

Jade

53.9

Chinese

~~Chou, Early Western, late 11th - 10th c., B.C.~~
Shang, ca. 1523-1028 B.C.

Ornament:

Very light translucent greenish nephrite ornament mask. Carved in relief and incised. Rear side pierced with six holes for fastening, and a central hole running from top to bottom.

Neg.No.
3694AAE

.046 x .041 x .006 (1-13/16" x 1-9/16" x 1/4")

1. Bought from Alice Boney, New York, N. Y. For price, see Freer Gallery of Art Purchase List after 1920.

2. (A.G.Wenley, 1953) It is difficult to determine just how this ornament was used, or the need for so many perforations in its back. However, one may suppose that it was applied to clothing and had other jade ornaments attached to it. Anthropomorphic masks occur in early Chinese bronze, pottery and jade (see 42.1, 52.30, 42.6 and 39.4). No doubt there is some connection between them, and they may represent legendary religious gods or heroes. As pointed out above, the present example probably was attached to wearing apparel and the hole running vertically through the middle of the piece suggests that other pieces of jade may have been connected with it. This

is also suggested by the fact that a bit of vermilion remaining in this hole is mixed with organic matter which might be the remains of cord or something of the sort.

3. (R.J.Gettens, 1953) The red taken from the large vertical hole in the center of the piece was recognized microscopically as vermilion; the presence of mercury was confirmed by microchemical analysis. The vermilion was mixed with organic matter and calcium carbonate (chalk).

4. (W.B.Trousdale, 1964) Chou dyasty. Early Western Chou.

5. From Exhibition Label, September 1980, by Julia Murray: Attribution is changed from Early Western Chou to Shang, ca. 1523-1028 B.C.