Jades of the Hongshan culture: the dragon and fertility cult worship

The art of working jade in ancient China appears as early as 3500 BC with the Hongshan (1) culture. This cultural settlement of ca. 4000-2500 BC once occupied the Liao River area of southeastern Inner Mongolia, northeastern Hebei, Liaoning and southern and central and western Jilin (Manchuria) provinces. During the 1920's and 30's two Japanese archaeologists, Kosaku Hamada and Seiichi Mizuno, spent three seasons excavating at Hongshanliou (2), the site in Liaoning province after which the culture takes its name. In the 1970's, excavations in the same area produced unprecedented finds of jade sculptures worked into dragon and cloud shapes. These works were discovered in tombs and on the surfaces of outdoor altars at several major sites. Stylistically they appear as mature and sophisticated works of art. It is suggested that they were symbolically potent in relation to their excavated context of elaborate ceremonial centers and to another art form, unique life-size clay sculptures of female fertility figures. The jades, images, and in particular the archaeologists label "pig-dragon", appear singularly important. As a way of explaining the special position of these jades in the early cultural setting of ancient China, I shall initially identify the jades according to type, style and archaeological context.

The connection between Hongshan and Yangshao cultures is illustrated primarily by certain shared pottery shapes and painted motifs. When Hongshanliou was first excavated archaeologists labelled the early Hongshan phase "Painted Ware" after the similarly painted pottery of Yangshao in central and northern Henan. Sun Shoudao (9) and Guo Dashun (10) recently amplified this relationship in noting that there were two successive ceramic phases corresponding to the Hougang (13) Yangshao and later Longshan (12) cultural periods. Almost all C-14 dates from Hongshan sites are concentrated in the middle of the 4th millennium: one from Dongsanqiu (11), Liaoning dates to 5485 ± 110, calibrated to 3490 ± 110 BC (11) and three from Niuheliang (14). Liang dates to 3020 ± 80, 3625 ± 110 and 3630 ± 110 BC, respectively. Excavators have dated Hongshan cultural remains at Xishuiquan (15), Chifeng (16) to before ca. 2600 BC and within the range of the Hougang phase of the Yangshao Neolithic. A working timetable for the Hongshan culture is ca. 4000-2500 BC.

Hongshan jades according to type, style and material

The jades unearthed from Hongshan burials and ceremonial centers are distinguished as ornaments for attachment or suspension. Each usually has one or more small holes, pierced either as a perforation at the top of the jade or as an eye slit at the back. Major jade types include the so-called "pig-dragon" (zhuling) (17) and related forms (fig. 1C, D); the "horse hoof-shape" (matixing) (18), (fig. 1B); the shape called "cloud with hooks" (gouyanxing) (19), (fig. 1A); the "falcon with cat head" (maotouyingxing) (20), (fig. 1F); and the disk with perforated attachment holes (fig. 1E). Fu (21) axes types with and without perforation holes for hafting also appear (fig. 1L). Less common but also perforated with an attachment hole are shapes in the form of fish (fig. 1H), cicadas (fig. 1G), and tortoises (fig. 1I). Other ornamental shapes include the ring-shaped bracelet (fig. 1O), various beads (fig. 1N), a long pencil-shape (fig. 1P), an awl-shaped pendant (fig. 1Q), and a linked disk-shape with perforated holes for attachment (fig. 1M). The small awl-shaped pendants, the ring bracelets and the beads are types prevalent in burials of other cultures belonging to coastal northeast and south China, called Dawenkou (22) and Songzi (23), Hemudu (24), respectively. The listed shapes, on the other hand, specifically characterize the Hongshan culture.

The most outstanding of these native Hongshan jade types is the so-called "pig-dragon". This name is derived from features of the face that suggest the wild boar (the excavators use pig), and from the feature of the curling body that suggests the mythical dragon of Chinese legend. Facial features in their most complete form are represented by the double fist-sized jade, around 15 cm. tall, that was unearthed at Jianping (25) county, Liaoning (fig. 1D, left). In the drawing large U-shaped ears in profile fold in two or three layers around completely circular pupil or eye sockets. At the top these ear shapes rise in sloping, split peaks. The remainder of the face is limited to the snout with two teardrop-shaped nostrils and a mouth open at the sides where a set of upward and downward-turning tusks are symmetrically rendered. The C-shaped body is an emphatic thick, softly rounded curl that ends in a flat surface parallel to the snout. To create this C-shaped body tube the center is pierced by a large circular hole. A small perforation created by drilling from two sides lies as a rule at the top of the body curl.
Fig. 1. Jade Types of the Hongshan Culture: A. "Hooked cloud" shapes. M14, Niuheisang, L: 15.8 cm. (WW 1986, fig. 18.3, p. 12) and B. "Knife right banner," L: 22.4 cm. (From WW 1986, fig. 5, p. 11) C. Dragon. Sanshingulou, H: 26 cm. (WW 1986, fig. 1, p. 6).


Fig. 1. Les types de jade de la culture de Hongshan : A. Formes dites « à vis à crochets », provenant de la tombe n° 14 de Niuheisang, L: 15.8 cm., et de la Banière de droite de Baisi, L: 22.4 cm. ; B. Tube en forme de « sésame de chêne », tombe n° 4 de Niuheisang, L: 15.3 cm. ; C. Dragon provenant de Sanshingulou, H: 26 cm. ; D. Dragon-cochon découvert à Jiuming, H: 15 cm. ; dragon-cochon appartenant au Musée Provincial du Liaoning, H: 4 cm. ; dragon-cochon provenant de la tombe n° 4 de Niuheisang, H: 10.3 cm. ; E. Disques avec double perforation provenant respectivement de la tombe n° 7 (L: 11.5 cm) et de la tombe n° 11 de Niuheisang. F. Disque provenant de la tombe n° 1 de Huitongou, L: 2.5 cm, et du site de Nasitas, dimensions non communiquées. G. Cigale, de Nasitas, L: 9.9 cm. ; H. Poisson, tombe n° 3 de Huitongou, L: 2.7 cm. ; I. Tortue, site de Huitongou, L: 4.5 cm.
Jades related to the conformation of the "pig-dragon" include the large-scale 21 cm. long piece from Sanxingtala (figs. 1 C and 3) and the arc-shape from Dongshanzui (fig. 1 J). The former piece differs from the pig-dragon in its larger size and serpentine rather than felty thick body shape, in head type that is long and in profile rather than thick and frontal, and in eye type that is almond rather than circular in shape. Although it has been argued that the Sanxingtala dragon head is comparable to the head of the pig-dragon in having nostrils and an open mouth, the position and delineation of snout and mouth differ. The Sanxingtala dragon carries a head plume rather than encircling ear flaps of the pig-dragon variety. The similarly between the dragon heads of the arc-shaped jade and Sanxingtala jade indicates that alongside the pig-dragon type the Sanxingtala one was standardised for faces.

Naturally rendered pig heads decorate the ends of another small jade, 8.9 cm. long, from Sanguangdianzi (fig. 1 K). These swine heads are rotund and less elongated structurally than their related forms on the Dongshanzui arc and jade from Sanxingtala. The three nonetheless share snouts with nostrils, slightly open mouths and slanting profile eyes and suggest by their typological similarity that the pig and its wild progenitor, the boar, were the inspiration behind the heads of both jade dragon types of Hongshan cultural date.

Another Hongshan jade may be a generic reference to the abstract symbol of pig-dragon; although this is a tentative rather than firm identification. This type is represented by the small stone face, 2.2 cm. broad, found at Nasitai (fig. 2) in Inner Mongolia.23 and by more complex renditions in jade from the collection of Mr. Erwin Harris (fig. 4) and excavations at Niuheliang.24 Common to both simple and elaborate versions are the circular eyes and long mouth area punctuated by tusks. The Harris piece, measuring 17 cm. long, can be studied in detail and is used as exemplary of this type. Unlike the simple stone disk from Nasitai, the Harris jade is exquisitely worked into a complex shape outlined by seven pairs of aligned, symmetrical tusks and flanking end pairs of softly rounded opposing hooks. The reverse face is polished but undecorated.

The second distinctive jade type from Hongshan sites is what the excavators label the "hooked cloud" design. This shape varies in size, measuring 24 cm. long for the example from Sanguangdianzi (fig. 5) and 7.9 cm. long for the example from Hutouguou (fig. 6) (but this example is broken, and thus incomplete). The shape takes its name from the openwork spiral (cloud shape) whose four corners bear gently outward curving equidistant arcs. Two or three perforated holes may appear at the top (fig. 1 A) or eye slits for threading may appear on the ornament's reverse (fig. 5) that is otherwise flat, polished and undecorated. Sensuousity is emphatic in the characteristic undulating form, here, suggestive of dense rolling cloud vapors a subject already raised by the label "hooked cloud". Softly rounded grooves that characterize the pig-dragon's eye folds or hooks of the animal face define the central spiral and quadrifoliate arcs of the cloud. Seven examples of this sensitively modelled form are published.25 A version from Balin (fig. 1 A with) has seven outer hooks, three more than are usual for the otherwise standard four at each corner. In some versions the head of a bird may be picked out in profile at the center (fig. 5). Because this shape is designed for attachment and has been found behind the head of corpses, it has been described as an ornament for a headdress.

A third, highly unusual shape in the Hongshan repertoire is that labelled "horse hoof". It is an open cylinder characterized if turned upside down as horse-hoof in outline, slanting obliquely as it hits the ground (figs. 1B 6-7). The edges of the
Fig. 3. Dragon Jade, H: 26 cm., Sarsvingtala, Inner Mongolia (WW 1984:6, pl. 1)
Fig. 3. Dragon jade, H. 26 cm, Sarsxingtala, en Mongolie intérieure.

Fig. 4. Animal Face Jade,
W: 17 cm., Erwin Harris Collection.
Fig. 4. Ornement représentant une tête d’animal vue de face, jade, l. 17 cm.
Collection Erwin Harris.
open end forming an oblique angle are sometimes considerably thinner by comparison to the opposite end where the edges are equal in width with the rest of the cylinder (fig. 7). The sharp, thin edge may show slight fractures and the opposite end may carry opposing perforated holes (fig. 7). Because examples of this jade work of art have been found in excavated burials lying horizontally behind the head of skeletons, the form has been described as a predecessor of the porcelain pillow. Other scholars suggest it functioned as a hair ornament. One of the Sackler pieces and two comparable pieces from the Buffalo Museum of Science and Grenville Winthrop Collection at Harvard University are unusual in having an evenly thick edge at the oblique end of the cylinder. The same thick end of the Winthrop jade is decorated with a U-shaped motif repeated in expanding form as if to mimic painted designs found on contemporary cylinders made out of clay.

A fourth type of Hongshan jade is the small pendant usually under 5 cm. wide that is modeled on one side with an eye hook on the reverse. One popular variation is the bird shape, sometimes labeled owl and locally called "cat-headed falcon". An example in turquoise was discovered at Dongshan- zui (fig. 8). Standard interpretations favor a protruding head with cat-like ears and pointed chin, unmarked body framed by unfolded wings, talons, and lower tail with striations indicating

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leathers. Variations are marked by tendencies to simplify the shape and details of the head and feathers, as in the examples from Houtouguo (fig. 1F top) and Balin Right Banner (fig. 9). The example from Nasaitai shows clear description of the bird’s talons (figs. 1F bottom). The other small-scale pendant jades, such as the tortoise (fig. 1J), profile fish (fig. 1K) and cicada (fig. 1I), may also vary between a simplified and more detailed treatment of form.

A fifth type of Hongshan jade is the squarish or rounded disk with a large central and pair of small perforated attachment holes (figs. 1E, 10-11). Four examples have been excavated from Hongshan sites and others are known in collections (fig. 10). Each has in common a 10-12 cm. width and a 5-7 cm. thickness that tapers at the center and exterior edges. Although one author identified this shape as a symbol of the yue (battle axe), there is no prototype for this evolution. The two perforations at the top indicate that this piece like other Hongshan jades was designed for suspension. There is a fa-axe form that varies between a long rectangular shape, 13.5 cm. long x 5.8 cm. wide, to an oval-shaped blade with perforation for hafting (fig. 11).

A sixth category in the Hongshan jade repertoire includes ring-bracelets (fig. 1O), beads (fig. 1N), ornaments with two or three large holes (fig. 1M), awl-shaped pendants (fig. 1Q) and very long pencil-shaped rods, with one measuring 29 cm. long (fig. 1P).

Hongshan jade is consistently described as soft jade, theoretically equivalent to the nephrite worked further south by neolithic cultures of Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. It is distin-
guished technically as *xiyanyu*[^39], a green colored type of serpentine, also known as bowenite.[^45] *Xiyanyu* is close in terms of physical chemistry to Kunlun jade, also sometimes called serpentine since it comprises chrysotile and lizardite.[^46] Colors range from light green, lake green, mottled black, chicken-bone white, to yellow and brown. Similar colors may be mottled as splatches within the fabric of the jade. Hardnesses range from 3.5 to 6 on the Mohs scale, as compared with 6 or 7 for nephrite and jadeite. *Xiyen* jade has a specific gravity of 2.5-2.7 which is less than nephrite at 2.9 to 3.4.[^47] Like other jades, Hongshan ones were worked with abrasives and rotary utensils through a process of grinding, cutting, piercing and burningish.[^48]

The Hongshan style is typified by a respect for expressive sculptural form and material lustre. A jade’s edge is methodically rounded and the surface carefully burnished in creating a wet, unctuous sheen. Features are delineated either as soft ridges and grooves, forming undulating wave patterns or as very shallow channels, creating delicate lines marking tusks or wrinkles of a snout. Lines defining features on smaller pieces may be crude but this quality is due to the limitations of size. Lathe marks sometimes appear, as on the interior of some horse hoof jades. In almost all cases the jade is handled as if modelled out of soft, pliable clay despite the jade’s otherwise obdurate hardstone property. Certain jades, such as the “pig-dragon” and “horse hoof” shapes, stand out three-dimensionally, expressive more as sculptures than as flat, two dimensional images. Stylistically Hongshan jades can be defined as both naturalistic and conceptual.

**Hongshan jades: their burial and ceremonial context**

The significance of jades of the Hongshan culture can in part be understood by the context of their discovery. Excavations of jades on or near foundations of ceremonial structures or within tombs used ceremonially occur at four primary sites, including Sanguangzhanzi, Houtougu, Dongshanzui and Niuheliang in Kezuo[^49] and Lingyuan[^50] counties, Liaoning.[^49] At Dongshanzui jade works of art in the form of small-scale birds, double-headed dragon forms (fig. 1 F-1) and unpublished cicada shapes[^50] lay within the foundations of a square stone platform (fig. 12) and ceramic torsos of pregnant females (figs. 13-14) lay nearby on an adjacent circular platform (fig. 12).

The two open-air altars at Dongshanzui are part of an elaborate structure with surrounding walls and subsidiary foundations created out of carefully worked stones.[^51] The rectangular platform measures 11.8 m. long × 9.5 m. wide and the circular one 2.5 m. in diameter. Both altars were constructed out of a hard-packed yellow earthen layer framed with grey and white sand-colored granite stones worked to a smooth surface and rectangular shape of .20 to .30 cm. long. The small (ca. 5.8 cm. tall) and half lifesize (18 cm. tall × 22 cm. wide) fertility figures in seated posture (figs. 13-14), found on the southeastern side of the circular platform, are sensitively modelled with protruding bellies, buttocks, and thighs. The discovery of these female figurines and jade works of art on outdoor altars underscores their specialized ceremonial function.

Jades are also commonly found within elite tombs. The type of stone tomb and wall structure first discovered at Houtougu (fig. 15) is related to those recently excavated at Niuheliang on the border of Jiaoping and Lingyuan counties in western Liaoning near the Hebei border.[^52] The tombs at Niuheliang, called “stone pile mounds” (fig. 19, Z 1-2), are rich and complex in relationship to two other related finds of large scale, one called the “Goddess Temple” nushen miao[^53] (fig. 16) and the other a structure comprising three concentric stone walls (fig. 19, Z 3). Niuheliang was discovered in 1981 and excavated from 1983-1985. Although the distribution of remains is extensive, encompassing 1.2 km. in area and seven sites (Niu [53] I-VII), only Niu I and II have been published in a preliminary report. Niu II incorporates the large-scale cemetery and tiered circular altar and Niu I the “Goddess Temple.”

The mountain top complex of Niu I lies on the southern edge of a large-scale platform (fig. 16). The “Goddess Temple” proper is surrounded on the east side by a wall filled on its outer edge with painted ceramic cylinders. The layout consists of two parts, one a multi-room foundation labelled J1B that measures 6.9 m. wide × 18.4 m. long and the other J1A, a smaller, single room foundation that is half below ground, measuring 2.65 m. wide × 6 m. long. Although few measurements and no ground plan of the multi-room structure have been provided, it is understood that the foundations were stone and

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the walls a combination of a wood framework held together by two to three layers of mud and thatch. The floors and walls had undergone different degrees of burning. As described but left unillustrated, the layout of J1B consists of a central, major room, in one case described as circular, that was flanked on the north by a small rectangular room and on the east side by a passageway leading to an oval-shaped room with polished walls. In the main chamber were found polychrome painted clay fragments of a human head with inlaid turquoise eyes (fig. 17), shoulders, upper arms, hands and breasts, plus animal parts in the form of the head of a "pig-dragon" (fig. 18) and its pettites, and distinctive large-scale ceramics. In the northern room fragments of a large-scale bird claw and red pottery cylinder fragments were discovered. Fragments of wall murals in purple-red and yellow-white shades show abstract designs decorating "raised hands" and stippled dots in rows. Because the architectural structure of the central hall had fallen down, the ceramic sculptures, assumed to be raised reliefs, remained as piecemeal parts. Certain fragments refer to subject matter directly related to jade imagery, as in the head, foot and rolled snout of the "pig-dragon". Tusks, described as fangs, and the lip of this type are immediately apparent (fig. 18). The hooves
(pig trotters?) of this dragon are reported to be from the lower part of the pig-dragon’s upper body.

The life-size head of a female (fig. 17), measuring 22.5 cm. tall × 16.5 cm. wide or 23.5 cm. wide from ear to ear, was found in the central hall of the temple complex. This celebrated head was identified as north Chinese in type. Her association with two shoulder parts attached to neck and breast is one piece of evidence indicating that the head was originally part of a complete female body. Because the back of the head was flat and a wooden support was found attached to it, it is hypothesized that the figurine, like the “pig-dragon,” once decorated the temple wall. Other remains of body parts, mostly seated females in a kneeling or cross-legged posture, apparently represented three different sizes. An ear and nose fragment found in the main chamber of the temple, for example, is described as belonging to a figurine three times life-size. The excavators theorize that these naturalistically modelled forms belong to six images of at least four different size females — small, one-third life-size, life-size, and three times life-size. Also curious is that pieces of human bone have been found in the ceramic cavity of one of the upper arms. Bodily parts were modelled over a hollow interior.

Excavators at Niuhe-liang have also reported four stone pile burial groups, Z1 and Z2, within Niu II just north of the Goddess Temple (fig. 19). This is also the area (Z3) where the unpre-
cedent design of a round altar constructed out of light red granite stones and stepped at three levels (fig. 19, Z3) was identified. Preliminary calculations show three concentric rings with diameters measuring 22 m. to 15.6 m. to 11 m. respectively. Z2 consists of a very large pit burial, M1, crowned at ground level by a rectangular stone-lined platform and surrounding walls that on the outermost level are 17.5 m. east to west and 18.7 m. north to south. Inner walls are described as located at 5.9 m., 7.5 m., and 8 m. in distance from the coffin chamber. No mound exists; the stone-lined platform of 3.6 m. length is perfectly flat as at Hutougou. The underground part of the large burial (M1), measuring 2.21 m. long x .85 m. wide, and .5 m. deep, is centralized. M1 at Hutougou (fig. 15) interestingly measures 5.7 m. wide and lies 4.5 m. underground and is surrounded, in this case, not by a rectangular but rather circular wall aligned with painted ceramic cylinders. As at Hutougou, various layers of rectangularly worked stones define the coffin chamber of M1 at Niuheilang that now lies robbed and empty of the expected jade works of art. At Hutougou burial goods were exclusively jades in the form of tortoises, falcons, hooked cloud shapes, rings and bracelets. Ceramics and tools were noticeably absent. In the earth fill of the Niuheilang burial human, pig and ox bones were discovered. This mammoth complex of a deep underground burial topped at ground level by a carefully designed altar and surrounding stone walls evidently belonged to a leader of powerful dimension, of one who like the deceased at Hutougou commanded large-scale, well-designed veneration.

A group of smaller stone mound burials from Z1 is located to the west of the large burial M1 and circular altars (fig. 19). Like the structure of M1, these burials are organized as a large rectangular area delimited by an inner and outer stone wall, in this case a double one framed by painted pottery tubes. These tombs are distinguished from the monolithic burial in being set in rectangular pits that are half-under and half-above ground, with stones piled atop them in a mound. Some of them are joint burials in the sense that a stone wall may be shared or in some cases three skeletons may exist in one stone enclosure. No sexes of the skeletons have yet been reported. Some burials have been reopened for the addition of a second burial, as in the case of M7, M1-M19 are cited but not all are represented on the drawn map of finds. Only five tombs, M4, M6, M7, M11, and M15 have been published. Jades from burials of the latter group represent typical shapes, including the "pig-dragon," "horse hoof," disk shape, "hooked cloud," and ring-bracelet. The burials are all comparable in structural type to those known at Hutougou and Hongshanhou.

The significance of the Hongshan jade dragon

The complex of large-scale ceremonial centers and altars found at Hongshan sites evidently focused on fertility deities and powerful human spirits. The fact that the jade works of art were found in association with these ceremonial sites strongly suggests that they functioned as related religious symbols. This was the consensus of various scholars who in July of 1983 convened a symposium on the site of Dongshanzi. The well-known scholar of prehistory, Su Bingqi and eleven other contributors published their views in Wenzhou 1984, no. 11. The major issues raised concerned the religious function of the altars and associated finds of jade and ceramic sculptures, and the date of the site. As noted by several authors, the site at Dongshanzi had more that one phase of occupation and during the latest one there were two functional altars, one square and one round. The last settling was identified with the Late Yangshao and early Longshan phases on the basis of finds of grey and black ceramics.

Scholarly opinion also concurred that Dongshanzi was a ceremonial center and that its sacrificial altars were used in worshipping an earth mother who was treated as a fertility goddess. Perhaps she represented what later literary references mean by Hou Tu [168], or Sovereign Mother Earth. "Hou" is a title used in addressing females, usually queens, in later Shang oracle bone inscriptions. The excavators of Niuheilang, Sun Shoudao and GuoDashun, go further in suggesting that the emphasis on worship of a fertility goddess, as represented at Niuheilang, is connected with ancestor worship in which the fertility goddess signifies a mythified ancestress. Supplementary deities such as the dragon would then signify her assistants and as such also function as fertility symbols.

Sun Shoudao also maintains that the "pig-dragon" represents an early form of the mythical Chinese dragon and that the
Fig. 20. Ceramic Jar with Painted Dragon Image, Wushan, Shaanxi, Yangshao Cultural Period (Five Thousand Years of Chinese Art Series: Chinese Jade, Part 1, Taipei, fig. 21:1, p. 181)
Fig. 20. Jarre en terre cuite peinte, ornée d’un dragon, site de Wushan, au Shaanxi, contemporain de la culture de Yangshao.

Fig. 21. Ceramic Pan with Painted Dragon Image, Interior, Taosi, Shanxi, Longshan Period (KG 1983.1, pl. 4:1)
Fig. 21. Bassin pan en terre cuite orné sur l’intérieur d’une image de dragon, site de Taosi, Shanxi, époque Longshan.

Fig. 22. Dragon Image, Interior of bronze pan, M5, Anyang, Henan (Yinxu Fuhao mu, pl. CV:1)
Fig. 22. Représentation d’un dragon à l’intérieur d’un bassin pan, provenant de la tombe n° 5 d’Anyang, au Henan.

Fig. 23. "Pig-Dragon"
Jade, H: 3.2 cm.,
Late Shang, Arthur M. Sackler Collections, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Fig. 23. Dragon-crochet, jade, H: 3.2 cm., fin Shang, Arthur M. Sackler Collections, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 24. "Pig-Dragon"
Jade, W: 5.8 cm.,
Late Shang, M5, Anyang, Henan (Yinxu Fuhao mu, pl. CV:1)
Fig. 24. Dragon-crochet, jade, l. 5.8 cm., provenant de la tombe n° 5 d’Anyang, au Henan, fin Shang.
identification of the pig in this early image was probably linked with the needs of an early settlement for agricultural and domestic fertility. This symbolic identification is persuasive for several reasons. Pigs or more likely wild boars are the most common animal remains in late neolithic burials. They also appear as a prominent subject in other major jade-working cultures of the late neolithic. To early northern and coastal Chinese the swine must have been a potent symbol that evolved in response to the revolution that sought to tame and domesticate the wild animal, in this case the boar. Scholarly notice of later literary references in classical texts and Han art to the boar as a symbol of a spirit of thunder and rain called Xiweite, are relevant. They illustrate the continued interest in associating the boar with fertility in early historic times. The dragon of course is well known in later literary references as a symbol of fertility and as a skyscraper vehicle to the supernatural. Early literary references to the dragon as a provider of rain, a fertilizing source and symbol of beneficence abound, and, with the archaeological evidence connecting the Hongshan jade dragons with fertility figurines, strongly reinforce the notion that the Hongshan dragon was initially conceived as a fertility symbol.

Certain art historical and later literary data also support the contention that the Hongshan jades refer to the traditional dragon symbol of fertility. In defining the thickets C-shaped jade as the legendary Chinese dragon, Sun traced its typological evolution from Hongshan times through the chronologica stages of Xiajadian (ca. 7500-1800 BC), Erlitou (ca. 2100-1800 BC) and Shang (ca. 1800-1100 BC). Although available excavated examples for comparison are limited, examples from the period transitional to Shang are suggestive. A painted pot with interior motif of curling dragon from Taosi (fig. 21), a site currently identified with the Longshan culture and possibly early Xia regime, ca. 2200 BC, appears revealing. Painted in black and white detail a dragon curls within the burnished bowl's interior in seeming anticipation of the motif popularized on later ritual bronze vessels. The body of the painted dragon is decorated with a scale motif and the head is characterized by an open mouth issuing forth a tongue with branches. Although there are obvious differences of media between the Hongshan and Longshan works, the formal composition of snake body with tail that curls and ends at its head appears to be meaningful as an image that persists over time in signifying the dragon. The few extant, earlier versions of the dragon on late Yangshao pottery from Wushan, Gansu (fig. 20), Baosi, Shaanxi and Gangu, Gansu are similarly circular in design; they suggest by their occurrence that this image was more common to ancient north China than has been generally recognized.

In Shang art both dragon varieties of the Hongshan jade tradition appear (figs. 22-24), although the Suxingtala variety is far more popular and varied in design. A representative example of the latter is the dragon encircling the interior of a Shang bronze pan (fig. 22). Shang characteristics are evident in the transformation of horn or ear type and in body markings. The pig-dragon type in later Shang art is also well represented by several examples excavated from burials in the cemetery of the Western Sector, and from burial No. 5 at Anyang (fig. 24). Other examples are known outside China in the Seattle Art Museum and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (fig. 23). The type is easily recognizable in disposition; a squarish head is attached to a thick curling body. What dates these examples to the Shang is the body decor of scroll-like motifs or the emphasis on a volupptuous thick torso. Details of the face that were once carefully rendered are now simplified and the head is almost flush with the body.

In addition to the suggestive archaeological and art historical data is certain literary data that seems to tighten the correlation of the Hongshan jade with the image of the traditional Chinese dragon. In oracle bone script of late Shang times there are two graphs used to represent the dragon. Generically they correspond closely to the images of the two Hongshan jade types (fig. 25: 1-4, 5-6). The second variation (fig. 25: 5-6) is transcribed long (龙) or dragon as it is known in modern Chinese. The first (fig. 25: 1-4) is transcribed qiu (竜), the dragon that according to the Shuowen (说文) dictionary of Han times has no horns. Although in oracle bone inscriptions the latter graph functions semantically in the sense of "to recover," its phonetic reading of qiu (竜) clearly identifies it as the hornless version of dragon. What we may be witnessing over time, from the preliterate era of Hongshan to the literate era of Shang, is the survival of the distinction of two different dragon types, a distinction marked in Hongshan jade imagery and also later Shang jade imagery. The graphic data from Shang oracle bone inscriptions is dense and the questions posed are complex; the equivalence of pictographic variation and artistic imagery nonetheless appears profound, especially in the implications this equivalence may have on the origins of early Chinese civilization. Perhaps the Hongshan was one of the cultural influences that contributed to the historic tradition that came to define northern China in Shang times.

The jades from the Hongshan culture are rich and varied, possessing a style and expression of their own. They appear to be directly linked in symbol with the ceremonial centers focused on fertility and procreation. The symbolic images, in particular, the dragons are exceptional not only for their conception but for their connection with the early mythic dragon of ancient China. Although excavations are ongoing and thus our conclusions tentative, future work in this area promises to be rewarding in revealing more about the pre- and protohistoric contribution of the Hongshan culture to mainstream Chinese traditions.
Les jades de Hongshan : le dragon, la fertilité et le culte des esprits

Des jades, sans équivalent jusqu’au présent, ont été mis au jour récemment sur des sites appartenant à la culture de Hongshan dans la partie la plus septentrionale de la Chine, à savoir la région est de la Mongolie intérieure, le nord-est du Hebei et le Liaoning. Ces jades sont datés entre ca. 4000 et 2000 av. J.-C., ce qui correspond à une phase importante de la préhistoire de la Chine, ayant contribué à la formation de sa civilisation. D’importants types de jades sont identifiés dans l’article et font l’objet d’une analyse stylistique et typologique : ce sont le « cochin-dragon » *zhulong*, la forme dite « de nuage à crochets », la forme dite « en sabot de cheval », « la chouette aux ailes déployées », pour reprendre leur dénomination chinois. Le style de ces jades est imagé et naturaliste, des qualités difficiles à obtenir avec un matériau aussi dur à travailler, et ce, dès une époque très reculée. La forme la plus chargée de sens, dite *zhulong* ou « cochin-dragon », paraît associée à l’image la plus ancienne du dragon mythique en même temps qu’a un culte de la fertilité. L’existence de ce culte est suggérée par les vestiges d’une vaste architecture consacrée à une déesse de la fertilité, par des fragments de figurines sculptées représentant des femmes enceintes et par des témoins de la période Shang ayant un caractère paléographique ou ayant valeur de comparaison.

5. Fu Sinian, *‘Yi Xia donxi shou’*, *Fu Sinian xuani*, 1935, pp. 998-1020.

As previously suggested in associating the jade finds of Hongshan with the Eastern Yi (Wu Hong, *Bird Motifs in Eastern Yi Art*, *Ornamentation*, October 1985, pp. 32-36). 
6. Wu Hong, *‘Yi Xia donxi shou’*, pp. 1020ff.
8. Sun Shouduo and Guo Dashun, *Lun Liaohe liuyu de yuanshi wenming yu long de qiyuan*. *WW* 1984.6, p. 11. For illustration of painted pottery see *Hsung-shan-hou*, fig. 2a, pl. XXXII.
14. Another type of jade, a hook, is known by one example at Nasiti (KG 1987.6, fig. 6: 17, p. 516). For other possible Hongshan images that have not yet been excavated see A. Forsyth, *Five Chinese Jade Figures*, *Ornamentation*, May 1990, pp. 54-63.
15. See e.g., Dauvenou, *Beijing*, 1974, figs. 80-83 (mostly stone examples but typologically comparable) and Songze, *Beijing*, 1987, figs. 22.
16. For the slt disk earrings of Liangchou, cultural date see Zhou Nanguan, *Shihun Taihu diqu xinzhi shidiyiqu*, *WW* 1985.5, p. 79. It is a misconception to imply that the “pig-dragon” jade of Hongshan date originated in the silt disk complex as only found at Late Neolithic sites in central coastal and southern China (J. Wiat, *Chinese Jades from the Collection of the Seattle Art Museum*, 1990, p. 13). The Hongshan dragons are too large and thick to function as earrings; furthermore, they are consistently pierced at the top with a hole for suspension.
17. Published examples come from Chifeng and Nasiti, Balin Right Banner, Inner Mongolia; Sannxiitala and Wengnuo Special Banner, Inner Mongolia; Fuxin Commune, Fuxin, Liaoning; the Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang: *The Cultural Museum, Aohan Banner, Liaoning* (Sun and Guo, *...long de qiyuan*), *WW* 1986.8, figs. 1-3, p. 517; *Tianjin Art Museum* and old catalogs (You Rende, *Shang dai dao longwen dao zuo* shun yu ren shi yu,*WW* 1981.8, figs. 1-3, p. 58); and Weichang, Hebei (*WW* 1984.6, p. 14).
18. The unpublished “pig-dragon” jade from the Robert Ellsworth Collection was on exhibit at China Institute in February through June, 1990. It measures 22.5 cm wide x 10.2 cm thick and is blue-gray to green in coloration.
22. KG 1986.6, fig. 8, p. 501.
23. KG 1987.6, fig. 13, p. 516.
27. In addition to those from Sanguandianzi and Houtouguo, mentioned above, are those collected at Balin Right Banner (*WW* 1984.6, fig. 5, p. 14, also illustrated in *Zhenhuagou meishi gugong*; vol. 9 (Yiqu), *Beijing*, 1986, fig. 5, p. 3); Wengnuo Special Banner (*KG* 1986.6, p. 500); and Nansiulan (*WW* 1986.8, figs. 18, 3: 12, and *Nasiti* (*KG* 1987.6, fig. 14, p. 517).
28. KG 1986.6, p. 499; KG 1986.8, fig. 17, p. 12 (Niuheilang).
29. Examples of this horse hoof-shaped jade in western collections, including the Minneapolis Museum of Art, Asian Art Museum, Avery Brundage Collection, and Buffalo Museum of Science were on exhibit at China Institute during the spring of 1988 and two are described in the brochure to this exhibit (E. Childs-Johnson, *Ritual and Power: Jades of Ancient China*,...