

Jade
(Nephrite)

15.87

S.I.658

Chinese,

W. Chou dynasty, ca. 1027-771 B.C.
Shang, 1523-1027 B.C. (ca.)

Ceremonial implement of the type kuei; short narrow form with bevelled end and perforated handle; mottled dark olive brown, reddish brown, olive green and orange; decoration: in sensible relief and channeled, a demon head on one side, a spread eagle on reverse, triple grooves across handle; dull luster.

18.4 cm
~~18.4~~ length. (7-1/4")
~~0.36~~ width. (1-7/16")
03.6 cm

Neg. Nos.

~~4727B2~~
S958B

1. Bought from Hwang Chung-huei, New York. For price, see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 158.
2. Original attribution: "Ancient". See further, S.I.658, Appendix VII and Envelope File.
3. (J.E.L., 1927) Early Han (?)
4. (A.G.W., 1943) Chou dynasty. Type kuei. See ⁹~~38~~.54 for comparison of head carved in slight relief.
5. Sp. G. is 2.965. Nephrite.

6. (H.E.Buckman, 1964) The Envelope File, which has now been destroyed, contained the following (no signature):

The Ancient Man-Phoenix Scepter of Jade.

According to Tso Chuan, the famous commentary of "Spring and Autumn Annals by Confucius", this scepter was an emblem used by Emperor Shao-hau (2594-2511 B.C.), son of Huang-ti, for recording great national achievements; it being carried by dukes as the most valuable piece of ceremonial article during their audience with the Emperor.

In ancient and mediaeval ages of China, the readers may recall that the dragon was not infrequently taken as a sign of luck. However, to adopt the system of calling different ministers of affairs with names of various kinds of birds, Emperor Shao-hau had the distinction of being the only man. Tso Ch'^uin Ming, author of the famous commentary of "Spring and Autumn Annals", mentioned ~~the~~ that the Emperor named his prime minister, the minister of heaven or astronomy, phoenix merely for the reason that a phoenix arrived at the capitol on his coronation day.

As to the peculiar and ancient feature of the image on this scepter, it also bore certain resemblances to those of many famous characters in the Chinese History. For instance, its large eyes correspond to those of Fu-hi^s (2852-2738 B.C.); its narrow chin, to that of Huang-ti^r (2704-2595 B.C.); its spaced teeth to those of Ti-k'u (2432-2363 B.C.); and its tiger nose and large ears, to those of Ta-yü (2205-2198 B.C.). From the above it may be concluded that this man's figure is possibly a picture of Emperor Shao-hau himself.

7. From Exhibition Label, September 1980, by Julia Murray: Attribution is changed from Western Chou to Shang, ca. 1523-1027 B.C. Based on a Neolithic stone tool whose blade is sharpened at the top, early jade chisels were ceremonial rather than utilitarian. The shape was retained in the jade repertoire in the Shang and Chou periods. The simple, elegant shape of a chisel is subtly embellished by smoothly ground edges, which are shown to advantage by the lustrous polish of the entire surface.

8. (Julia Murray, 1982). For a general discussion of chisel-shaped jades, see folder sheet 17.31 . The motifs carved in very low relief on each side of chisel 15.87 distinguish it from others in the Freer collection. The demonic face on one side resembles those found on two other jades in the collection, amulet 53.9 and plaque 39.54 . This face motif is discussed in the articles by Dohrenwend and Wu Hung (see bibliography) and in Hayashi Minao, "Sen In-shiki no gyokki bunka" 林巳奈夫, 先殷式の玉器文化 (Patterns on Pre-Yin Jades; in Japanese), Museum no. 334 (January, 1979), pp. 4-16. The standing bird on the other side of the chisel is similar to a motif that appears on a chisel in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (reproduced in line-drawing by Wu Hung, p. 70, fig. 26b). and on another chisel in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan (reproduced in line-drawing by Hayashi, p. 7, fig. 9, right).

9. (From an exhibition label: Studies in Connoisseurship: 1923-1983 - September, 1983).

Based on a Neolithic stone tool, whose blade is sharpened at the top, early jade chisels were ceremonial rather than utilitarian. The simple, elegant shape of a chisel is subtly embellished by the smoothly

ground edges, which are shown to advantage by the lustrous polish of the entire surface. The motifs carved in low relief on each side of the chisel include a demonic face and a striding bird.