

Jade

68.24

Chinese

Shang

Tsung 琮 . Square, slightly tapering prism of brownish black nephrite. Drilled longitudinally from both sides leaving a smooth ridge in the middle.

Neg. No.

10294B

Height: .184 (7-1/4")

Width: .086 (3-3/8")

1. Acquired by gift from Mrs. Eugene Meyer, Washington, D. C., and Mt. Kisco, New York. To be acknowledged as Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer.

2. (T. Lawton, 1978) The following is taken from the entry in the Meyer Memorial Exhibition catalogue. "While the shapes of some Chinese ritual jades seem to have been derived from neolithic stone implements, that of the tsung appears to have been meant for ritual purposes from the very beginning. The unusual, nonfunctional form of the tsung may possibly be explained by the relative lateness of its appearance; no neolithic tsung are known. Traditionally said to be symbolic of Earth, the tsung is in the shape of a cylinder encased within a slightly shorter prism or cube. In early examples, there is a relatively

thick section of jade between the central cylinder and the flat outer surfaces. As the central opening became increasingly larger in circumference, artisans began to curve the outer surfaces. Tsung very considerably in proportion, the longest examples now known measuring approximately 20 inches. The outer surfaces of this square, slightly tapering prism of brownish-black nephrite are flat and unornamented. The four corners at each end of the tsung are bevelled, thereby forming an octagonal collar. Several small unfinished areas suggest that the artisan conceived the form as somewhat larger than the jade available. The interior was drilled longitudinally from both sides, resulting in a slight ridge in the middle of the cylindrical hollow."