

Jade
(Nephrite)

19.61

S.I.1441

Chinese, 12th century, B.C.

Shang dynasty, late, 12th-11th century B.C.

Hsi-an, Shensi(?)

Ceremonial weapon of the type ko; pointed end, bevelled sides and two cutting edges; long, slightly indented handle indented at end and perforated; black and dark olive-green; decoration: in relief and incised, both sides alike, short lateral ridges above handle, three groups of triple lines at perforation. (Slightly chipped, one granular defect.) Box.

31.0 cm
~~31.0~~ in length. (12-3/16")
~~6.62~~ in width. (2-7/16")
6.2 cm

Neg. No.
H389B5
S3743AE

1. Bought from Seaouke Yue, of Shanghai. Said to have been excavated at Hsi-an, Shensi. For price, see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 347.

2. Original attribution: Chou. See further, S.I.1441, Appendix IX.

3. (J.E.L., 1940) 12-11c. B.C. Chou dynasty or earlier.

4. (A.G.W., 1945) Shang dynasty.

5. Sp. G. is 3.025. Nephrite.

6. (H.E.Buckman, 1964) The Envelope File, which has now been destroyed, contained the following: "Excavated at Sianfu, in Shensi."

7. (T.Lawton, 1974) Among the most carefully finished jade implements dating from the Shang dynasty are the ko, or dagger-axe blades, whose forms clearly indicate that they were based on metal prototypes. (For a example excavated from Cheng-chou and dated earlier in the Shang dynasty, see Chinese Archaeological Exhibition, Washington, no. 64). Unlike the bronze ko, which actually were used as combat weapons, the jade counterparts were ceremonial and served as symbols of status.

This blade of black and dark olive-green nephrite represents a relatively early form of the ko. Only a slight inward curve on either side of the ko suggests a transition from blade to tang. Three groups of tripled lines intersect the conical perforation at the end of the tang, while small notches accent the butt end. The faceted edges extend along the length of the blade, ending where slight projections mark the point at which the blade tapers to the tip. Two finely worked, raised horizontal ribs interrupt the faceted edges at slightly diagonal positions on either side of the blade. The median crest runs from the tang to the tip of the blade. The nephrite ko is said to have been unearthed at Sian, Shensi province.

8. (Julia K. Murray, 1982). For a general discussion of jade ko, see folder sheet 17.396.

A smaller ko blade also having a very short tang relative to the rest of the blade was found among early Shang remains at Erh-li-t'ou, Honan (K'ao-ku 1975/5, pl. 8/1).