteless as we believe Ming–Ch'ing to be, they are considered to fit within this period.

The second step is to use as comparative material the designs on Buddhist stelae which are frequently dated, and the forms of pottery or metal objects for which a style sequence has been established. We then add certain assumptions such as the use of some archaistic motifs in Wei, the influence of foreign styles in T'ang, the keener observation of the human, animal and plant world reflecting in more naturalism.

Supporting material is slowly beginning to emerge: the large number of Han–T'ang tomb murals with their descriptive details, an excavation of a Sung grave at Tê-an, Kiangsi. However, an excavation near Peking of the grave of an old woman yielded a surprise. The elaborate style of her jade jewelry makes us think it belongs to the late Ming or Ch'ing period, but a date of mid-11th century is assigned to the burial, based on a jade token dated 1024-31.

In fact, we probably have many misconceptions about Ming style since our knowledge depends almost entirely on porcelain shapes and decorations, their sequence established by reign marks. The unmarked and export ware, free from rigid imperial standards, exhibits an enormous and imaginative variety of style that should make us realize almost anything is possible in Ming art.

One tomb at Nan Ch'ang, Kiangsi had a large quantity of jade in the form of long pointed leaves. Each has a perforation at the wider end, but the leaves appear to be too large and too numerous for a necklace. The tomb also had a girdle of plain jade placques, other jewelry, and a *kuei*. This is a Ming translation of the old ritual object, a rectangular baton with triangular tip, patterned with heavy raised dots, and, had it appeared on the art market a few years ago, would have been called a fake.

More predictable objects—porcelain, a few jades, some of great elegance—were found in the tomb of Emperor Wan Li (died 1620) and also in a tomb of the earlier Hung-wu period (1368-98).

From Sung on, the literati became buyers of small jade objects such as book weights, brush rests, brush holders for their desks, and ornamental pieces merely to admire or give to their friends. Prized by collectors today, they reflect the gamut of taste of the original patrons, be it a simple, natural form such as a cup shaped like a lotus, or a fanciful composition, or a pictorial scene that may point a moral or make a pun.

Ch'ing, the last royal dynasty, is a period of general prosperity with a large and affluent bourgeoisie who have a taste for flamboyant creations. Nephrite was again in good supply, and jadeite began to be imported in the late 18th century. Its more brilliant color and high polish made it a favorite material for both jewelry and large vessels.

The Ch'ien-lung period marks the apex of technical virtuosity which usually seems to be paired with lavish and extravagant designs. Reign marks on jade appear for the first time in this period.

In the early 20th century, diamond drills and carborundum made cutting easier, and world demand for Chinese jades brought

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Jade figure. Ch'ien Lung Period. A woman standing by a pine tree (longevity) holds a scroll in her right hand and a ju-i (good wish) in her left. A deer (prosperity) by her side holds a sacred fungus (age) in his mouth. It is a rebus which should read, "Wishing you long life, prosperity and attainment of desire. H. 8¾". W. 8½". George Byron Gordon Memorial Collection in the University Museum.

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about their mass production. These pieces, mostly jewelry, vessels, and objèts d'art, are often intricately fashioned and have a high polish, but usually their interiors or back surfaces are carelessly finished. We understand that the present Chinese government is encouraging the jade craftsmen to once more produce work of high standard.

To summarize: The answers that recent Chinese archaeology can provide for the study of jades, the chronology of their style and their role or place in Chinese society, are only beginning to appear.

As one reviews the reports in Chinese publications, it becomes apparent that many of the excavations are essentially "salvage archaeology," a neat and quick removal of objects from tombs found in the path of construction. The sites are usually discovered by agricultural or construction workers and excavated by local archaeological brigades. The results are carefully recorded as to number and description of the objects, and excellent drawings are made. Yet one is often frustrated by gaps in the information. There are simply not enough scientifically trained archaeologists for the number and spread of the sites.

There is some C-14 dating being used, and rightly so, to establish boundaries for the prehistoric period. There is no use of thermoluminescense, and there seems to be little use of other techniques to give us more details of the early environment and related social structure. There is some work on human remains and animal bones, and identification of food and grains found in Han tombs, etc. But much remains to be done.

Dates are often given in broad terms, i.e. "Western Chou," a span nearly as long as from the Renaissance to the present. Western scholars, to get around this block of dynastic time, invented the term "Middle Chou" for a certain rather impoverished style of bronze vessels which seem to fall toward the troubled end of the Western Chou period. We need more details and scientific help to establish whether this type really appears between 900 and 600 B.C.

Also, from the reports we can only guess at the extent to which the grave was "disturbed," and therefore of the extent to which the remaining contents portray the original deposit and mirror the society of its time. As an example, one of the most beautiful and elaborate belt hooks, set with three jade circles, was one of the very few objects overlooked by looters of a tomb at Ku Wai Ts'un. One wonders what else might have been in that tomb, but the clues are passed over.

While there were laws in the early 20th century against tomb robbery, extreme poverty made the peasants risk much. A frank account by Osvald Karlbeck, *Treasure Seeker in China*, tells of peasants digging at night around the Shang tombs at Anyang, and daring to take only small pieces like jade that could be concealed in their clothes when they went to market. Is this the reason that many of the richly equipped tombs yield fewer jades than one would expect?

In the early tombs, few large *kuei* or elaborate *pi*, and no large *ts'ung* are found. Were these objects, which are known mostly from Western collections, restricted to the most royal graves and looted centuries ago? The "Red Eyebrow" gang pillaged the imperial graves at Ch'ang-an in A.D. 26. The report of it in the Later Han History mentions that the corpses wore jade shrouds.

We repeat, much remains to be done. Perhaps it is time to do no more excavating than is necessary for salvage, and to analyze and assay what has already been discovered. Should the Chinese be willing, the University Museum would gladly share the scientific resources for which it is famous, and also provide advanced archaeological training in order to advance world knowledge of this great and ancient civilization.

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Research Associate for China and Southeast Asia, was a student of Dr. Alfred Salmony, author of several texts on Chinese jades. Unable to do first-hand research in China, she has spent much time in neighboring Southeast Asia but returns occasionally to work on her original interests in the Museum collections.

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These texts are translated by Legge in *Sacred Books of the East* series. Translations more preferred are *Chou Li,* Biot and Li Chi (Li ki), *Shu Ching* (Chou King), Shih *Ching* (Chou King) by Couvreur with text in Chinese, French and Latin.

Map of China copied from *Catalogue of the Chinese Exhibition*. See article by Elizabeth Lyons, pp. 4-20.