

# THINKING GREEN: CHINESE JADES REWORKED IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BCE

*Lecture given by J. Keith Wilson on Tuesday 12 March 2013*

## *The Woolf Jade Lecture*

After almost one century, archaeologists and art historians have established a sound understanding of the types of antiquities associated with different Chinese periods and regions.<sup>1</sup> This has been particularly useful for jades and other hard stones that were often vaguely or erroneously classified previously. In addition to disclosing standards, however, researchers have also identified anomalies. Some are unusual or as yet unmatched pieces. More interesting, however, are objects that have been found far from where they belong either historically or geographically; archaizing artifacts; and jades that were reworked after they were first created.

All three of the last categories were represented in the 1976 discovery of the Bronze Age tomb of a late Shang dynasty royal consort who lived in the early Anyang period and probably died around the year 1200 BCE.<sup>2</sup> This consort, now generally called Fu Hao, was buried with over 750 jade objects, nearly all made from nephrite. Remarkably, the contents included a number of Neolithic jades of various dates and cultures suggesting that she may have been a jade collector. These were not properly identified in the initial excavation monograph where all of the pieces were presented as if they dated to the lifetime of the consort. It took some time for scholars to catalogue them correctly as heirlooms predating the late Shang dynasty by one or two millennia.<sup>3</sup>

The same tomb included a group of jades with late Shang-style decoration and working methods applied to shapes inspired by much earlier Neolithic models. Circular pendants in the form of coiled dragons, for instance, show a familiarity with Neolithic works created by the Hongshan Culture (about 4700 to 2900 BCE) predating the early Anyang period by at least 1700 years.<sup>4</sup> The examples found in Fu Hao's tomb help to provide a context for unprovenanced pieces like one in the Singer collection (fig. 1).<sup>5</sup> We do not yet know if such jades were consciously produced as archaizing forms

<sup>1</sup> One recent survey of these achievements is Xiaoneng Yang, ed., *New Perspectives on China's Past: Chinese Archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. The young Freer Gallery of Art played an active role in introducing modern archaeological practice to China, dispatching its first curator, Carl Whiting Bishop (1881–1942), hired in 1922, to work there from 1923 to 1934, and sponsoring the first scientific excavation undertaken by a Chinese archaeologist (at the Yangshao Neolithic site of Xiyincun, Shanxi [1925–26]) and the first seasons of excavations organized by Academia Sinica, the Chinese scholarly academy, in 1928 and 1929 at Anyang. See Clayton Brown, “Li Ji: Father of Chinese Archaeology,” *Orientalism* 39:3 (April 2008), 61–66.

<sup>2</sup> Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Hayashi Minao, “Inkyo Fukō bo shutsudo no gyokki jakkan ni taisuru chūshaku,” *Tōhō gakuhō* 58 (March 1986), 1–70.

<sup>4</sup> In the excavation monograph the artifact class was termed Jue Type II; the five examples (M5:413–414, M5:435, and M5:985–986) are introduced in *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 129 and illustrated in fig. 105:1–3. The Neolithic prototype has been unearthed at a number of Hongshan Culture sites such as Tomb 4 Niuheliang, Liaoning; see Liaoning sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Liaoning Niuheliang Hongshan wenhua nushenmiao yu jishi zhongqun fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 1986:8, 1–17.

<sup>5</sup> When first published by Max Loehr in 1965, this pendant was dated to the Western Zhou period; the discovery of the Fu Hao tomb provided the basis for its redating to the early Anyang period. See *Relics of Ancient China from the Collection of Dr. Paul Singer*, New York: Asia Society, 1965, no. 48. There are additional circular pendants like this in the Sackler collection: S1987.583, S1987.597, and S1987.606.





Fig. 1. *Circular pendant (jue) in the form of a coiled dragon*

China, probably Henan province, Anyang

Late Shang dynasty, ca. 1300–1200 BCE

Jade (nephrite)

4.4 x 4.5 x 1.2 cm (1 3/4 x 1 3/4 x 1/2 in)

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, The Dr. Paul Singer Collection of Chinese Art of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; a joint gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, Paul Singer, the AMS Foundation for the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, and the Children of Arthur M. Sackler, S2012.9.232

times is still lacking.<sup>7</sup> Such an ambitious goal also lies beyond the scope of the current paper which simply aims to establish several meaningful categories of such “recycling” in antiquity by focusing on a few representative pieces that were both created and reworked in the second millennium BCE. This period corresponds to the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age in China, a time of increasing interaction between different regions and cultures. Despite the resulting changes in social, political, economic, and material culture, the medium of jade continued to be important, used to fashion precious luxury goods as well as venerated ritual and ceremonial objects. In such a context, identifying and interpreting changes introduced to existing finished forms seems especially meaningful. Thus, in addition to demonstrating how some altered forms were derived from inherited ceremonial jade artifacts like disks, tubes, tools, and weapons, this study also speculates on when and why the changes were made. Finally, it addresses the attitudes implied by the alterations. All of the examples analyzed here come from the Freer and Sackler collections. They will be introduced not in the sequence of their original creation but according to the order in which they were remade. They have been selected to represent just three of many categories of reworked jades from antiquity: repaired, recycled, and repurposed.

#### *A monumental harvesting blade (hu) repaired in the late Neolithic period*

Inspired by a modest functional agricultural tool, this impressive ceremonial object is among the largest early jades to survive to modern times (fig. 2a). When the trapezoidal piece arrived in 1918

but their creation confirms the survival of other Neolithic types into the Bronze Age whether their true identity was recognized at the time or not.

Both of these categories – true antiques and later derivations – show that not all jades were buried shortly after they were first made never to be seen again for millennia. Instead, some might have been treasured above ground and passed from one generation to the next for long periods of time or found in chance discoveries and returned to active circulation in pre-modern times. This seems to be true of the jades that are the subject of this essay: Archaic pieces that were reworked or repurposed in antiquity. Fu Hao’s tomb contained early Anyang era instances of this type, including a circular pendant that was converted from a collared disk.<sup>6</sup> The identification and study of such objects requires knowledge of typological standards as well as the ability to recognize alterations and understand the ways the changes were made.

This phenomenon has been noted by some researchers in the past, but a systematic effort to address the topic comprehensively and define patterns of reuse ranging from ancient to modern

<sup>6</sup> This pendant (M5:589) is discussed in *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 129 and illustrated in colour pl. 16:1.

<sup>7</sup> This study builds on the pioneering work of Jessica Rawson who has written “Jade has a remarkable talent for survival, a quality that has been overlooked at its most practical level.... The endurance of jade ensured that individual pieces survived over extraordinary periods of time, being reused and reinterpreted in later eras.... This capacity for survival far exceeds that of metals or ceramic, both of which are much more easily broken into indistinguishable small pieces or melted down.” Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade from the Neolithic to the Qing*, London: British Museum, 1995, 22–23.



at the Detroit home of Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), the Gallery’s founder, it came in a fitted hardwood box inset with a burl wood panel inscribed with three large characters reading “Zhou hu jie (Ceremonial tablet of the Zhou dynasty [ca. 1050–256 BCE]) (fig. 3).” The two neat columns of characters below – written in historically-inspired clerical script (*lishu*) like the title above – report that the enclosed ancient jade was owned by Duanfang (1861–1911; referred to using his studio name, Taozhai) and states that the inscription was written by Zhu Deyi (1871–1942), a protégé of Duanfang and an accomplished calligrapher. This type of box was reserved for only the most important pieces in Duanfang’s collection.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars today disregard the Zhou dynasty date assigned to the object on the inscribed box lid and instead generally believe it dates to the late Neolithic period. Difficulties in dating the object accurately resulted in part from a complicated series of interventions that reshaped and redecorated the object over time. Suffice it to say, it is typologically inspired by smaller, more robust functional stone tools of approximately the same trapezoidal shape that were first used to harvest grain in late Neolithic times. The holes along the spine of the functional models were used to anchor the stone blade to a handle, probably made of wood. Larger, presumably ceremonial versions crated from luxury materials like nephrite began to appear in south China by the late fourth or early third millennium BCE.<sup>9</sup> The most sophisticated examples are, however, found at Erlitou (ca. 1900–1500 BCE), a site in Henan province in the north that bridges the late Stone and early Bronze Ages. The original fabrication of the Freer piece predates the Erlitou but not by much. For now it will be assigned to the late Neolithic Longshan Culture (ca. 3000–2000 BCE), associated with Shandong province, and dated to ca. 2000 BCE.

Excavated examples of the ceremonial jade type illustrate blades that are essentially symmetrical and broader along the bevelled, slightly arched “cutting” edge than the opposite side which is typically

<sup>8</sup> Freer bought this piece from his primary Shanghai source You Xiaoxi. Although it has proven difficult to obtain much biographical information about You (even his life dates remain unknown), his archived correspondence with Freer reveals him to be a thoughtful, scholarly-minded dealer who provided his American client with a string of remarkable acquisitions in the years immediately following the fall of the Qing dynasty through to Freer’s death in 1919. During this period, You was obtaining many of these offerings from the family of Duanfang, a powerful late Qing official who was also China’s premier collector of antiquities, early paintings, and Buddhist sculpture in the late Qing. Duanfang’s assassination on November 27, 1911, in the opening weeks of the Chinese Revolution, led to the dispersal of his collection, as his family sold pieces off one by one.

This blade has been extensively published beginning in the year after its purchase by Freer. In sources issued before the late 1980s, it was variously dated to the Shang dynasty through the Eastern Zhou period; beginning with Hayashi Minao, it has been assigned to the Neolithic, usually the Longshan Culture. See Katherine Nash Rhoades, “Recent Additions to the Freer Collection,” *Art and Archaeology* 8:5 (September–October 1919), 284–285; Alfred Salmony, *Carved Jade of Ancient China*, Berkeley: Gillick Press, 1938, pls. 7:3, 8:1; Umehara Sueji, *Shina kogyoku zuroku*, Kyoto: Kuwana bunseidō, 1955, pl. 48; Na Zhiliang, *Yuqi tongshi*, Hong Kong, 1964–1970, vol. 2, pl. 14; William Willetts, *Foundations of Chinese Art from Neolithic Pottery to Modern Architecture*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, colour pl. 7; William Watson, *Early Civilization in China*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1966, 75, fig. 58; Geoffrey Wills, *Jade of the East*, New York: Weatherhill, 1972, pls. 19–20; Doris Dohrenwend, “Jade Demonic Images from Early China,” *Ars Orientalis* 10 (1975), 62, figs. 32, 40; Hayashi Minao, “Sen In shiki no gyokki bunka,” *Museum* 334 (January 1979), fig. 10; Na Zhiliang, *Yuqi cidian*, Taipei: Wenwen chubanshe, 1982, vol. 2, 196, no. 1729; Hayashi Minao, “Inkyo Fukō bo,” fig. 2; Na Zhiliang, *Zhongguo guyu tushi*, Taipei: Nantian shuzhu, 1990, 137–138, fig. 48, and colour pl. 46; Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art*, Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1993, fig. 141; Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade*, 45–46, 184–185; Elizabeth Childs-Johnson and Gu Fang, *The Jade Age: Early Chinese Jades in American Museums*, Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2009, 184–185.

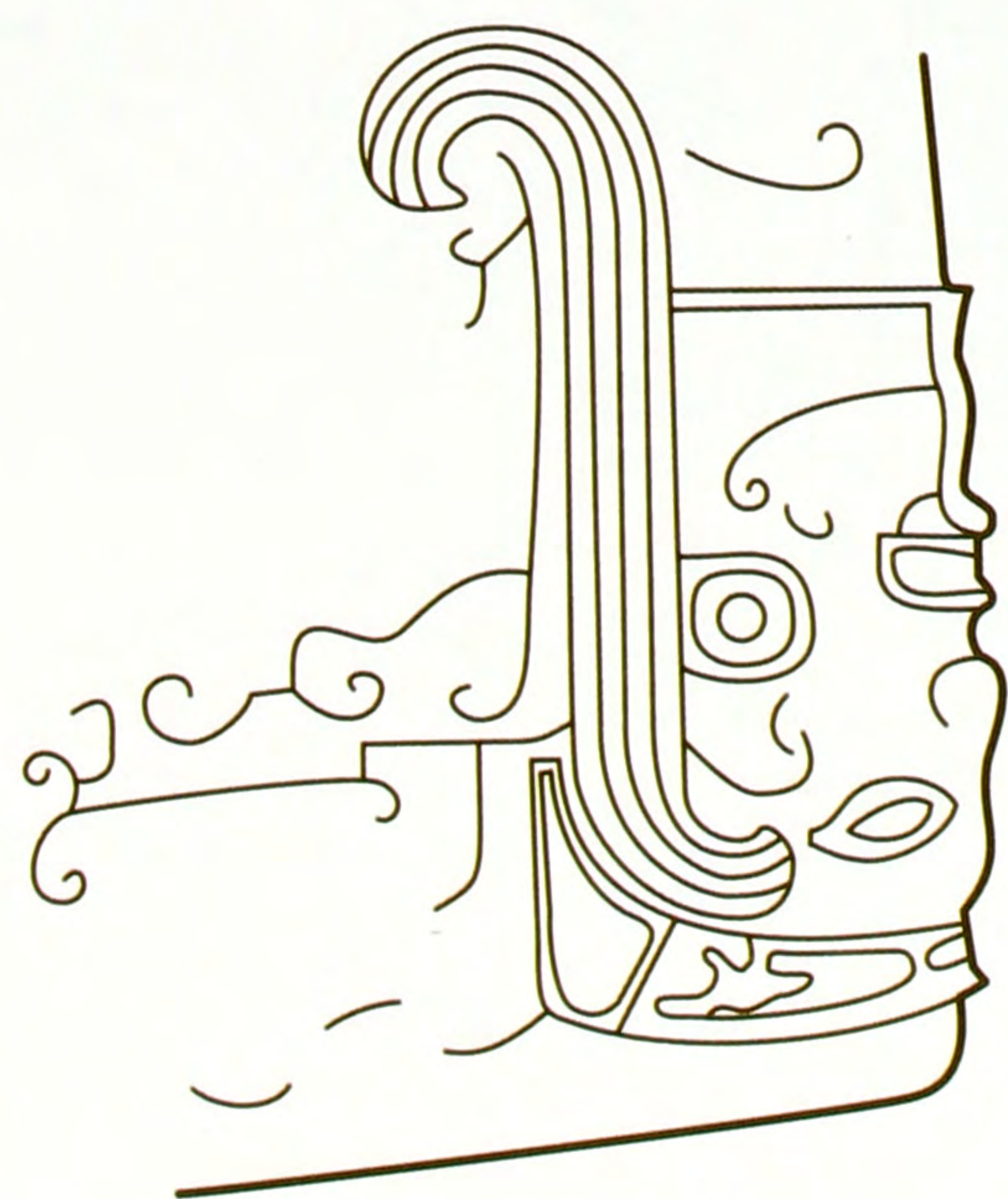
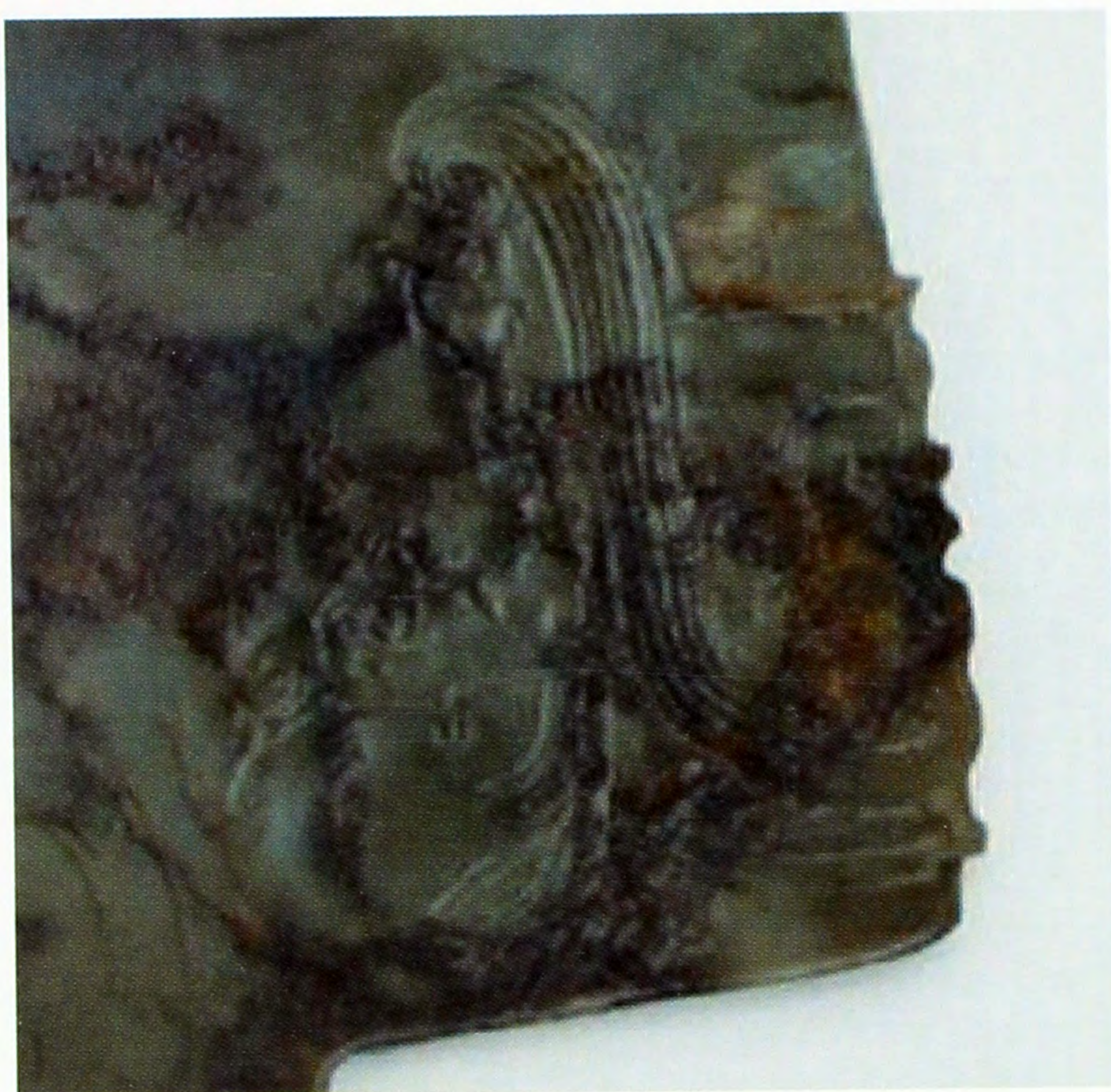
There are two related harvesting blades with decoration in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (S1987.450 and S2012.9.167) that will not be addressed here.

<sup>9</sup> Well-known stone examples discovered in Tomb 131 at Beiyinyangying in Nanjing belong to the middle phase of a regional Qinglian’gang Culture (ca. 3000 BCE) and are published in Nanjing bowuyuan, *Beiyinyangying*, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993, 24–25, 37, and colour pl. 1. Larger, more angular knives have been found frequently in middle Xuejiagang Culture tombs (ca. 3300–2800 BCE) at Qianshan, Anhui; they are described as being roughly the same age as the Nanjing pieces. See Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Qianshan Xuejiagang*, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004, 68–179, and especially colour pls. 13–15.





Fig. 2a. *Harvesting knife (hu) with masks and felines, fragment*  
China, probably Shandong province  
Late Neolithic period, Longshan Culture, ca. 2000 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
18.6 x 72 x 0.8 cm (7 5/16 x 28 3/8 x 5/16 in)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1918.1.1



Figs. 2b–c. *Harvesting knife (hu) with masks and felines, detail*



Fig. 3. *Box for harvesting knife (hu) with masks and felines*



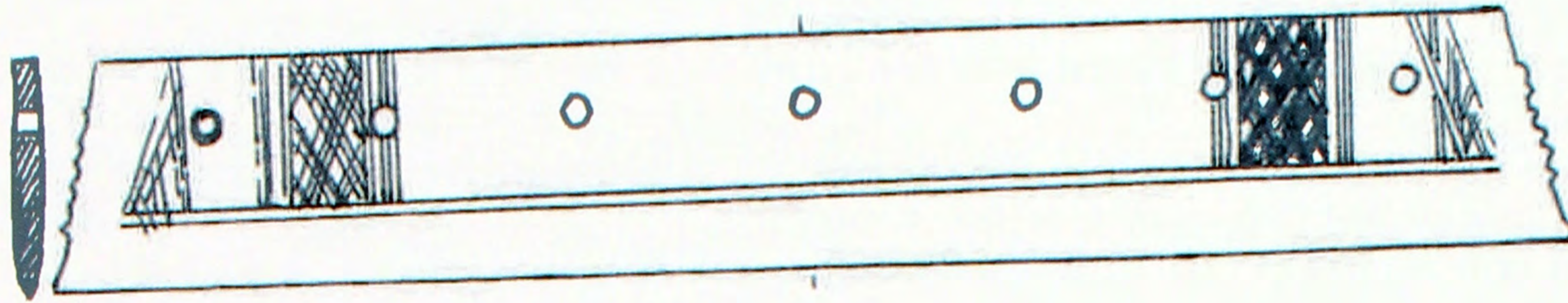


Fig. 4. *Harvesting knife (hu) with geometric decoration*  
Henan province, Yanshi xian, Erlitou (VIK7:3)  
Early Shang dynasty, ca. 1600–1500 BCE  
9.6 x 65.2 x 0.4 cm  
Liyan Jin after Yanshi Erlitou pl. 168

punctuated by holes that were probably purely decorative on the nephrite versions (fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> On the most elaborate *hu*, the two slanting sides have matching serrated edges and the flat faces are embellished with very shallowly incised geometric decoration.

The Freer knife differs from such examples in obvious ways:

- The broader, arched edge is awkwardly truncated and notched at one end
- The serrated fins at the two ends do not match
- Although the three holes are drilled from the same side and equally spaced, their distance from either edge differs; measurement confirms that the hole at the left is inset exactly half the distance between each pair of holes whereas the space between the right hole and edge is random

Based upon these observations it seems that the Freer blade must have been broken and repaired. Originally it likely extended further at one end (to the right in the orientation illustrated in fig. 2a) probably long enough to accommodate at least one more hole at a proper interval from those at the left and inset from the original right edge like the hole at the extreme left. Rough calculations suggest a loss of at least 14 cm. If this is true, the original blade must have



Fig. 5. *Appliqué with face and masks*  
China, probably Shandong province  
Late Neolithic period, Longshan Culture, ca. 2000 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
7.2 x 3.2 x 0.5 cm (2 13/16 x 1 1/4 x 3/16 in)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Purchase, F1939.54

<sup>10</sup> The first publication of this harvesting blade contains only a vague description of the burial context, but it was reportedly found with two other large jade blades, two bronze ritual vessels, ceramic pieces with cinnabar, turquoise chips, and other small decorative items; see Yanshi xian wenhuaguan, “Erlitou yizhi chutu de tongqi he yuqi,” *Kaogu* 1978:4, 270, pl. 12:3. The burial is dated to the fourth phase of the Erlitou chronology, corresponding to ca. 1600–1500 BCE; see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Erlitou 1959 nian – 1978 nian kaogu fajue baogao*, Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1999, 341–342, pl. 168. The best published image of this remarkable blade is Wen Fong ed., *The Great Bronze Age of China*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, cat. no. 3.



approached one meter in length. If it had survived at that scale, it would have been the largest jade known.

When was the blade broken and what changes were made to rescue what was left of the still massive but damaged object? The answer is suggested by a decorative element that was added to the broken end of the blade when it was first repaired. Not repeated on any other authentic *hu*, the design (rendered upside down when the blade is positioned as it is in fig. 2a) is bisected by the broken edge and extends onto both flat faces of the blade (figs. 2b–c). It represents a composite face formed by two profile views of a humanoid with long hair. Rendered in very thin relief lines, this composition and method of execution recall a frontal mask on a Neolithic jade applique also in the Freer collection (fig. 5) which is similarly associated with the Shandong Longshan Culture.<sup>11</sup> It thus seems likely that the ceremonial harvesting blade was broken and repaired shortly after it was first made, still in the Neolithic period. Since the serrated edge at the right and the related notches and flanges at the broken end of the bottom edge are significantly different from the remaining original serrated edge at the left in fig. 2a, the repairs must not have been made by the same craftsmen who first created it.

It is noteworthy that such elaborate decoration was added to a damaged object, since it would have been much easier (and possibly more common at the time) to simply grind the rough edges smooth. Although refinished by different craftsmen, the extremely fine quality of the changes indicates that the knife remained a prestige object even after it was broken.<sup>12</sup> Thus, although the number and range of interventions experienced by this blade transformed it rather dramatically from its original shape and character, causing some to argue that the changes diminish the antiquity's value, it could also be asserted that the alterations have added to its significance both by reflecting its living history and by showing that it was treasured throughout time.

#### *Tubes and disks recycled in the late Shang dynasty*

With the demise of certain Neolithic cultures and the broader transition from the Stone to Bronze Age, some early jade forms lost their significance. This seems particularly true of two ritual types that are highly characteristic of the Liangzhu Culture (3300–2250 BCE), which occupied a large area between modern Shanghai and Nanjing along the lower reaches of the Yangzi River in the late Neolithic period. Found with personal ornaments as well as ceremonial

<sup>11</sup> The prominence, placement, and presentation of the face on this appliqué, purchased by the Gallery from the New York dealer C. T. Loo, suggest that it was part of the initial concept of the object, unlike the version on the harvesting knife. Although it is now assigned to the Longshan Neolithic, the Freer applique was dated as late the Eastern Zhou period; see Alfred Salmony, *Carved Jade of Ancient China*, 51–53, pl. 32:6; Carl Hentze, *Die Sakralbronzen und ihre Bedeutung in den frühchinesischen Kulturen*, Antwerp, 1941, pl. 78:152; Doris Dohrenwend, “Jade Demonic Images,” 60–61, fig. 24; Hayashi Minao, “Sen In shiki,” fig. 7; Na Zhiliang, *Yuqi cidian*, vol. 2, 37, no. 139; and Elizabeth Childs-Johnson and Gu Fang, *The Jade Age*, 152. A ceremonial stone tool with a related design was unearthed in a Longshan Neolithic context in Shandong; see Liu Dunyuan, “Liangchengzhen yizhi faxian de liangjian shiqi,” *Kaogu* 1972:4, 56–57. This piece can also be compared to a similarly decorated jade chisel in the Freer collection (F1915.87). Related jades from urn burials at a Shijiahe Culture site (ca. 2500–2000 BCE) at Zaolin'gang, Mashan, Jingzhou, Hubei province, are discussed in Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuyuan, *Zaolin'gang yu Dujintai: Jingjiang dati Jingzhou Mashan duan kaogu fajue baogao*, Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1999, 15–21, 52–53, pl. 3:2 and 5:1. Examples of this type are also represented in the Sackler Gallery's permanent collection (S1987.880) and by three long-term loans to the Gallery from the Smithsonian American Art Museum (LTS1985.1.276.1–3). Yet another piece, possibly repolished or reworked in modern times, is in the Freer collection (F1953.9).

<sup>12</sup> Manipulation of this object did not end in antiquity. Both sides of the blade also have two sets of crudely engraved animals and human heads which were added in more modern times, probably the nineteenth century. There are, in addition, remnants of a lengthy inscription composed in ten rather widely spaced columns between the holes on the side shown in fig. 2a; this inscription, now no longer legible, may have been added at the same time. The area formerly occupied by the inscription is less brown than the surrounding surface suggesting that the colour of the entire object was also changed through artificially induced staining that was removed in the area occupied by the inscription when it was ground away before Freer purchased the object.





Fig. 6. *Ritual tube (cong) with masks*  
 China, Lower Yangzi River Valley  
 Late Neolithic period, Liangzhu Culture, middle phase, ca. 3000–2800 BCE  
 Jade (nephrite)  
 4.5 x 7.2 x 7.2 cm (1 3/4 x 2 13/16 x 2 13/16 in)  
 Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1916.118

tools and weapons in elite Liangzhu burials, these *cong* tubes (fig. 6)<sup>13</sup> and *bi* disks were produced in very large numbers.

Although their purpose remains unclear, *cong* tubes are customarily found near the center of rich Liangzhu burials at Fanshan, Yaoshan, and elsewhere; their proximity to the body – possibly placed on or near the chest – surely indicates their importance, at least in burial ritual.<sup>14</sup> This significance is further attested by the fine workmanship and extraordinary polish of the best pieces. Made in a variety of sizes and proportions, they customarily possess a square cross section, are bored through with a circular channel, and finished with round cuffs at the top and bottom. They are uniformly decorated

<sup>13</sup> When first acquired from the Shanghai dealer Lee Van Ching (Li Wenqing), this short *cong* was thought to date to the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) and was not reassigned to the Neolithic until the early 1980s when the first major Liangzhu excavation reports were published. As one of the most finely finished examples of its type, it has been included in many publications: Alfred Salmony, *Carved Jade of Ancient China*, 48, pl. 28:1; Umehara Sueji, *Shina kogyoku zuroku*, pl. 52:6; Hayashi Minao, “Sen In shiki,” fig. 19; Hayashi Minao, “Ryōsho bunka no gyokki jakkan o megutte,” *Museum* 360 (March 1981), 26; Julia K. Murray, “Neolithic Chinese Jades in the Freer Gallery of Art,” *Oriental Art* 14:11 (November 1983), fig. 16; Thomas Lawton, “China’s Artistic Legacy,” *Apollo* 118, no. 258 (August 1983), 134, fig. 11; Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art*, 205, fig. 140; and Elizabeth Childs-Johnson and Gu Fang, *The Jade Age*, 98–99. Characteristics of this *cong* are duplicated on dozens of examples recovered in documented excavations at a range of Liangzhu sites over the past three decades. The closest comparison in scale and design was found in Tomb 7 at Yaoshan, Yuhang, Zhejiang province; based upon the Liangzhu ceramic typology, excavators date that burial to the opening portion of the middle phase of the Liangzhu Culture, beginning about 3000 BCE. See Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yaoshan* (Liangzhu yizhiqun kaogu baogao 1), Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2003, 81, 84, figs. 101–102, colour pl. 189. The Galleries possess numerous other authentic Liangzhu *cong* of various sizes and proportions.

<sup>14</sup> Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yaoshan*; Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Fanshan* (Liangzhu yizhiqun kaogu baogao 2), Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2005.



with repeating mask designs centered on the four corners. In the most elaborate forms like the one in fig. 6, the features rendered in relief include a pair of oval eyes incised with round pupils and a very fine network of sunken lines, a median snout, and a small raised bar for a mouth, all below a pair of horizontal bands comprised of thin incised lines.

Such representative Liangzhu objects were less important in other Neolithic cultures and gradually faded from the archaeological record by the early Bronze Age. Found infrequently across northern China from Shaanxi to Shandong, the post-Liangzhu *cong* tubes have often been discovered singly as isolated examples in late Neolithic, Shang, or early Zhou tombs making it difficult to understand their original context and purpose.<sup>15</sup> Like the one illustrated in fig. 7, they are generally undecorated, often have a soft profile with bluntly defined elements, and can be rather small.<sup>16</sup> They still retain the chunky proportions and thick walls of their Liangzhu models, however, lending them a robust, rugged appearance.

The declining relevance of this Neolithic ritual form helps to explain the emergence of new objects made by recycling their corners and adding decoration. Typically representing a wedge in cross section, such pieces can be readily identified by their peculiar shape; in addition, the undecorated back of derived pieces almost always takes the form of a smooth continuous arc which corresponds to one segment of the circular boring characteristic of intact *cong*.

Both of these elements can be seen on a previously unpublished jade (fig. 8) created from a quarter of a *cong* like that illustrated in fig. 7. Exploiting the wedge shape to lend their creation a sculptural quality, the craftsmen used the central axis of the wedge to serve as the pronounced snout of an animal mask (*taotie*), symmetrically arranging the other features of the face – eyes, eyebrows, and horns – on either side. Some of these elements are rendered in sunken outlines while those extending to the edges of the object are also shown with openwork. Both the design and workmanship link this jade to the late Shang capital at Anyang where the motif is pervasive and technical comparisons abound. The piece may have been used as a fitting or pendant since it has a small hole (barely visible in fig. 8) drilled beneath the snout.

Although this symmetrical mask motif bisected by a raised ridge repeats an earlier formula found on intact Neolithic *cong* like the one in fig. 6, the current object is not simply a salvaged portion of an earlier decorated whole. Jade *cong* are heavy, stout objects and are hardly ever encountered accidentally damaged or fragmentary. The natural colouration and veining of the jade fabric found on this piece, too, cannot be compared to the nephrite customarily seen with intact earlier *cong* with masks. Thus, the contours and surface patterns of this fitting or pendant were doubtless created fresh during the late Shang using the corner of a late Neolithic *cong*. Presumably the source was a modest, plain tube of approximately the same dimensions as the piece in fig. 7. These earlier ritual objects had little significance in Shang society intact, and may have been seen to possess greater value as a source of processed material ready to be made into something else.<sup>17</sup>

Just as some old forms that had lost their significance could be recycled to create new things better suited to current tastes, foreign objects could be given more familiar functions, too.<sup>18</sup> One case in point is the type modern scholars label ‘collared disk’, named after the raised ring that frames the

<sup>15</sup> These later *cong* have been discussed in Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade*, 150–56.

<sup>16</sup> Like the Liangzhu *cong* in fig. 6, this previously unpublished piece was dated to the Han dynasty when purchased by Charles Lang Freer from the Shanghai dealer Li Wenqing. As pointed out in file notes written by former curator Jenny So, the nephrite used to form this piece closely resembles that of late Neolithic disks associated with northwest China probably suggesting its place of manufacture. The Galleries possess other small jade or serpentine *cong* resembling this one, some of which may have been repolished or even created anew in modern times: F1917.42, F1917.69, F1917.74, F1917.75, F1917.142, S2012.9.243–247. Taller versions were also made.

<sup>17</sup> There are many related examples in the Sackler. Most impressive is a tall wedge-shaped mask, formerly in the Bull collection, which was given to the Gallery by Dr. Paul Singer (S2012.9.165). Alfred Salmony first published it as a pre-Anyang object; *Chinese Jades Through the Wei Dynasty*, New York: Ronald Press Co., 1963, 23–24, pl. 2:4. There are also fittings such as S1987.513 and arc-shaped plaques (S1987.550 and S1987.576), all decorated with Anyang-style designs.

<sup>18</sup> As already mentioned in relation to the tomb of Fu Hao, oddities could also be selected and preserved intact as collectibles.





Fig. 7. *Ritual tube (cong)*  
Northwest China  
Late Neolithic period, ca. 2000–1800 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
4.4 x 5.6 x 5.4 cm (1 3/4 x 2 3/16 x 2 1/8 in)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1917.41



Fig. 8. *Fragment of a ritual tube (cong) made into a fitting or pendant with an animal mask (taotie)*  
Northwest China, probably reworked in Henan province, Anyang  
Late Neolithic period, reworked in the late Shang dynasty, ca. 1300–1050 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
3.9 x 4.8 x 2.3 cm (1 9/16 x 1 7/8 x 7/8 in)  
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Arthur M. Sackler, S1987.865



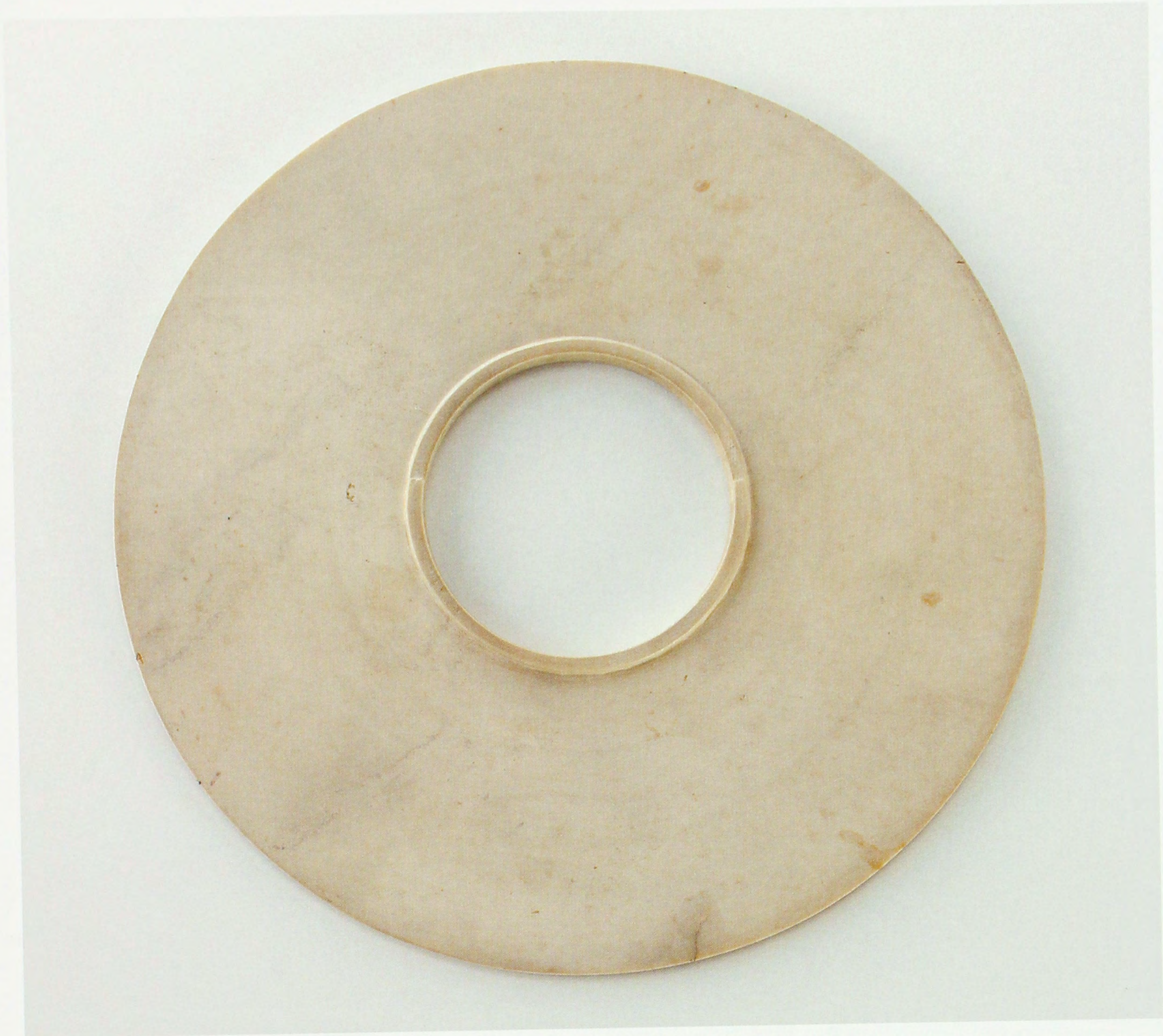


Fig. 9. *Collared disk*  
China, probably Henan province, Anyang  
Late Shang dynasty, Anyang period, 1300–1050 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
17.6 x 0.3 cm (6 15/16 x 1/8 in); Diam. of hole 5.9 cm (2 3/8 in)  
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Arthur M. Sackler, S1987.647

central perforation on both faces of the disk, itself quite thin (fig. 9).<sup>19</sup> Although jade collared disks are frequently encountered at Anyang, they have not yet been found at pre-Anyang sites so researchers are not sure if they evolved from Neolithic bracelets or ritual disks (*bi*).

In early Anyang burials like the Fu Hao tomb, which contained almost four dozen of them, collared disks with outer diameters small enough to function as bracelets are found together with others approaching twenty centimeters across (like the piece in fig. 9), surely too large to wear.<sup>20</sup> Despite

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Sackler purchased this previously unpublished late Shang piece from another American collector in 1959.

<sup>20</sup> The Fu Hao monograph identifies four collared disks as Bi Type II (M5:456, M5:495, M5:1014, and M5:1016); several more with similar diameters appear to have had their collars ground down (M5:588, for example). Most of the collared disks, apparently trimmed, are assigned to various categories of bracelets defined by their diameter: Huan Type II (9 examples), Huan Type III (1 example), Yuan Type II (7 examples), Jue Type I (1 example) and Zhuo Type 1 (9 examples). Each category includes pieces scribed with concentric rings. See *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 118–119, 120–122, 129, 176.





Fig. 10. *Collared disk made into a round axe*  
 China, probably Henan province, Anyang  
 Late Shang dynasty, Anyang period, 1300–1050 BCE  
 Jade (nephrite)  
 19.8 x 20 x 0.8 cm (7 13/16 x 7 7/8 x 5/16 in); Diam of hole 6.2 cm (2 7/16 in)  
 Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer, F1970.39

these differences in their outside measurement, however, the size of the central hole varies very little, generally ranging between five and six centimeters in diameter.<sup>21</sup> The same is true of more unusual objects such as rounded axes with vertical flanges (fig. 10).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Collared rings in heirloom collections such as the Sackler Gallery, are the same; the Sackler possesses ten versions in jade, most with diameters small enough to suggest they functioned as bracelets (S1987.457, S1987.460, S1987.654, S1987.656, S1987.658, S1987.735, and S2012.9.226–229); two others are made from serpentine (S1987.458–459).

<sup>22</sup> In this instance, the collared disk was trimmed, given sets of matching vertical flanges, and a beveled edge along the bottom arc. Although bequeathed to the Gallery in 1970, it was purchased decades earlier by Eugene (1875–1959) and Agnes (1887–1970) Meyer who were close personal friends of Charles Lang Freer and followed his lead in collecting. Unfortunately, the circumstances surrounding their purchase of this piece are unknown. When acquired, however, it came in an inscribed box which dated the piece to the Zhou dynasty and stated that it had been owned by Duanfang, like the harvesting blade discussed above (fig. 2). Different from that earlier piece, however, this one was included in the fragmentary catalogue of Duanfang's jade collection published posthumously; see Wang Dalong, *Taozhai guyutu*, Shanghai (np), 1936, ch. 1, 3a–b. See also Thomas Lawton and Hin-cheung Lovell, *Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Memorial Exhibition*, Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1971, 4–5; and Julia Murray, *A Decade of Discovery: Selected Acquisitions 1970–1980*, Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1979, 15. A second round axe also given to the Freer Gallery by the Meyers, may have been made from a disk that had its collar ground down (F1968.48).





Fig. 11. *Fragment of a collared disk made into arched pendants in the form of fishes*  
 China, probably Henan province, Anyang  
 Late Shang dynasty, Anyang period, 1300–1050 BCE  
 Jade (nephrite)  
 Each 5.4 x 1.8 cm (2 1/8 x 3/4 in)  
 Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Purchase, F1979.26-27

Some surviving articles such as small pendants in the shape of fish show that collared disks could be transformed almost beyond recognition (fig. 11).<sup>23</sup> Designed to appear to be leaping, the arched body of the fish was created from a segment of the thin disk while the fins that project perpendicularly from the belly were fashioned from the original collar surrounding the central hole. (The arc of the collar represented by the fins matches that on the Round Axe in fig. 10.) Once the contours were finished, many edges were bevelled, some so thinly that they were easily damaged. On the examples illustrated in fig. 11, the portion of the unwanted collar between the fins was ground down and almost completely removed. Suspension holes were made to look like mouths and suggestive details such as striations on the fins and features of the head and tail were made in sunken lines.

Although it is tempting to conclude that such modest pieces must have resulted from refashioned fragments of broken disks, this seems not to be the case. Found in rather large numbers and frequently in pairs derived from the same source stone, such fish pendants were clearly desirable in their own right. In addition, the rather consistent size of surviving representatives would not have allowed for

<sup>23</sup> These previously unpublished pendants were purchased as “study material” in China by Dong Guangzhong, Carl Whiting Bishop’s assistant. Their source is not recorded. They remained in the Bishop Collection at the Freer until they were formally transferred to the primary collection in 1979. The Sackler also possesses some fish pendants: S1987.465, S1987.470, S1987.573, and S1987.633.



accidents. It thus seems more likely that some collared disks were intentionally subdivided into units that were then converted to new uses. Since examples are found as early as Fu Hao's tomb, the practice of making them may have extended through the entire Anyang period.<sup>24</sup>

The sudden emergence of collared disks in the northern jade inventory as well as the concurrence of apparently intact, trimmed, and refashioned versions is surprising. This unusual pattern of reuse caught the attention of Jessica Rawson who has written: "Presumably these collared disks were either already old, or came from outside the Shang domain, making a change of use quite natural. If they had been a revered local form, it seems unlikely that they would have been so readily transformed."<sup>25</sup> At the close of her discussion, Rawson proposed a southern origin for the production of collared disks, which seems entirely plausible.

#### *A monumental dagger-axe (ge) with an early Western Zhou dynasty inscription*

The final example to be treated here is a jade dagger-axe or halberd (*ge*) that bears an incised inscription on one of its faces near its base (figs. 12a–b).<sup>26</sup> Because so few jades were inscribed in antiquity and since the text on this piece names an early Zhou dynasty individual entitled the Grand Protector who is well known from transmitted traditional sources as well as bronze inscriptions, the brief passage has attracted considerable attention (fig. 12b).<sup>27</sup> The text reads:

In the sixth month on the day *bingyin* the king was at Feng and ordered the Taibao [Grand Protector] to inspect the southern states along the Han [River]... [He] commanded the Marquis Li to assist, using one hundred infantrymen...

Commentators believe that the Grand Protector mentioned in this inscription was Shi, the Duke of Shao, son of the founder of the Zhou royal house and the first individual to carry the title. Together with his half brother the Duke of Zhou, the Grand Protector helped shepherd the young dynasty through the reigns of its first kings. The event mentioned in the inscription probably took place during the first years of Zhou rule when Feng (located west of modern Xi'an) was the primary capital. According to traditional sources, the Grand Protector was enfeoffed with Yan, which corresponds to large areas of modern Hebei province, far to the northeast and distant from Feng.

Since its discovery in the early twentieth century, this dagger-axe served as a benchmark object because – unlike almost all jades unearthed in the era before modern archaeology – there seemed to be solid epigraphic evidence supplying it with a date of creation. Thus, the fitted storage box made for it was carved with both the title "Zhou zhang (Ceremonial scepter of the Zhou dynasty)" and an annotated transcription of the incised text added to support the assigned date. Indeed, the attested early Zhou periodization has generally been repeated by scholars to this day. A formal examination of the halberd itself, however, suggests that it was an antique when the inscription was added.

<sup>24</sup> Fish pendants like this are called Huang Type IV in the monograph. See *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 125–127.

<sup>25</sup> Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade*, 165.

<sup>26</sup> This halberd was formerly in the collection of Duanfang and was purchased from his family by Charles Freer through You Xiaoxi. Prior to Duanfang, it was owned by Wu Jingting, who purportedly acquired it in 1902–03 shortly after it came to light during renovations to the Shrine of the Duke of Shao southwest of Jicheng in Shaanxi province. As with the Round Axe discussed above (fig. 10), the draft entry for this piece prepared for Duanfang's jade catalogue survives in Wang Dalong, *Taozhai guyutu*, ch. 2, 84a–85a. The most comprehensive study of the piece is Pang Huaijing, "Ba Taibao yu ge," *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1986:1, 70–73; it is also discussed in Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The Role of Grand Protector Shi in the Consolidation of the Zhou Conquest," *Ars Orientalis* 19 (1989), 59, note 23.

<sup>27</sup> The Grand Protector who is named on the halberd is also mentioned on a group of early Western Zhou dynasty bronze ritual vessels purportedly excavated at Liangshan, Shandong province in the mid-nineteenth century. He and the vessels have been the subject of many studies including Thomas Lawton, "A Group of Early Western Chou Period Bronze Vessels," *Ars Orientalis* 10 (1975), 111–121; Chen Shou, "Da Bao gui de fuchu he Da Bao zhuqi," *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1980:4, 23–30; and Edward L. Shaughnessy, "The Role of Grand Protector," 51–77. One of those vessels, the Taibao *gui* (ritual grain steamer), is also in the Freer collection (F1968.29), another gift of Eugene and Agnes Meyer. This translation draws upon the work of Edward Shaughnessy and Julia Murray.





Fig. 12a. *Dagger-axe (ge) with geometric decoration*  
China, probably Henan or Hubei province  
Early Shang dynasty, ca. 1500-1400 BCE; inscription added ca. 1050-1000 BCE  
Jade (nephrite)  
67.1 x 10.2 x 0.6 cm (26 7/16 x 4 x 1/4 in)  
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1919.13a-c

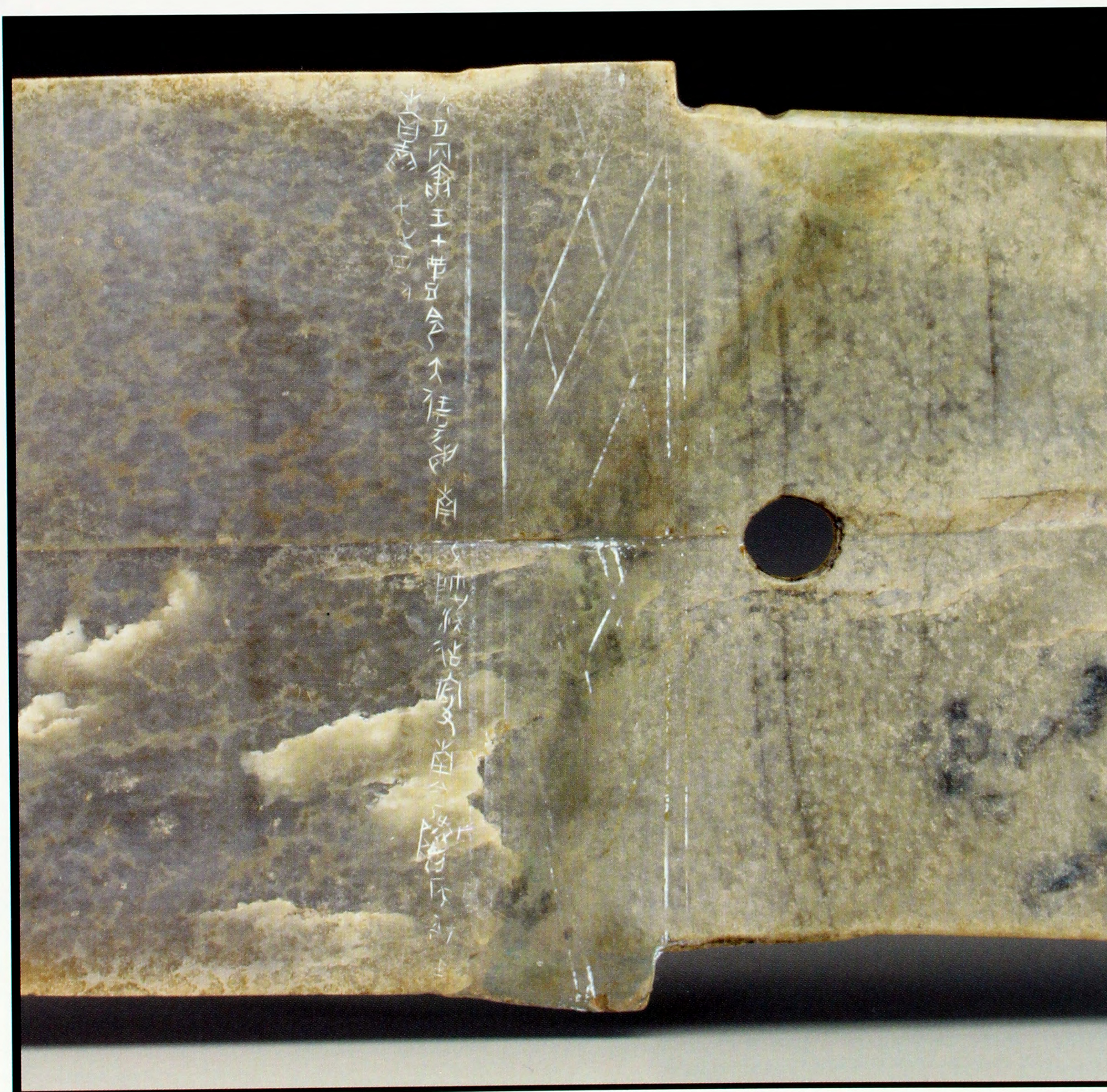


Fig. 12b. *Dagger-axe (ge) with geometric decoration, detail showing inscription*



Halberds like this were inspired by functional metal dagger-axes that first appeared in the early Bronze Age and were continually improved over the subsequent 1500 years.<sup>28</sup> The very effective weapons were composed of two parts: A pointed blade sharpened on all sides counterbalanced by an inset rectangular tang at the back. The functional weapon was designed to be mounted on a transverse wooden shaft with the pointed blade projecting towards the enemy and the tang extending through the shaft to the back. A raised perpendicular element and nearby hole would have been used to lash it securely to the handle. In battle, they were swung as shown in ancient bronze vessel inscriptions. In the ideogram for *fa*, “to attack (fig. 13),” a symbolic hand holds the shaft of the mounted dagger-axe against the neck of a stooped human figure drawn in profile.<sup>29</sup>

Jade dagger-axes have been found in early burials at Erlitou, which is significant for two reasons. First, it shows that ceremonial versions were almost coeval with the earliest functional bronze ones. In addition, it represents the first instance of a jade tool or weapon inspired by a metal – not stone – model. Like their practical models, the jade versions were made for centuries and formally evolved over time. Similar to the ceremonial jade harvesting knives (*hu*) discussed above, the nonfunctional blades were not constrained by the practical requirements of their effective inspirations but could instead reflect artistic explorations of issues of scale, proportion, structure, and decoration in more purely aesthetic terms. Comparisons with archaeologically-recovered examples help contextualize the original production of the blade with the Grand Protector inscription and thus shed further light on the significance of the inscription.

The inscribed Freer halberd is extremely thin, especially in view of its extraordinary length. Its two components – tapering blade and slightly inset rectangular tang – are articulated in the silhouette, and a small hole is drilled from the uninscribed side just behind where the two parts meet. Framed units of cross hatching quite similar to those on the Erlitou blade in fig. 4 decorate the base of the blade on both sides. The face with the inscription is marked by a median ridge that begins near the back end of the tang and continues roughly two-thirds of the way to the tip of the blade. This line was inspired by the raised spines that strengthen functional bronze blades; on the metal models, however, the reinforcement does not extend to the tang since its value relates only the pointed portion of the weapon. On the jade, the line is a surface inflection that adds to the visual interest of the object, hence its extension onto the tang is inspired by artistic principles, not practicality. It is also not a raised crest as it is on functional weapons but instead is created by the intersection of two flat planes that differ slightly in height, the result of traditional techniques of shaping jade objects. Although the reverse is essentially flat down the center, both sides have bevelled edges that are ground quite thin and sharp along the contour.

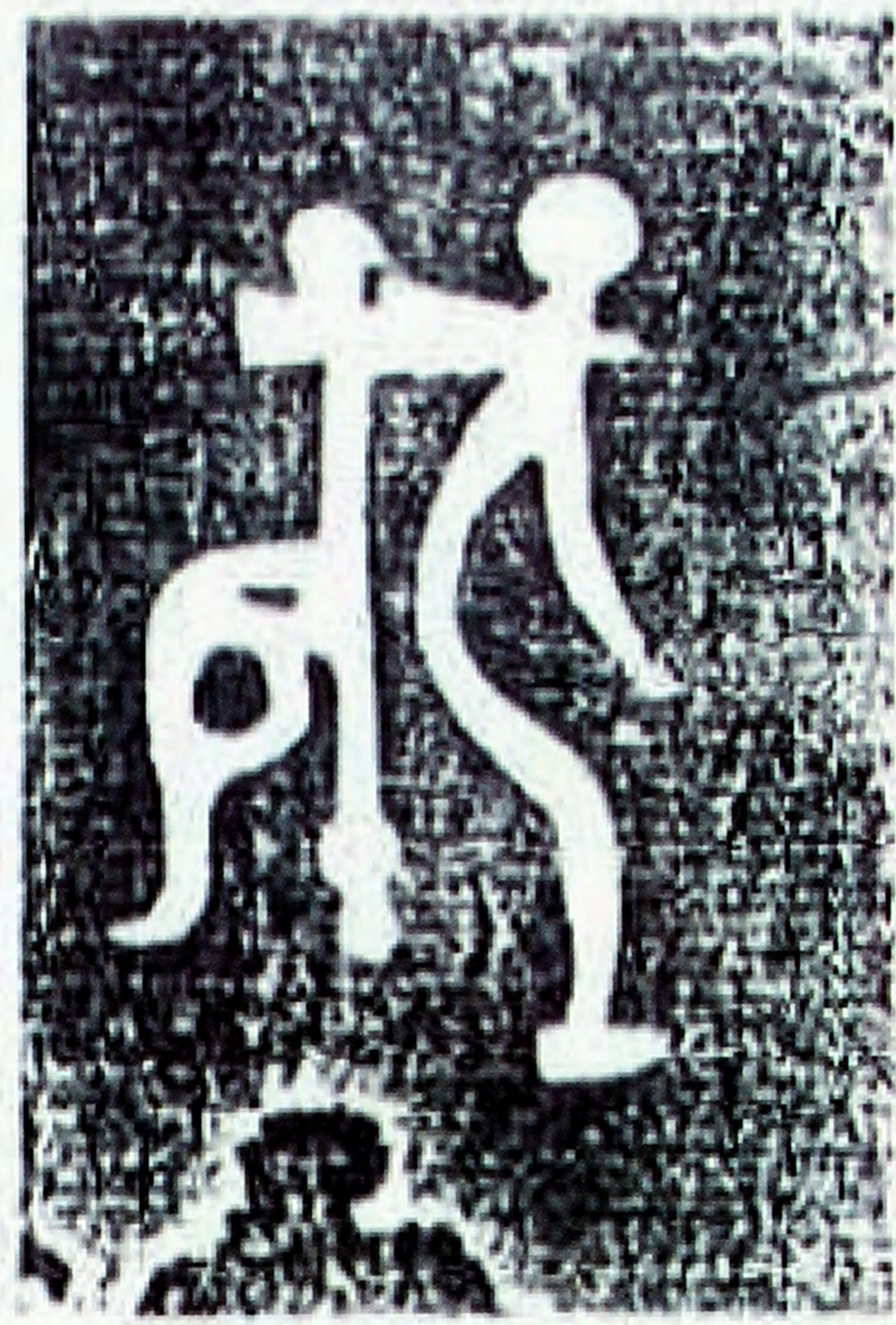


Fig. 13. Rubbing of the ideogram *fa*, “to attack,” on a middle Anyang-era bronze *ding* tripod in the Sackler collection, ca. 1200–1100 BCE

<sup>28</sup> For a survey of the formal evolution of bronze and jade *ge* halberds from Erlitou to Anyang, see J. Keith Wilson, “Lithic Art in the Bronze Age: A Jade Dagger-Axe,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 77:1 (January 1990), 9–25.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, 453.



The proportions of the Freer blade as well as almost all of its formal details recur on several impressive jade halberds unearthed at Lijiazui, Panlongcheng, Hubei.<sup>30</sup> They come from some of the very richest burials of the early Shang period, and are dated to the first phase of the Upper Erligang period, equivalent to the 15th century BCE. One of the blades (PLZM3:14), even larger than the Taibao *ge* in the Freer, offers a particularly close comparison.<sup>31</sup> The blade of the Panlongcheng jade halberd is not symmetrical. The lower edge is roughly horizontal and the upper edge curves down to the point. The lateral edges are tapered and lack reinforcing ribs. The point is rendered as a distinct triangular element fixed at the end. The highly polished, convex surface is unfaceted and the arcing crest continues beyond the blade to the bevelled plate, again a purely artistic invention.

These designs are quite different from Anyang-era fabrications beginning with the 39 examples, many incomplete, found in Fu Hao's tomb.<sup>32</sup> The largest were only two-thirds the length of the Freer blade; one of the longer pieces (M5:580) carries a brief incised inscription that appears to identify it as an object submitted as tribute.<sup>33</sup> In the tomb monograph, these examples were sorted into five types, almost all borrowing more heavily from contemporaneous bronze forms than anything discussed above. Many are rather stocky, with contracted, chunky blades and disproportionately large tangs. Reinforced, faceted edges are not abbreviated, but extend to the point. The relatively greater influence of metallic models on these jade derivations is also apparent in the raised spine which frequently traces a straight line down middle of the more symmetrical blade and does not extend to the tang.

These comparisons suggest that the halberd was already some 500 years old when it was chosen to be inscribed with a documentary text and presented to a son of the Zhou dynasty founder by a king who was either his half-brother or nephew. Although the precise age of the jade *ge* was probably not accurately understood at the time, its formal details in addition to its extraordinary size would have distinguished it from average examples. The addition of the historical narrative further differentiated it, transforming it into an important commemorative symbol and memorializing memento, which reflects yet a different kind of "recycling."

### Conclusion

Although only a few altered objects have been featured in this study, they represent much larger reservoirs associated with heirloom collections and scientific excavations alike. The prevalence of alteration is a product of the generic properties of jade itself: the character of the stone, which allows it to survive largely intact for extremely long periods of time, and the merit attached to the artifacts fashioned from the lithic fabric, sometimes for no other reason than their potential to be converted into more highly valued things at a later date. The practice of alteration must have begun in very ancient times, perhaps when a treasured possession was repaired after being damaged. As time went on, such repaired pieces were probably joined by objects that were recycled in response to changing tastes.

To narrow the present discussion, it focused on artifacts from the second millennium BCE, a pivotal period of cultural change spanning the Stone and Bronze Ages in China. Only the late Shang fitting or pendant derived from a Neolithic *cong* (fig. 8), however, seems to result from evolving cultural values. Alterations to the Neolithic harvesting blade (fig. 2a) and Bronze Age collared disks (figs. 9–11) came soon after the original objects were made. For the former, respectful additions related to repairs, which left the original object still clearly discernible. Conversely, for the latter, conversions nearly obliterated the source artifact showing that it may have been of little intrinsic

<sup>30</sup> Hubei sheng bowuguan, Beijing daxue kaogu zhuanye, and Panlongcheng fajuedui, "Panlongcheng 1974 niandu tianye kaogu jiyao, *Wenwu* 1976:2, 5–16; recent comprehensive treatments of the site is Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo ed., *Panlongcheng: 1963–1994 nian kaogu fajue baogao*, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001; and Kyle Steinke and Dora C. Y. Ching ed., *Art and Archaeology of the Erligang Civilization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> The best published image of this remarkable blade almost one meter in length is Wen Fong ed., *The Great Bronze Age of China*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, cat. no. 10. Its location within the damaged context of M3 is illustrated in the tomb plan in Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo ed., *Panlongcheng: 1963–1994*, 183, fig. 123.<sup>32</sup> *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 130–139.

<sup>33</sup> *Yinxu Fu Hao mu*, 131–132, 139, fig. 74:1, 75:3, colour pl. 17:2.



value among Anyang consumers. Finally, the halberd, which could have been treasured due to its great size alone, may well have carried additional merit due to its age – perceived through its formal qualities – leading to its conversion to a commemorative instrument with the addition of an important documentary inscription.

The Grand Protector's dagger-axe also suggests that jade objects could be transmitted for generations or even centuries before being buried. The contents of relatively intact tombs such as that of Consort Hao likewise reveal the surprisingly broad chronological and geographic spans of jades brought together and buried at a definite point in time. Both forms of evidence also illustrate the conflicting impulses of preserving oddities intact as collectibles and converting them to other uses. Additional research on this and other periods will reveal the extent to which these observations are uniquely characteristic of the period or typify the media over greater lengths of time. After all, this was an epoch when many earlier ritual jade traditions were coming to an end and more decorative uses of the medium – especially for jewelry – were on the rise.

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