

Jade

16.511
S.I.1057

Chinese

~~Chou, Western~~
Neolithic, ca. 2000 B.C.

Ornament; rounded plaque with straight base; obverse slightly convex; reverse slightly concave with three double perforations; opaque, mottled cream and tans; silvery incrustation, more profuse on reverse; decoration: carved in low relief and incised, a stylized face with geometric pattern over and about it. Box.

Neg.No.
4088AA

Height: .069 (2-3/4")

Width: .081 (3-3/16")

1. Bought from Seaouke Yue, of Shanghai, in New York. For price, see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 236.
2. Original attribution: Hsia. See further, S.I. 1057, Appendix VIII. (See Paragraph 7.)
3. (J.E.Lodge, 1929) Late Chou (?).
4. Sp. G. is 2.591. Serpentine (?).
5. (A.G.Wenley, 1946) Period uncertain. Cf. also 17.378C, 17.378D and 17.380.
6. (W.B.Trousdale, 1964) Chou dynasty. Western Chou, 9th-8th century B.C.
7. (H.E.Buckman, 1964) The Envelope File contained no further information, and has now been destroyed.

8. (Julia Murray, 1980) Attribution is changed from Western Chou to Neolithic, ca. 2000 B.C.

9. (Julia Murray, 1982). In shape the plaque 16.511 resembles one excavated from a site belonging to the late phase of the Liang-chu 良渚 culture of the east-coast Neolithic (see K'ao-ku t'ung-hsün 考古通訊 1957 no. 2, pl. 12/15), a type represented in the Freer collection by plaques 17.380, 17.378C and 17.378D. The decor of 16.511 however, belongs with a type found primarily on tsung from the late Liang-chu context. (See Wen-wu tzu-liao ts'ung-k'an 文物資料叢刊 no. 3, pl. 3/1 for one such tsung, excavated from Ts'ao-hsieh-shan, Wu-hsien 吳縣草鞋山 in Kiangsu province; also cf. Freer tsung 16.118.) The design on the Freer plaque 16.511 differs from that on the tsung in that the raised motifs are all covered with incised meander-patterns; and arms ending in long claws are incised beside and below the "face." The form of this demonic design and its symmetrical, centered arrangement on the surface of the plaque suggest that it may represent a forerunner of the t'ao-t'ieh mask found in Bronze Age decor.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has a closely related plaque (acc. no. 18.63) bearing the same design, with its details slightly less clearly incised (possibly damaged). See accompanying photos, page 3.

The design on the related Freer plaque 17.380 may be viewed as a simpler version of that on 16.511 as it lacks the incised meanders and arms-with-claws of the latter. Both plaques, as well as the undecorated 17.378C and 17.378D, are drilled with three pairs of holes on the back surface, possibly intended for attaching the plaque to another object or for stringing it together with other pendant elements.

Another related plaque is in the Minneapolis Institute of Art (acc. no. 50.46.230); see Chinese Jades: Archaic and Modern, cat. no. 91. The design on this example has a more elaborate crest and no claws-with-arms.

10. (J. Murray, 1982) A review of the Original Miscellaneous List shows that this object was excavated in Hsiaki, Chekiang.

11. See 16.118, # 10.