

17.396....1
a-b

V-FF-9

Jade
(Nephrite)

17.396.1 = blade ; F1917.396.2a-b = box; F1917.396.3 = rubbing of inscription on blade.
a-b

S.I.1336

Chinese, ~~12th-century B.C.~~
~~ca. 1523-1028 B.C.~~ ca. 1400-1300 B.C.
Shang-Chou dynasty, ~~late, 12th-11th-century, B.C.~~
(ca. 1600-ca. 1050 B.C.)

Large emblematic weapon of the type ko (one chip missing).
Opaque nephrite mottled and striped in shades of gray and
yellow-gray. Carved and engraved with parallel ridges and
lines in various patterns; a conical perforation in the
tang. Rough wooden box.

84.1 cm 11.9 cm
84.1 x 11.9 over all. (33-1/8" x 4-11/16")

Neg. Nos.

H530B2
H739B2
5352B

12B
H879B

1. Bought from Seaouke Yue, of Shanghai. For
price, see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 307.

2. (J.E.L., 1942). This emblematic weapon was
first published in the West, anyway, by Laufer in his
Jade (1912, Pl. IX, pp. 40-41). He saw it in Peking while
it was still in the possession of 端方 Tuan Fang (see
folder 18.1, ¶2) from whom he obtained a photograph of it
and information to the effect that it "was dug up in 1903
not far from the old city of Fêng-siang fu 鳳翔府
Fêng-hsiang Fu in Shensi Province from a considerable

depth....." (op.cit. p.40). There seems to be no reason why this statement of provenience should not be accepted as true; and a very interesting locality it involves. Originally, this region seems to have been known by the name of 岐山 Ch'i Shan, --- the mountain which dominated it; and, indeed, there is still a District (縣) called Ch'i-shan in the Fêng-hsiang Prefecture. South of the mountain stretched a fertile plain, and thither, in the 26th year of the 商 Shang Emperor 小乙 Hsiao-i (circa 1327 B.C.), came the 古公亶父 Ancient Duke T'an-fu, known also as King 太 T'ai, with his people from 邠 (邠) Pin. There he settled down; there built the city of 周 Chou, and there founded the royal line of the great Chou dynasty. He was succeeded by his son 季歷 Chi-li (1284-1185 B.C.) who, five years before his death, was formally recognized by the Shang Emperor 帝乙 Ti-i as Duke Chi of Chou. He, in turn, was succeeded by his son 昌 Ch'ang (1231-1135 B.C.), known also as 西伯 "Chief of the West", and posthumously as King 文 Wên of Chou, who was the father of 發 Fa (1169-1116 B.C.), afterward King 武 Wu, the final conqueror of Shang and the first reigning sovereign of the Chou dynasty. This, in outline, is the account given in the 史記 Shih chi (cf. Chavannes, Mémoires historiques, Vol. I, pp. 213ff; see also Legge, Chinese Classics, Vol. II, p. 176, and Vol. IV, Pt. II, pp. 427-464); but further details appear in the 詩經 Shih Ching "Book of Songs", and more again, as well as a different chronology, in the 竹書紀年 "Annals of the Bamboo Books". The principal events and their sequence, however, are fairly constant throughout all the records. Little is told about the

relations between the Shang Emperors and the Ancient Duke or Duke Chi; but between the last two Emperors on the one hand and Dukes Ch'ang and Fa (i.e. King Wên and King Wu) on the other, relations became increasingly frequent and unfriendly, until the final overthrow of Shang and the triumph of Chou. However, the "Bamboo Books" say that on one occasion when Duke Chi did homage at the Court of the Emperor 武乙 Wu-i, he was presented with 玉十穀 "ten pairs of jades", and on a later occasion received a 圭璜 kwei tsan, --- a ceremonial jade of some sort, --- from the Emperor 文丁 Wên-ting (Legge, Classics, Vol. III, Pt. I, Prolegomena, pp. 137 and 138 Note); while in the "Book of Songs" it is said that the officers of Yin (Shang) assisted at the sacrifices in the Chou capital (Legge, Classics, Vol. IV, Pt. II, p. 430). Perhaps these instances, though few in number, are in themselves enough to indicate that Shang ceremonial objects of jade normally found their way to Chou long before the Shang dynasty fell, and that the present example, excavated in the home-land of Chou (周原) may well be one such object. That it is a product of the Shang rather than the contemporary Chou culture is strongly suggested by the high perfection of its design and execution. It is distinctly more metropolitan than provincial in appearance, --- the kind of thing more reasonably to be expected from the craftsmen of a long-established, sophisticated and luxurious civilization like that of Shang, than from those of a relatively new-born, raw and pushing community like that of Chou. The fact that it was found in the ancient territory of Chou does not necessarily mean that it was made there, but does, I think, imply that it was made

before the Chou capital was moved from the foot of Mount Ch'ei to ~~鳳~~ ^鳳 Fêng (circa 1136), and so before the fall of Shang. Its exquisite finish has much in common with that of our 39.19 and 39.20, --- which are said to have come from An-yang, --- and with 41.3 and 19.17, --- neither one of known provenience. Moreover, the blades of all these, --- and of our 19.61 too, --- seem to follow a recognizable pattern with respect to their surfaces and edges. Thus, the present example has a relatively thin, two-edged blade provided with a median ridge running from butt to point. The outline of either edge is varied by two slight waves or projections which form transverse pairs, --- one about midway between butt and point, the other seeming to establish a base-line at which the pointing of the blade begins. Between this apparent base-line and the actual point, the taper of the edges starts at the median ridge, and this short section of the blade is, therefore, divided into two longitudinal surfaces; but the longer section, between the base-line and the butt, is divided into four longitudinal surfaces, two of which are separated from one another by the median ridge and are respectively flanked by the clearly defined taper-surface of the corresponding edge. Thus the general effect is that the two surfaces adjacent to the median ridge run the full length of the blade, while the taper-surfaces of the two long edges begin, --- or end, --- at the pair of slight projections which mark the base-line of the pointing. This may be taken as the type pattern with which the blades in this small group conform, on the whole, so closely as to suggest

that they are all representatives of the same tradition and, approximately, of the same period, --- perhaps late Shang, perhaps the early decades of Chou, when the cultural influence of Shang was still directly felt. By that time, anyway, the ancient 戈 ko type of bronze weapon had already acquired, in addition to its practical significance as an arm, a purely ceremonial significance as an emblem, and even a special form in which the latter aspect was embodied. Possibly our 34.8, 39.39, 39.40, and 41.5 may be said to illustrate stages in such a development, since all four suggest ceremonial rather than practical use. They are quite orthodox in form, and look as if they had once been hafted; moreover, the first three are made of bronze; but 34.8 has dull, cast edges, a blunt point and inlaid decorations; 39.39 and 39.40 are too thin to be strong and are extensively inlaid with turquoise; while 41.5 has a thin jade blade and a bronze tang densely inlaid with turquoise. In the present example, however, the separation of the ceremonial from the practical aspect of the ko weapon is seen to be an accomplished fact; the former has retained nothing of the latter except its general shape; in all other respects, --- intention, material, size, proportions, detail, technique, finish, --- the ko emblem is as distinct in its own way as the ko weapon (cf. folder 19.13, ¶3). No doubt the bronze weapon preceded, as it also survived, the jade emblem; but there must have been a long period during which the two were made and used contemporaneously, and for this reason neither can at present contribute much to the accurate dating of the other. It can be fairly said, however, that the

period which produced the present example was also the period when the demand for such things was most exacting and the art of making them most highly developed. In this connection, our own records (see Miscellaneous List, S.I. 1336) supply further information to the effect that this jade was excavated from the grave of the first Duke of 召 Shao, and was known as the 赤刀 "red sword". On the face of it, there is nothing impossible about this and, if true, it is of great interest; but the dealer Seaouk'e Yue (游小溪 Yu Hsiao-ch'i) who, in a letter of May 13th, 1917, addressed to Mr. Freer, as well as in an accompanying statement written in Chinese (see Voucher No. 1, November, 1917) gave the information as a matter of proven fact, unfortunately failed to mention the source from which he derived it, or to offer any other supporting evidence. It can hardly be doubted that, if Laufer had heard and believed the story, he would have reported it; but there is no reference to it in his account of the piece (loc.cit). He does say, however, that the jade is of a "peculiar light-reddish" color, thus sustaining, in a way, the dealer's statement that the object was called the "red sword"; but upon whatever this name or Laufer's observation may have been based, there is certainly no trace of red in the stone itself now, although flecks of cinnabar still adhering to the tang suggest that the whole thing may once have been so smeared with red pigment as to merit such a title from its discoverers. The presence of cinnabar in early Chinese burials, although not related, as far as I know, to any practice mentioned in the ancient records, is familiar to modern archaeology, and the mere fact that there are still traces of vermilion on this jade is enough to indicate that it was found in a grave, while the

further fact of its large size and fine quality is an equally sure indication that the grave was prepared for an important personage. Such a personage was, no doubt, the first Duke of Shao. His personal name was 奭 Shih, and he and his elder brother 旦 Tan were younger sons of King Wên and, therefore, younger brothers of King Wu of Chou. When King Wên moved his capital to Fêng, he divided the government of his former territory between his two younger sons, making Shih Duke of Shao (the modern District of 垣曲 Yüan-ch'ü in Shansi), and Tan Duke of Chou; but when King Wu came to the throne in 1122 B.C., he bestowed the marquissate of Northern 燕 Yen upon the Duke of Shao, and the marquissate of 魯 Lu upon the Duke of Chou. Yen was in Chihli, Lu in Shantung, and neither Duke seems to have spent much time in his respective marquissate; moreover, during the minority of King Wu's successor, King 成 Ch'êng, and the Regency of the Duke of Chou, the Duke of Shao was attached to the Royal Court as 太保 Grand Guardian, and had, also, general supervision of the Western part of the Empire. He was one of the ablest of the men who established the Chou dynasty, and since he apparently retained his marquissate of Northern Yen for 70 years, he can hardly have been much less than 90 at the time of his death in 1053 B.C. That he died in the Capital (Fêng or 洛 Lo) seems likely, since he still served as Grand Guardian under King 康 K'ang, successor to King Ch'êng; but I do not know of any evidence regarding this point nor of any, --- apart from Seaouk'e Yue's letter, --- regarding the place of the Duke's burial, although it might reasonably be sought among the tombs of his contemporaries near 咸陽 Hsien-yang in the 西安 Hsi-an Prefecture of Shensi.

He was, no doubt, quite worthy of this fine emblematic jade, even as it was worthy of him, and it might have been conferred upon him when, for example, he became Duke of Shao or Marquis of Yen or Grand Guardian; but except for hear-say, there is, I think, no evidence that it was ever associated with him in any way. However, John C. Ferguson, in his Outlines of Chinese Art (pp. 72-74), refers to three jade tablets which were taken, in 1902, from the grave of the Duke of Shao. He goes on to say: "While Tuan Fang was governor of Shen-si province, he ordered the repairing of this grave, but in the process the masonry collapsed and these scepters were found. One remains in the possession of Tuan Fang's family, one belongs to Fêng Kung-tu, of Peking, and the third is now in an American collection." That one of the three which Ferguson illustrates is not ours, nor, indeed, is there any conclusive reason to think that ours is involved in what he says; but his statement does support a belief that the grave of the Duke of Shao has been identified.

3. (T. Lawton, 1978) Late Shang, 12th-11th century B.C. Previously attributed to Shang-Chou.

4. (Julia K. Murray, 1982). The jade ko is a dagger-shaped blade made as a ceremonial substitute for the functional bronze ko, which was used as a weapon. Sometimes the jade blade was mounted in a bronze handle (cf. 41.5), making the substitution for the bronze blade directly; more often the jade blade was complete in itself. The type first appears in remains of the early Shang period at Erh-li-t'ou, Honan, and the evolution of the shape continues well into the Chou period. Perhaps the greatest concentration of jade ko occurs in sites of the late Shang period, particularly at Anyang, Honan.

Jade ko vary greatly in size. The middle Shang sites of P'an-lung-ch'eng, Hupei and Erh-li-kang, Honan, have yielded extremely large and finely made blades (comparable to 17.396), clearly objects of considerable ritual importance. At the other extreme, trinket-like miniature blades, perhaps intended to be worn (cf. 16.149, 16.150, 39.19, 39.20, 79.33, 79.35) have been excavated from late Shang sites in Anyang, Honan (see K'ao-ku hsueh-pao 1955, pl. 19; and 1979/1, p. 101, fig. 76), and from Western Chou sites in Shensi, Honan, and Kansu (see folder sheet 79.33).

The evolution of the shape of the blade in general proceeded from the distinctly individual, carefully contoured Shang type to the more perfunctory and less articulated Chou type; and ends in the mass-produced, straight and flat tablets found at Hou-ma, Shansi, which belong to the Eastern Chou period (for an example, see K'ao-ku 1973/3, pl. 4/1).

Incised surface decoration appears on some blades (15.108, 16.150, 17.37, 17.396, 19.13 and 78.31). Sometimes it is arranged in groups of parallel lines, as on a ko blade from Erh-li-t'ou (K'ao-ku 1976/4, pl. 6/1 lower); cross-hatch designs are also found, as on a large hu blade from the same site (K'ao-ku 1978/4, pl. 12/3). Chou blades are more likely to be plain.

5. (Jenny So, January 1996) Added "(ca. 1600-ca. 1050 B.C.". "ca. 1523-1028 B.C." changed to "ca. 1400-1300 B.C.").