Jade

16.628

Chinese,

Late Chou dynasty.
Neolithic or early Shang, late 2nd millennium B.C.

Ornament; thin flat pendant of irregular shape; two notches in base, upper edge fluted; two perforations; semitranslucent, mottled yellowish-green and tan; almost covered with earth incrustation. (Tool marks and chip on one surface.) Box.

0.065 in length  (2-9/16")
0.035 in height.  (1-13/32")

3. (J.E.L., 1928) Late Chou.
5. (I.M., 1946) Cf. 17.382 for piece of somewhat similar shape.
For a similar jade ornament unearthed from a Liang-chu良渚 culture site in the Hangchou Bay region in Chekiang province, see K'ao-ku t'ung-hsün, 1957, no. 2, pl. 12, fig. 18.

Although the Liang-chu culture is primarily a neolithic culture, considered part of the Lung-shan neolithic culture, the sites in the region also yielded later artifacts, including Chou and Han jades.

8. (Julia Murray, 1980) Attribution is changed from Chou to Neolithic or early Shang, late 2nd millennium B.C.

9. (Julia Murray, 1982) A plaque very similar in shape to 16.628 was excavated from a site of the late phase of the Liang-chu良渚 culture of the east coast Neolithic period at Chiang-ning Tsan-miao江寧驾廟, Kiangsu province (K'ao-ku 1981 no. 3: p. 197, fig. 7). It differs from the Freer piece in that its surface is decorated with a face-like mask (similar to that found on FGA tsung 16.118 and 17.384 and plaques 17.380 and 16.511). Other plaques of slightly different proportions (more like FGA plaque 17.382) were excavated from Liang-chu sites at Wu-chin Ssu-tun武進寺墩 and Wu-hsien Chang-ling-shan吳縣張陵山 both in Kiangsu province (K'ao-ku 1981 no. 3 p. 196). These finds make it likely that the plaque published in K'ao-ku t'ung-hsün 1957 no. 2, discussed by Lawton above, also belongs to the Neolithic and not to a later period.

Hayashi Minao has suggested that the shape of the angular type of plaque is descended from that represented by butterfly-shaped objects made of wood that were found in remains of the
Ho-mu-tu culture on the south shore of the Hangchow Bay in Chekiang province. These finds, which include the earliest evidence for rice cultivation in China, have been carbon-dated to 5000 B.C. See Hayashi Minao, "Jade of the Liang-chu Culture" Museum, no. 360 (March, 1981): 22-33 (in Japanese).

Attribution changed from Neolithic or early Shang to Neolithic, late 2nd millennium B.C.


Like many of the ancient jades bought by Charles Lang Freer, these rings were originally attributed to the Chou dynasty. On the basis of recent archaeological finds, they now are thought to date to the late Neolithic period.

Rings with tall, slightly concave walls are found among Neolithic remains in various parts of China, often made of other kinds of polished stone, ivory and pottery, in addition to jade. Two of the present examples are unusual because of their decoration. One of them (17.385) has two emblems lightly incised on the outer wall 180 degrees apart.

One of these is a motif suggesting the crescent moon surmounted by the sun, a device also found on a large ritual pottery wine jar that was excavated from remains of the late phase of the Ta-wen-k'ou culture in Shantung Province, attributed to the late 3rd millennium B.C. The same motif appears as part of a larger design incised on a Neolithic
The other design incised on the ring is larger and more elaborate, resembling outstretched wings containing eyes. Hayashi Minao has related the general contour of this motif to a kind of angular plaque found in remains of the Liang-chu culture in east coastal China (see: 16.628 and 17.382) and has traced its ultimate origins to a design carved on several artifacts of the Ho-mu-tu culture (radiocarbon dated to ca. 5000 B.C.). However, in the absence of conclusive evidence, the interpretation of both emblems remains a tantalizing problem.

The second ring (19.46) is unusual in having the outer surface covered with abstract meander patterns resembling basketry designs. In shape and proportions, this ring most resembles one found in the lower strata at Shih-hsia, ch'ü-chiang, in Kuangtung Province.