


Jade
(Nephrite)

18.35

S.I.1363

Chinese,

~~Chou dynasty. Late Shang-Early Western Chou~~
ca. 1523-1028 B.C.

Slender, rectangular axe (fu ) slightly wider at blade;
~~Slender-chisel-shaped object of the type kwei~~; beveled
blade and conical perforation; slate blue and silvery
gray with earth colored incrustations and black streaks;
smooth surface with areas of granular pittings. (Chipped).

Box.

11.4 cm

11.4 in length. (4-1/2")

Neg. No.
H407B2

4.5- width at blade. (1-25/32")
4.5 cm.

1. Bought from K. T. Wong, of Shanghai. For price,
see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 316.

2. Original attribution: Hsia. See further,
S.I.1363, Appendix IX.

3. (J.E.L., 1929) Late Chou.

4. Sp. G. is 2.927.

5. (A.G.W., 1945) Chou dynasty.

6. (E.H.W., 1956) X-ray diffraction analysis. Nephrite.

Film F131. 2/21/56.

7. (T.Lawton, 1978) Late Shang-Early Western Chou.

8. (Julia Murray, 1980) Attribution is changed from from Late Shang-Early Western Chou to Shang, ca. 1523-1028 B.C.

9. (Julia K. Murray, 1982) Axe-shaped implements (Ch.: fu 斧 or ylleh 鉞) appear relatively early in the jade inventory, at least by the 3rd millennium B. C. Axes made as tools and possibly weapons from other kinds of stone (cf. 19.39) are found among Neolithic remains as early as the 5th millennium B. C., especially in eastern China. Stone axes were also included among grave offerings in the Neolithic era, often being laid directly on top of the body of the deceased. Axes made of jade were also used in this manner as funerary offerings, but they probably had other ceremonial applications that became increasingly important. Eventually, the original concept of the jade axe as a replica of the utilitarian stone axe was forgotten and it came to be part of a large category of ceremonial tablets collectively called kuei 圭 . Such symbolic tablets were associated with court officialdom and Taoist divinities. The basic axe shape persisted with modifications through the Ch'ing dynasty; the later examples often bear elaborate decor derived from motifs belonging to the ornamental repertoire of ancient bronze vessels (14.44, 16.370, 16.623, 17.27, 19.40 & 19.43).

The axe 18.35 closely resembles an Early Shang jade axe excavated at Erh-li-t'ou, Yen-shih 偃師 = 里頭 , Honan (reproduced in K'ao-ku 1976/4, pl. 6/2, lower left).