

Jade
(Nephrite)

17.79

S.I.1166

Chinese,

~~W. Chou dynasty~~ Neolithic ca. ~~2000 B.C.~~ 3000-2500 B.C.

Very large perforated disc of the type pi; bored from both sides leaving median ridge; mottled dark and light greens, golden tan and brown; cream colored cloudings and white veins of decomposition on obverse, profuse on reverse; decoration: lightly incised device. (Break and chip on rim.)

.318 in diameter. (12-1/2")

Neg. Nos.

~~143033~~~~173953~~~~174131~~

S3243AE

S7365AA

1. Bought from Lee Van Ching, of Shanghai, in New York. For price, see Original Miscellaneous List, p. 268.
2. Original attribution: Han. See further, S.I.1166, Appendix VIII.
3. (J.E.L., 1927) Pre-Han.
4. (A.G.W., 1945) The incised device may be a later addition.
5. Sp. G. is 3.001. Nephrite.

6. (I.M., 1946) The device is in the form of a bird on a goblet-shaped perch above a shield-shaped stand with crenelated top; an unidentified elaborate symbol is in the field and a simple geometric design at the base.



Cf. device on 17.346, which is very similar, and also that on 17.348; for other forms of device, see 19.58 and 17.385.

7. Exhibited:

1917 Chicago, Ill. The Art Institute, No. 110.

8. (H.E.Buckman, 1964) The Envelope File contained no further information, and has now been destroyed.

9. (T.Lawton, 1978) Western Chou.

10. From Exhibition Label, September 1980, by Julia Murray: Attribution changed from Western Chou to Neolithic, ca. 2000 B.C.

11. (Julia K. Murray, 1983) For further discussion of the motif incised on the surface of this pi, see folder sheet 17.346. See also folder sheet 17.19 for a discussion of pi.

12. (From an exhibition label: Studies in Connoisseurship: 1923-1983, September, 1983). Exhibited with: 17.346 and 17.348

When acquired in 1917, these three pi disks were attributed variously to the Han (17.79) and Chou (17.346 & 17.348) dynasties. In addition to their unusually fine polish, these pi are remarkable for the incised decoration, which appears on one surface about halfway between rim and center. The images are those of birds standing on emblematic forms. The outer rims of these three pi are slightly concave in profile, unlike the vast majority of pi which are straight-edged.

Well-polished pi disks have been excavated from Neolithic remains in eastern China, indicating that the technical capability for such sophisticated workmanship already existed in prehistoric times. The Japanese scholar Hayashi Minao 林已奈夫 has recently linked the incised emblems to the Liang-chu 良渚 culture, primarily on the basis of similar motifs executed in other media -- pottery, bone and wood. However, no jade pi exactly like the present examples have been excavated thus far, and their attribution to the Liang-chu culture remains tentative.

13. (Jenny So, January 1996) "ca. 2000 B.C." changed to "ca. 3000-2500 B.C. "