Odyssey

Call #: N7342 .C56 1998
Location: FA-OVERSZE at

Book/Journal Title: China, 5000 years; innovation and transformation in the arts

Book Author: Elizabeth Childs-Johnson;

Year 1998
Pages: 55-68

Copyright Information:
The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of the specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

Charge Maxcost: $10.00 IFM
Fax: (757) 683-5906
Email Address: sfrazer@odu.edu
Ariel: 128.82.252.7

University of Virginia
Alderman Library
Interlibrary Services
PO Box 400109
160 N. McCormick Road
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4109
434-982-3094 (phone)
lib-lend@virginia.edu

Ship to:
Old Dominion University
Perry Library - ILL
4427 HAMPTON BLVD
Norfolk, VA 23529-0256
VIVA
Jade as Material and Epoch

Jade, “the fairest of stones,” is described in the revered and earliest of Chinese dictionaries as embodying five virtues: “Benevolence is typified by its luster that is bright and warm; integrity by its translucency; wisdom by its sonorous ring when struck; courage by its hardness; and steadfastness by its durability.”¹ As far back as the late Neolithic period, this
oburate stone, known as nephrite jade, could be worked into what are for Chinese tradition technical masterpieces of ritual and aesthetic function. Yi jade was, in fact, the preeminent medium of the late Neolithic period, exploited earlier than bronze as a political and religious power symbol which may now be associated with China’s earliest civilization. Late Neolithic prehistoric cultures—Hongshan, Liangzhu, and Longshan—have been identified archaeologically as three successive jade-working cultures of circa 5000-2000 BCE, predating the historic Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods. Each culture boasts a major jade art that is idiosyncratic yet telling in the formation of later Chinese values and cultural expression.

In this exhibition, jades are drawn not only from the jade-working cultures of Neolithic date, but also from other periods of great innovation such as the Western and Eastern Zhou, when jade was first used for head and body covers in burial and for elaborate pectorals hanging down the front of aristocratic robes, and from later periods, Han through Tang, when jade was worked into a variety of exquisite ornamental forms.

JADE AS MATERIAL

Nephrite, like jadeite, is considered “true jade” by specialists today. Unlike the emerald green and harder jadeite, nephrite varies in color from translucent white to various shades of green and brown and is the only jade that was used during the Neolithic and early dynastic periods.

Based on a recent identification, nephrite can now be documented as originating in Neolithic China. A specimen taken from an outcropping of rock at Zhaomeiling in Liyang, Jiangsu Province, has been confirmed as having mineral qualities similar to Liangzhu-period nephrite. It is likely that local deposits of nephrite were found elsewhere in the lower reaches of the Yangzi River. The nephrite found in tombs of the far northeast (Hongshan culture) is also thought to have been mined locally.

Mineralogically, nephrite is a rock composed of densely intergrown, randomly oriented, interfelted fibers of the minerals tremolite and actinolite. These minerals are calcium-magnesium-iron silicates, Ca₂(Mg,Fe)₂Si₂O₆(OH), and belong to the amphibole mineral group. The difference between actinolite and tremolite is in the quantity of magnesium and iron. In actinolite, iron appears in greater quantities, to 50 percent; in tremolite, iron occupies under 10 percent of the total. Iron content affects the color of nephrite by darkening it, creating gray to green hues. In its purest form, the nephrite is translucent white (see, for example, cats. 17, 20).

Minerals sometimes mistaken for jade—referred to as “false jades” or as “pseudo-jades”—include agate, bowerite, fluorite, tacle, and serpentine. The major scientific meaning of distinguishing tremolites and actinolites from other minerals is by their specific gravity. Nephrites have a higher specific gravity and greater hardness than pseudo- and false jade minerals.

Jade is one of the most difficult stones to fashion: on Mohs’s scale of hardness for minerals (ranking from 1 to 10) jade measures 6–6.5; thus, it requires a harder stone such as quartzite (7–7.5) or diamond (10) to abrade or “carve” it. Several scholars have theorized about how early jade—the translucent nephrite as opposed to emerald green jadeite—was worked in ancient China. Each has described a technique that involves various stages of working with abrasives, from initially slicing off a chunk or slab of jade from a rock outcropping to boring holes and modeling linear motifs and openwork designs on the final jade piece. It is likely that a straight-edged hand or gut-string saw was the tool used to cut, slice, and pare the jade into a workable form.

Other tools involved probably included the awl and tubular drill, which may have been of bamboo. Since a fl int (miishi) awl has been excavated from a Liangzhu tomb, it is possible that this was the type of tool used to carve the minute detail decorating mieng (prismatic tubes) and related ornaments. Other specialists have argued that shark teeth excavated from Liangzhu tombs were used or that only a tool with a diamond point was sufficiently hard to carve such refined detail. That the Liangzhu craftsmen working jade used a bamboo or comparable drill with quartzite as an abrasive to make holes in ritual jades such as bi (disks) and mieng (prismatic tubes) is convincing, since the remaining elliptical marks, particularly marked in the centers of mieng, identify that type of tool. These holes are created from two sides by a bamboo drill whose point loses sharpness and thus width at the very center so that a ridge is formed. Quartzite crystals have been found on the surface of many Liangzhu and Hongshan jades, thus confirming that quartzite was the abrasive used with water when working the surface. On Neolithic jades, abraded decorative motifs often appear chipped; on later jades, metal-tipped tools were used so that these decorative motifs appear as clean, crisp lines.

In recent experiments on jades at the Freer and Arthur M. Sackler galleries in Washington, D.C., Wen Guang and Janet Douglas have shown that certain jades of dark green and brown color, dating to the Longshan and successive cultures and deriving from north and northwest China, are mineralogically iron- and manganese-rich nephrites. These jades possess small amounts of
manganese oxide that can be measured by X-ray fluorescence and related tools that measure mineral composition and the microstructure of minerals.\textsuperscript{10} The dagger-ax (ger; cat. 11) from the Shaanxi Provincial Museum falls into this category of manganese oxide–rich nephrite. Wen Guang has explained that the dark green and brown to almost black coloration of tall cong (see, for example, cat. 5) appears to derive from jades that have been collected over time. This phenomenon may be attributable to panno, the repeated handling of jade that causes discoloration over time, especially through oxidation of the iron content. The so-called chicken-bone white (jīzháihuí) or chalky white surface patches, particularly common on Liangzhu jades (see cat. 1) but also on others (cats. 2, 12), appears to be caused primarily by heating to a temperature above 900° C rather than by alteration during a long burial.\textsuperscript{11} The jade mineral does not decompose, but its density decreases and its microstructure becomes looser so that the jade may become brittle and less translucent.

Jade as a precious stone has an eminent history in China and for this reason is intimately linked with the beginnings of Chinese ritual and Chinese civilization. As one archaeologist has pointed out, all characters, or graphs, written with the jade graph 玉 are associated with spiritual power or beauty.\textsuperscript{12} For example, the word bāo ("precious") incorporates the jade graph. So does the word gui (a kind of jasper stone or an adjective meaning "extraordinary" or "admirable").

Jade's sacrosanct position in the history of Chinese tradition is probably best told not through later anecdotal descriptions, but rather through excavated finds and the earliest literary reference to ritual (dī) in Shang period bone inscriptions.\textsuperscript{13} The character 玉 incorporates the jade graph 玉, suggesting by its inclusion that jade was the earliest material as art to be used in religious worship. The function of jade as a preservative and symbol of immortality is also well known through Han alchemical practice and the life-preserving quality that is signified in the burial jade body suits of the Warring States and Han periods.

**JADE AS RITUAL IMPLEMENT AND INSIGNIA**

The working of jade is well illustrated by numerous finds from the three successive late Neolithic cultures that occupied coastal northern through southern China, from Liaoning down as far as Fujian. As Willets once noted, Yuan Kang in *The Lost Records of Yue* (*Yue jìjué*), a Warring States text, wrote that after the Stone (Neolithic) and before the Bronze and Iron ages, man used jade for weapons; this "Jade Age" was a period contemporary with the legendary Five Emperors and prior to the historic Xia.\textsuperscript{14} Archaeological evidence documents this reference: jade was the primary medium exploited by the elite to symbolize their power to rule. Whether or not we use the label "Jade Age," the use of jade over an approximate sixteen-hundred-year period (ca. 3600–2400 BCE) may be traced largely to coastal parts of China, an area of great cultural innovation at this time.\textsuperscript{15} Elite tribal groups forming what anthropologists now describe as China's earliest city-states are associated with these jade-working cultures—the Liangzhu in China's southeastern provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu and in Shanghai; and slightly later Shandong Longshan cultures of northeast China; but also possibly by the slightly earlier Hongshan, of far northeast China, primarily, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia provinces.

Jade types from Hongshan tombs (see fig. 1) are striking in their seemingly non-Chinese taste for sculpturally sensuous form. Two jades in this exhibition—an ornament in the form of hooked clouds with profile bird (cat. 1) and an ornament in the form of a curling so-called pig-dragon (zhudāo;
cat. 2)—are quintessentially Hongshan Chinese. Both works are directly tied to fertility-cult interests. Small jade figures as well as clay figures of various sizes representing nude females with large hips and buttocks have been found on outdoor stone-lined altars, in the Goddess Temple, and within aristocratic cist tombs at Niuheliang; their discovery suggests the presence of a cult centered on a form of mother goddess. The only items seen in tombs of the elite are jades, however. Most are pierced with holes for suspension or attachment to cloth, suggesting a function similar to that of an amulet worn by a specialized religious, ruling elite.

Most of the excavated Hongshan burials with jades derive from select areas, as at Niuheliang, which on the basis of present evidence was once a center for religious worship. The hooked cloud shape of jade (see, for example, cat. 1) has been found on the chest area of several corpses in the elite cemetery at Niuheliang, suggesting that this type of ornament decorated the chest as a pectoral. The shape, with hooks at four corners framing a bird’s head in profile, represents the prototype of the age-old bone and bronze script symbol for cloud with emerging bird or dragon head, evidently a reference to the heavenly bird in later Chinese myth.

The pig-dragon (cat. 2) also suggests a potent symbol in its emphatic disposition which begins in a boar-like head flanking tusks and beady eyes and ends in a short thick body curl. This posturohex emphasizing birth and nascent power is imitated in the shape of the pictograph for qiu, the earliest form for writing dragon in Chinese script. In all later Chinese history, dragons bring rain and beneficence. During the Neolithic period the Chinese domesticated the boar. As symbols of wealth, boar (or pig) skulls are commonly found in elite tombs. That the image of dragon with boar tusks and other fertility deities prefixed as symbols of control by this northern Hongshan culture is also made clear by the remains of dragon and fertility goddess sculptures, which decorated the wall of what, at Niuheliang, excavators describe as a mother goddess temple. In addition to their association with fertility, the pig-dragon jades are remarkable for their sensitive and painstaking modeling; they appear as though they were sculpted, wet clay rather than flat and linear, calligraphically defined jades that are traditionally associated with Chinese aesthetics.

The Liangzhu culture, of overlapping and slightly later date, reflects a more advanced social stage in the new and more complex layout of religio-administrative centers, as well as an increased complexity of jade types and their functions. In burials, jade not only decorates the dress of elite leaders, but now appears worked into shapes of ritual implements and weapons (fig. 2). Liangzhu jade owners wielded power over more sophisticated and complex religious rites and political and military matters as well.

The new appearance of specific ritual implements such as cong and bi, and of broad axes (yan) in large numbers complements the more complex scenario of ritual and socio-political administration that anthropologists currently describe as characterizing China’s earliest city-state. They propose that the Liangzhu culture encompassed a time span of roughly 3600–3100 BCE and that it included four major phases. Fully mature jade types representing Liangzhu periods III–IV of circa 3000–2400 BCE are represented in the exhibition by three cong (cats. 3, 4, 5).
The cong is the most idiosyncratic of all jades. It may be defined by its shape: a tube that is prismatic on the outside and circular and open from top to bottom inside. The Neolithic jade cong is decorated with animal and/or semihuman masks on the prismatically shaped corners of its outer square. In later ritual texts the cong is also defined as a symbol of the earth.

Liangzhu jades derive almost entirely from burials, evidently of a ruling, religious elite. These differ from Hongshan burials not only in their larger and more complex jade assemblage, but in their design; they were part of a man-made earthen mound with raised outdoor altar (figs. 3-4). Apparently, such raised earthen mounds with jade-filled burials functioned initially as outdoor ritual altars and subsequently as burial grounds called jihan mudi ("joint sacrificial and burial centers") and were locally described as zhuju junzi ("earth-constructed pyramids").

Recently, it has been proposed that Sidun, in Jiangsu Province, and possibly twenty other related burial-ground mounds were part of larger city-states that were cosmologically designed in the form of the cong, the ritual jade implement (figs. 2B, A2, 5). At present, however, only Sidun, Zhaolingshan, and Mojiaoshan appear to possess adequate features that qualify them as candidates for this ideal plan (fig. 4A). The proposed plan encompasses a central earthen altar and four axially located burial grounds as well as many residences and defensive moats: the Sidun mound complex measures 900,000 square meters in area, and the mound proper is over 100 meters wide and over 20 meters high. This design conjures up the look of today's surviving Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Tikal in Guatemala, and the religious structure called "Bright Hall" (mingtang) with circular moat (piyong) mentioned in later Chinese ritual texts. In any case, what emerges in the archaeological data is a new and extremely sophisticated phase of settlement: a city-state with spiritual center, outlying towns, a defensive system, and competitive arts serving both religious and political needs. This archaeological evidence of the Liangzhu culture defines the heart of the so-called Jade Age, not only in the sophisticated architectural design of a spiritual center but because over 90 percent of the ruling elite's burial goods were jades.

For protohistoric Chinese the cong was evidently more than a talisman; it appears to have been a mechanism of ritual and spiritual control. Positioned in four directions, it symbolized the power to petition or exorcize spiritual and demonic forces in a universe that was conceived as prismatically square. It is no accident that the shamanic fangxiang, or wu, the major exorcizer of...
demonic influences in Han dynasty religious practice, had vision in four directions. The character for *wu* ("shaman")—although not known textually until Eastern Zhou times—is related in origin to the Shang character for *fang* ("direction"). As is evident, one of the variations for *fang* in Shang bone inscriptions is like the Greek cross, the same shape as the *lung*. And it may also be no accident that in the ancient myth of China's origins the eight cosmic pillars that upheld the universe when the mythic Pan Gu created the world were axially oriented.45

The other popular ritual implement, the circular *bi*, is also probably significant in its association with the heavens, the circular vault or dome mentioned later in *Huainanzi* and the *Chuci* ("Songs of the South"). The few representations of birds and clouds that decorate *bi* (fig. 6) are in keeping with what must be a symbol of skyward power in which clouds and birds are associated in all later Chinese lore.

The *lung* (cat. 3) that comes from the largest tomb, No. 12, at Fanshan, in Zhejiang Province, is a marvel of craftsmanship. Twenty-four tiny representations of simple and complex mask types decorate all the flat surfaces of this vessel's exterior, straddling all corners and intervening passages (fig. 5A). Two alternating image types—the semihuman mask with horizontally striated headdress and the

Fig. 5. Shape and decor of three exhibited jade prismatic tubes (lung): A. Lung (cat. 3) from tomb No. 12, Fanshan, Zhejiang Province; B. Lung (cat. 4) from Fuquanshan tomb No. 9, Qingpu county, Shanghai; C. Lung (cat. 3) from tomb No. 3, Wujin county, Jiangsu Province. Neolithic period, Liangzhu culture (ca. 3000-ca. 2000 BCE).

Fig. 6A. The bird and cloud motif on a jade disk (*bi*) from the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (17.348). Neolithic period, Liangzhu culture (ca. 3000-ca. 2000 BCE).

Fig. 6B. Jade disk (*bi*). Neolithic period, Liangzhu culture (ca. 3000-ca. 2000 BCE). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (17.348).
animal mask with layered eyelids and nasal ridge—
decorate each prismatic surface. These semihuman
and animal-mask images are also represented more
complexly on the interstices. The latter, more
elsabrate version portrays the semihuman with
feathered headdress, trapezoidal face, and winged
arms embracing the animal mask, which has tusks
and framing limbs ending in claws (fig. 5). Both
Mou Yongkang and Wu Ruzuo have identified
these masked deities as sun gods.16 When depicted
as two different images, they should be interpreted
as a sun god and his vehicle, the embodiment of
animal power. Working these minuscule motifs must
have required great delicacy and painstaking labor
in digging and working away the surface with a
tiny flint or diamond awl. Although it has altered in
color to a chalky white, the cong retains its brilliant
luster, which through burnishing seems to have
intentionally captured the rays of the sun. This cong
has been nicknamed the “king of cong,” after the
vessel’s large size and superbly worked imagery.17

The cong from tomb Number 9 at Fuquanshan,
nesshanghai, is marked by a translucent gleaming
yellow-brown to green color (cat. 4). Miniature
masks and flanking birds fill four sides of this cong,
which is more circular than square (fig. 5B). Body
parts, only one millimeter wide, of both the masked
images and birds are filled with tiny whirling cloud
scrolls. On the cong from tomb Number 3 at Sidun,
Jiangsu Province (cat. 5; fig. 5C) thirteen levels of
mask images represent a standard variation of the
tall cong type that is tempting to associate with the
stacked arrangement of repeated images on a native
American totem pole of the Northwest. The more
schematic interpretation of the mask aligning the
four corners of this tall cong is the semihuman
mask, simplified to an abstract design of eye,
mouth, and headdress.

Jade usage takes a new turn during the last phase
of the Neolithic and first phase of China’s ancient
historical period, which begins with the Xia
(ca. 2100-ca. 1600 BCE). The new jade types that
appear during the Longshan and Xia ( Erlitou
culture) periods—the last flowering of the “Jade
Age”—include the blade ( zhang ) and the knife
(dao). Usually plain in decor, they function as
insignia. Both the blade and the knife are based on
agricultural tool types.18 The blade, which is
swordlike in shape and flares out at one end,
originates in the hoe and is known mostly in bone
or ivory as early as 5000 BCE at Hemudu, in
Zhejiang Province (fig. 7A).19 The knife derives
from the harvesting knife (fig. 7B). The recarved
jade knife (dao; cat. 6) from the Shanghai Museum
may be attributed to the Shaoding Longshan
Neolithic. Representational imagery still decorates
the front of the jade knife.

The blades ( zhang ; cats. 7, 8) reflect two styles. The
first is a classic Xia blade ( zhang ; cat. 7), seen in
evacuated examples from Erlitou (fig. 8A). The
handle is typically rendered with a delicate, dentellt
outline and paper-thin relief strips running from
top to bottom on the front side only. This
gomometrically textured area contrasts with the
blade, which flares out and is slightly concave. The
blade (cat. 8) from Sanxingdui, Guanghan, in
Sichuan Province, is a manneristically distorted
regional version of the classic Xia type. For
example, the blade’s mouth does not flare; it comes
to a point like a dagger-ax that then is bifurcated.
Comparable blades excavated from the same two
hoards at Sanxingdui are equally eccentric (fig. 8B).
They either violate classical form through the
addition of an extraneous, small profile bird placed
at the bifurcated mouth or destroy the beauty of
the paper-thin strips through harsh, repetitious
incised lines across the handle. The latter examples
represent the end of a classical Longshan and
Erlitou period tradition of working jade blade
insignia.

It is apparent that at this point in time more
sophisticated tools, probably metal tools in the form
of disks and drills (the modern lathe called the
chatou), were used with abrasives to carve the
insignia and their decor. The appearance of
multiple, small lengthwise scratches on a jade’s
surface indicates burnishing with metal-tipped
tools.

During the Shang period (ca. 1600-ca. 1100 BCE),
certain jades— particularly, weapons in the form of
dagger-axes (gr) or broad axes (pu)—continue to reflect the Xia taste for large-scale insignia. Jade types that eventually replace the insignia are the flat or round small figurines, designed more for decorative than ritual purposes. The small animal and human figures popular during the Shang are represented in the exhibition by four pieces excavated intact from the celebrated tomb belonging to the Shang queen popularly referred to as Fu Hao, but correctly identified by the name Fu Zi. Three of the jades represent variations of the bird motif—one naturalistic version from the side (cat. 10[3]), another with headrest and human-like legs tucked in profile (cat. 10[4]), and a third bird with ram’s horns (cat. 10[1]). A fourth small jade (cat. 10[2]) of light translucent green represents a human whose hands rest on his knees in servile attitude. All four jades have holes for attachment and were probably worn suspended as charms or decorative baubles. In the excavation report, jade figurines from this rich tomb amounted to over three hundred out of a total of six to seven hundred jades.17

JADE AS LIFE PRESERVATIVE AND ORNAMENT

The Western Zhou period (ca. 1100–771 BCE) is represented here by two jade works. A jade dagger-ax (gr; cat. 11) from Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, is a Western Zhou version of this weapon made popular during the Shang period. The Zhou date is apparent in the grooving and downward point of the blade’s tip, as found on dagger-axes of Western Zhou date excavated from Sanmenxia, Henan Province, and Tianma, Shanxi Province.18 The major artistic innovation in the jade medium during the Western Zhou period is seen in the rich assemblage of jade pieces creating a burial mask (cat. 12; fig. 10) and extended chest and body pectoral with additional, flanking jade insignia of dagger-axes and bi (fig. 10), excavated at Sanmenxia in 1990.19 This earliest of jade face masks, dating to the tenth century BCE, clearly anticipates the creation of a complete jade body suit by the Western Han period (206 BCE–8 CE) in provinces as far afield as Hebei, Shandong, Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Hubei.19

Sanmenxia has long been known as a Western Zhou cemetery site of the Guo state—an entrenchment that was probably of very early Western Zhou date.20 In the 1950s over two hundred tombs were excavated at this site, and in the last fifteen years new finds, including tomb Number 2001, to which the jade mask (cat. 12; fig. 10) belongs, were reported. This burial find is of high interest for what it says about Western Zhou burial rites and ritual reform, which required sets of vessels and jades that by their number and quality were designed to signify status. For example, tomb Number 2001 included not only bronze sets of gui (grain), ding (meat), and li (steamer) vessels (six to eight per set of identical form but different size), but sets of chimes and bells, as well as other unusual art works such as an unprecedented early belt with gold decorative attachments and an iron sword with jade fitting.
This rich tomb also documents that there was a specified manner of decorating the corpse with jade. The burial mask (cat. 12), for example, is composed of fourteen jade pieces, and the pectoral running from the corpse’s neck to its knees is composed of seven huang (arc-shaped) jades that are interconnected with agate and facette beads (fig. 10). Flanking the corpse were two jade dagger-axe-like blades at chest level, two pair of bi, and two handle attachments at foot level. Additional stone cowries (ban) were placed in the corpse’s mouth, and round post-shaped jades (ao) were placed in the corpse’s hand. Two further sets of eight small jade inlays were found on the feet. The excavators explain that these jades lay on top of what appear to have been over ten layers of red and yellow decorated silk cloth. The jade face mask was sewn to a silk cover, while the pectoral of jades formed a necklace that lay on the corpse’s chest. The practice of decorating a corpse with jade necklaces may be traced back to the Liangzhu period, when multiple strands of jade beads were commonly placed on both male and female corpses.

The fourteen jades of the Sammenxia burial mask (cat. 12) mark pairs of eyebrows, eyes, temples, ears, and cheeks and individually mark the forehead, nose, mouth, and neck. This type of jade face mask with elaborate jade pectoral and mouth and hand plugs may be compared with various others identified recently not only elsewhere in Henan, but also in Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Hebei, dating to the Western Zhou and later Eastern Zhou periods. The latter burials derive from cemeteries identifying Zhou enfeoffments belonging to the ancient states of Jin (Quanzhai, Tianma, Shaanxi), Ying (Pingdingshan, Henan), Guo (Fengxi, Xi’an, Shaanxi), Jing (Zhangjiapo, Shaanxi), Yu (Baoyi, Xi’an, Shaanxi) and Yan (Lihuihe, Fangshan, Hebei). Evidently, the practice of burying the elite with jade face masks and pectorals was standardized at this point in Western Zhou history.

In addition, jade was used to plug the orifices of the corpse. These jade investments protected the corpse from disintegrating while allowing the spirit (hun) to continue living, as described in various texts of Eastern Zhou and Han date. In the Yi Li ("Ceremonial Rites"), there is reference to the mingwu (the spirit mask that covers the head), with the commentary that the invoker of the spirit wore this jade covering at funerals in order to summon up the departed spirit which relatives and friends sought to keep from drifting far away. After the invocation rite, the jade face mask would then be buried with the corpse. (In archaeological literature, this face mask is commonly described as a “sewn jade face guard” [zhuyu miaozhuan].) The interest in invoking the spirit is well known as the objective of the shaman that inspired the poem “Summons of the Soul” in the Chuci (“Songs of the South”). Thus, the purpose of these jade masks is not only aesthetic but profoundly religious.

The rich and decorative sway of jade that peaked as a revived art during the Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE) is amply illustrated by its widespread use in pectoral and girdle ornament decorating the robes of the literati. The exhibited jades (cats. 13–16) representing small plaques, dragon pendants, disks, and rings fall into this category of decorative object. Competitiveness in the arts was at a premium during the Warring States period. This was the time of “The Hundred Schools,” when roving philosophers plied their trade in trying to win the support of an overlord. Confucius allegedly worked the literati crowd of Lu in Shandong. By the seventh century BCE, the central Zhou state was reduced to puppet status and was at
the mercy of the most powerful states of the day, known then as the Five Hegemonies (Wu Ba).

By the beginning of the fifth century BCE, internecine warfare was intensive. China was divided into seven powerful states, and there were numerous smaller ones that came and went, such as Peng in southern Henan at Xujialing, which was consumed by Chu. We read in poems from the Chuci ("Songs of the South") about various types of art whose specialty belonged to one of the competitive states. For example, the state of Qin was esteemed for its basketware, Qi for its silk cords, Zheng for its silk banners, and Jin apparently for its finely made belt buckles (xiàn) that "glittered like bright suns." Although Jin is credited with creating exquisite belt buckles—presumably of jade—the artistic domain of jade was not limited to this northwestern state. Jade girdles and pectorals

Fig. 11. Jade ornamental plaque from tomb No. 1 at Xiasu, Xichuan, Henan Province. Eastern Zhou, Spring and Autumn period (770–476 BCE).

Fig. 12. Variations of Eastern Zhou and Han jade pectoral and girdle ornaments: A. Decorative painted wooden figures from Chu tombs at Xinyang, Henan Province, and Jiangling, Hubei Province; B. From tomb No. 58, group Yi, Lu state, Shandong Province; C1–3. From burials accompanying the tomb of the King of Nanype, Guangdong Province. Eastern Zhou–Western Han periods (770 BCE–8 CE).
were ubiquitous in China throughout the Western and Eastern Zhou periods; they represent what one wore while alive and apparently took along into the next world. There is, however, some question about which jade necklaces were worn in life and which appear to have been made for burial. The jades initially used to create jade face masks from the late Western Zhou as represented by the jade face mask (cat. 12), and eventually body covers, apparently were often created out of reused or lesser quality jade.\textsuperscript{45}

An early example of one these decorative Eastern Zhou pectoral jades is the small plaque (cat. 13; fig. 11) excavated in 1987 from Xiasi, Xichuan county, in Henan Province. This jade (only 7.1 centimeters high) apparently came from tomb Number 1, which belonged to the wife of the Chu Prince Shuzhi Sun Peng, chief minister of Chu from 551 to 548 BCE.\textsuperscript{46} There is no archaeological data that may be used to describe the piece’s function, however. Since the plaque has two holes for suspension or attachment, it appears to have decorated a pectoral or girdle rather than a belt buckle. Although small, its shape and decoration are representative of the Eastern Zhou interest in richly textured surfaces and in the revival of Shang imagery that appears in all mediums of this period. An Eastern Zhou interpretation of the Shang animal mask is seen in the round eyes and body extensions in the form of C-curves which vary in textural effects from feathers, granulation, hooks with volutes, and scales, to claws.

A pair of dragon (long) pendants (cat. 14) from Pingliangtai, Huayangshi, Henan Province, of Warring States date is another ubiquitous form in Eastern Zhou art.\textsuperscript{47} In fact, during this phase of artistic activity, the dragon is the most popular ornament; and the most popular design at this time is the dragon type from Pingliangtai, with its head thrown back, its body in S-shape, and its claws rendered as curls. This pair of dragon pendants may also be joined to form the heraldic central motif of a pectoral. During this phase, the sensuous effect of the sinuous dragon body is enhanced by raised curls.

The Warring States jade ring (huang) with S-pattern (cat. 15) from Xujiating in Xichuan county, Hubei Province, and the Han bi with grain pattern (cat. 16) from Zhouzhi county, Shaanxi Province, are also probably pendant parts of pectorals that were worn by aristocrats when they were alive (see figs. 12, 13). The green jade bi is covered with the so-called grain pattern, the small-scale nodules that rise symmetrically out of tightly coiled C-hooks, a motif that appeared on late Zhou bronze vessels (see, for example, cat. 44). Shapes of sacred ritual design of Neolithic origin, such as the bi, were revived along with the animal mask as another popular ornament enriching Western and Eastern Han period art. The most elaborate designs, texturally varied concoctions, and elegantly inventive assemblages hung down the front of both male and female aristocrats. Variations of grids and pectorals, clanging and swaying, glittering and ringing signified dignity and rank—a sonorous and well-dressed elite.

Jade continued to grow as an art from Han to Tang times. In contrast to the Shang versions of small animal carvings, those from the Han and later periods tend to be more naturalistic. The winged horse (cat. 17) and so-called bi(see a winged lion with horns, cat. 18) illustrate the new naturalism, seen in images of both mythical and non-mythical animals of Han date (206 BCE-220 CE). Although stereotyped through such conventions as the arched neck and suspended tail to signify liveliness and movement, these animal shapes of hardstone jade begin to turn and twist in space.
The climax of the Eastern Zhou and Han periods is represented by a white jade vessel (zun; cat. 19) belonging to Liu Hong, Duke of Xuancheng and Commander Guarding the South, from Huanghantou, Anxiang, Hunan Province. Dating to the Western Jin (265–316), this vessel is a remarkable jade facsimile of a bronze original (see, for example, cat. 31), a popular type in Han times. The immortals/animals theme is signified by animal heads emerging from cloud motifs and by immortals/winged humans, seated or running pell-mell alongside dragons and other supernatural creatures, including the Goddess of the West herself, wearing the distinctive mortarboard-style headdress. It has its source in the Daoist cult of immortality symbolizing the mountain Kunlun, which was the domain of the Goddess of the West (Xiwangmu) (see cats. 19, 49, 50, 51). This scene in relief complements the Hongshan Neolithic sculpted jade bird (cat. 1) represents a bird amid clouds, most likely signifying the skyward realm of heaven; and the relief on the Western Jin vessel (cat. 19) represents the heavenly abode of Mount Kunlun, where immortality was granted by an empowered goddess.

Jade continued to be valued for its immaterial power and beauty during the Tang dynasty (618–907). The translucent Xinjiang white jade belt excavated from a cache at the village of Hejia, in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province (cat. 20, fig. 14B) is one superb example. Discovered in 1970, this cache has become famous for its gold and silver vessels, amounting to about 270 out of some 1000 objects, which are unprecedented for their variety, workmanship, and quality of preservation. The royal hoard has been identified as belonging to a prince of Bin, whose mansion in ancient Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) was consumed by flames in the mid-eighth century during the rebellion of general An Lushan. Like the decor of so many of the solid silver and gold vessels of this hoard, the major decorative motifs of the belt represent Central Asian and Persian subjects. The belt is composed of sixteen pieces; fourteen that are square and two that are D-shaped. On the back of each piece are loops where the piece was sewn to a leather backing. Each jade piece was worked into a relief image of a lion; poses vary from standing, sitting, snuffing, to pawing the air—all different and all indicative of a very lively animal (fig. 14B:1). This motif is one of three that appear to be popular on jade belts of eighth-century Tang date. The other themes are also exotic, featuring Persians playing musical instruments or Persians bringing tribute offerings (figs. 14A, B:2). The lion is also well known as foreign to Tang and earlier China, and is probably of Central Asian origin.

The art of working jade is special to China. The fact that this hardstone, nephrite, could be worked at all as early as the Neolithic period is indicative of the singular reverence the Chinese have paid to the
STONE. OVER TIME Nephrite WAS ABRADED INTO ALMOST ANY SHAPE—FROM A PRISMATIC TUBE TO A REEF REPRESENTING THE PARADISE LANDSCAPE OF A GODDESS—REFLECTING THE SOPHISTICATED LEVEL TO WHICH THIS ART COULD BE PERFECTED. IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE, THEN, THAT THE CHINESE IDENTIFIED JADE PHILOSOPHICALLY WITH THE CELESTIAL SPHERE, IMMORTAL AND INDestructIBLE, THE MATERIAL EMBODYING THE VITAL ENERGY OF NATURE.

NOTES
3. See, for example, the bone graph for “dze” (1908 in Li, fa, 14-24, 149.)
5. See, for example, Davidow (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1974), 6.
6. For the division of Hong Kong jade into categories of weapons, decorative ornaments, and implements for ritual use, see Childe-Childson, Ritual and Power, pp. 142-22, and Zhang Xingbo, “Hong Kong jade” (Proceedings of the Hon Kong Archaeological Society, 1990), p. 127.
CHINA: 5,000 YEARS
Curated by Shanan Lezic
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
February 6–June 3, 1998
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Summer 1998

China: 5,000 Years has been organized by the Guggenheim Museum in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China and the National Administration for Cultural Heritage of the People’s Republic of China, China International Exhibition Agency and Art Exhibitions China.

Major sponsors of this exhibition are

© 1998 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and Art Exhibitions China. All rights reserved.

Guggenheim Museum Publications
1071 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10028

Handset editions distributed by
Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
110 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

ISBN 0-89207-968-4 (hardcover)
ISBN 0-89207-262-4 (softcover)

Design by Tsang Seymour, Inc., New York
Printed in Italy by Marietta