



BEN JANSSENS
ORIENTAL ART
EARLY JADES
嘉 玉 铭 礼



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Foreword

Jiaming Zhao, curator of this exhibition, writes:

In the Stone Age, humanity glimpsed its extraordinary creative power and began pondering the profound mysteries of life, death, and the universe. Using jade and stone as their canvas, ancient civilizations sought to bridge the gap between themselves and the cosmos, creating works of art that connected them to the universe's enigmas. Although those ancient minds have long departed, the jade and stone creations they left behind endure, their brilliance undiminished through millennia.

As time marched on, during the Warring States period and the Han Dynasty, jade works of art evolved. They became not just symbolic connectors to the universe and markers of life and death but practical, everyday objects, adorned with fancy designs. The shift was subtle yet significant – from a focus on the cosmic to an emphasis on the intrinsic beauty of these works of art.

Our exhibition, ‘嘉玉铭礼’, masterfully intertwines the elegance of early Chinese jade works of art. From the simplicity and austere style of Neolithic jade bi discs to the intricate craftsmanship of Han dynasty jade ornaments, these works of art span epochs, capturing the essence of China’s ancient artistic evolution.

What makes this exhibition truly exceptional is the collaboration with Mr. Janssens. A European connoisseur with a profound understanding of Eastern aesthetics, he brings a fresh perspective to these ancient works of art. His ability to perceive beauty in the subtlest lines and shapes of a jade ge blade speaks volumes about his discerning taste. This collaboration between East and West not only elevates the works of art but also creates a fusion of cultures, an interplay that transcends time and geographical boundaries.

Jiaming Zhao

I hope you enjoy these early jades and please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of assistance to you.

Ben Janssens
London, October 2023



1 **JADE NOTCHED BI DISC, XUAN JI**
玉璇玑

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Diameter: 3 ¾ inches, 9.5 cm

A notched jade bi disc, *Xuan ji*, of circular shape with three notches to the side. The translucent stone is of predominantly pale green colour with some white and russet markings.

The *xuan ji* is the symbol of Polaris, the star of the North.





2 **JADE CEREMONIAL BLADE, *qi***
玉戚

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 8 ¾ inches, 22.3 cm
Width: 2 inches, 5.1 cm

A ceremonial blade, *qi*, of typical shape with a sharp, flared edge at the bottom and notched sides. The blade has a single circular aperture at the top and another smaller at the side.
A half circular aperture can be seen at the top.
The stone is of variegated grey-green tone with some black flecks.

The *qi* blade is used as a high-level *yue*.

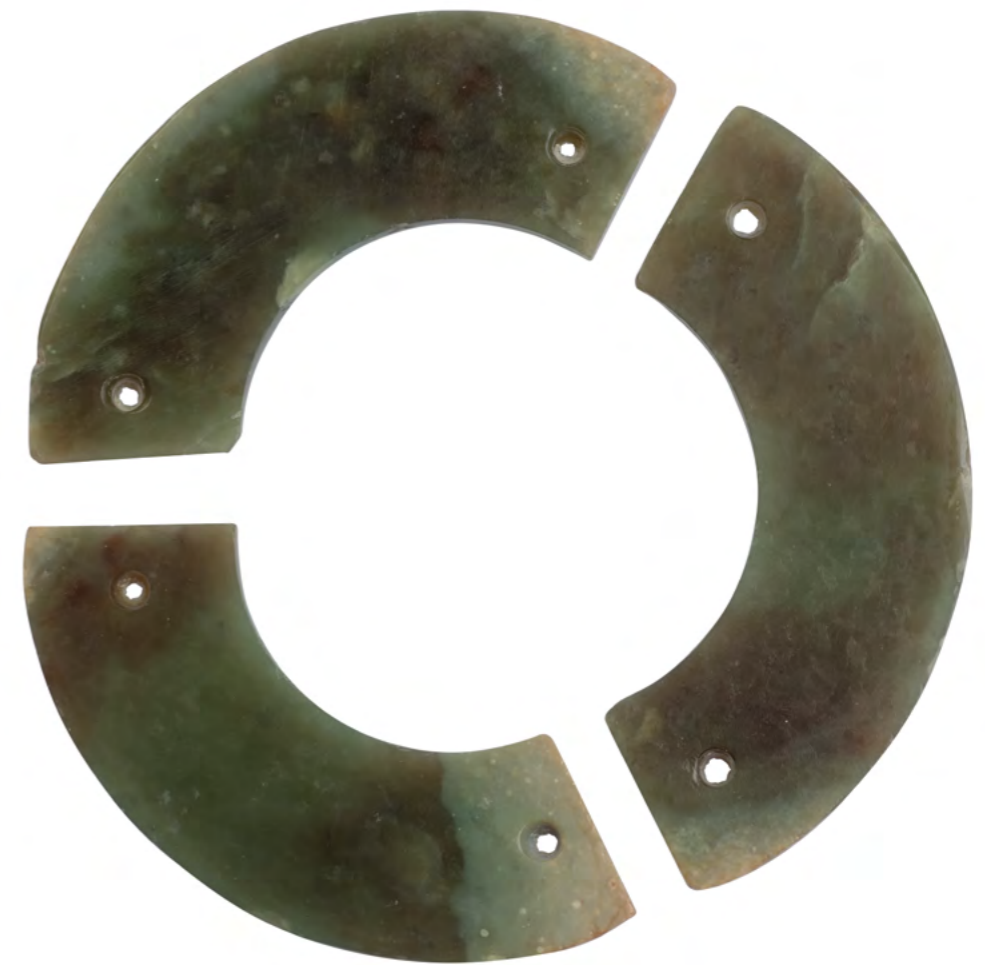




3 **HUAN IN THE FORM OF THREE HUANG PENDANTS**
玉三璜联环

Late Neolithic period to Western Zhou dynasty,
c. 3000 BC – 9th century BC
Diameter: 4 inches, 10 cm
Length of each (approximately): 3 ½ inches, 9 cm

Although the three *huang* pendants are of different size, they form a perfect circle when put together, forming a complete jade *huan* disc. They are also uniformly coloured and marked, indicating that these three sections were cut from the same stone as a single block rather than a thin disc.



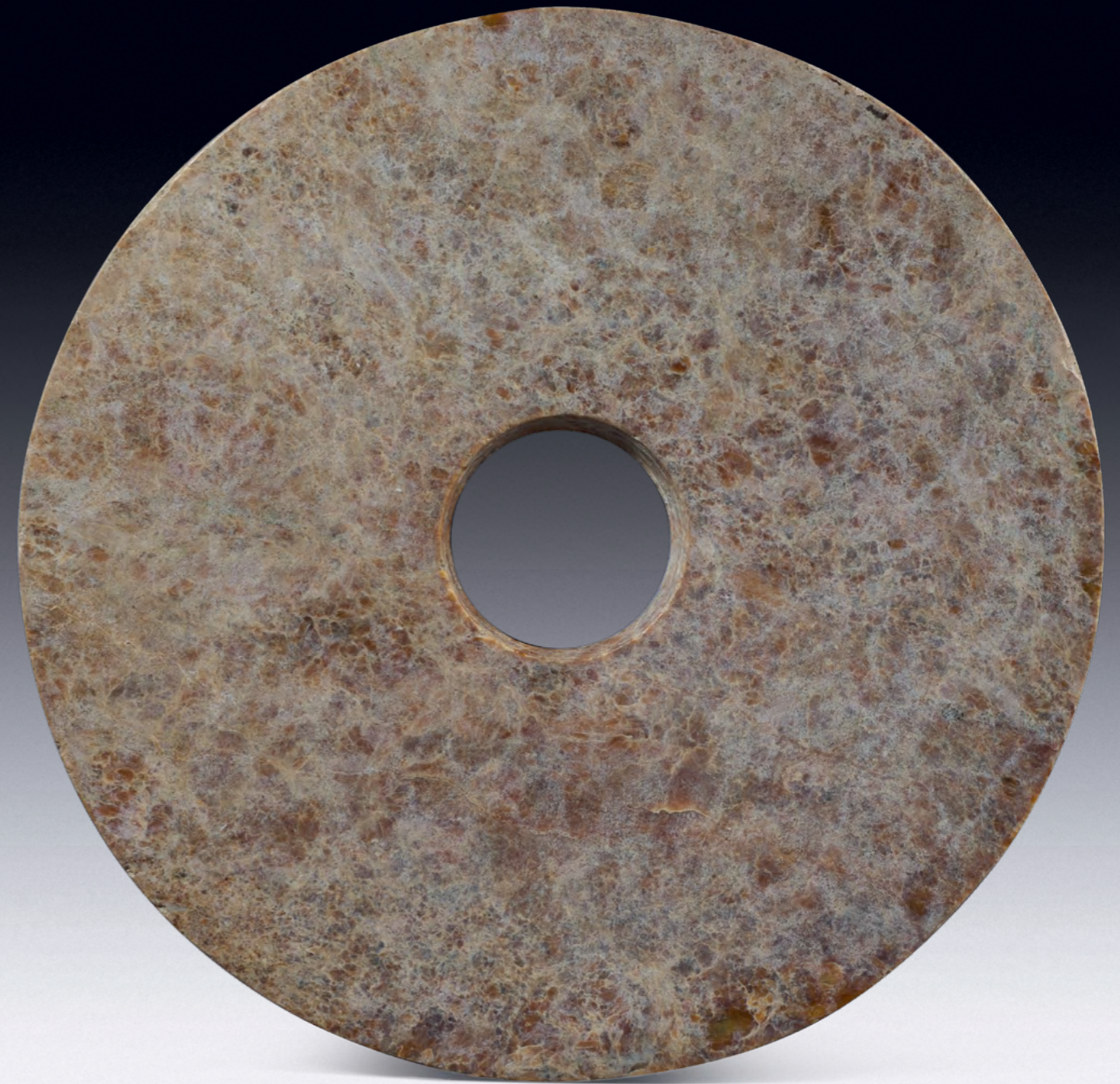


4 **JADE BI-DISC**
玉璧

Late Neolithic period to Western Zhou dynasty,
c. 3000 BC – 9th century BC
Diameter: 8¾ inches, 22.2 cm
Thickness: ¼ inch, 1.3 cm

A jade *bi*-disc, the central aperture drilled from two sides. The stone a mixture of russet and white tones.

A circular jade disc is known as *bi*. While the precise purpose of the *bi* disc is unclear, the large numbers found in some burial tombs suggest that they were a means for the deceased to show their wealth. An alternative theory is that they were used as talismans for the exorcism of and protection from evil.





5 **JADE CONG**
玉琮

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC

Height: 4 ¾ inches, 12 cm

Width: 2 ½ inches, 6.2 cm

A *cong* (tube) of typical shape. Two flat sides of the tube have white marking on the surface.

This yellow jade *cong* is one of the most exquisite examples of its kind. The *cong* is one of the principal jade types of the Neolithic period, first appearing during the Liangzhu culture around Lake Tai in Jiangsu province, an area that was home to one of the two major jade using peoples of early China. The Liangzhu people developed several of the most enduring jade forms, including the *cong* and the *bi* disc.¹ As with the *bi* disc, the purpose of the *cong* tube is not entirely clear, although *cong* are thought to have had a ceremonial and possibly also a protective function. One interpretation is that the *cong* symbolises earth, while the *bi* disc symbolises heaven.

¹ Rawson, J. *Chinese Jade from the Neolithic to the Qing*, British Museum, London, 1995, p. 122





6 **JADE HUAN DISC**
玉环

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Diameter: 3 ¾ inches, 9.5 cm

A jade *huan* disc, the stone of predominantly celadon green tone with some areas of dark and oatmeal inclusions.





7 **JADE PUPA AND EAGLE**
玉鷹及玉蚕蛹

Hongshan culture, Neolithic period, 4700 – 2900 BC

Eagle: Length 1 ¾ inches, 4.5 cm

Width 1 ½ inches, 3.8 cm

Pupa: Length 1 ½ inches, 4 cm

Thickness ½ inch, 1.3 cm

A jade *pupa* (cocoon) and a stylized eagle with outspread wings, pointy beak, claws and a prominent tale.

These two jades belong together as they are amongst the most typical animals in Hongshan culture with the pig dragon and the dragon.





8 **JADE HUAN DISC**
玉环

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Diameter: 4 7/8 inches, 12.3 cm

A jade *huan* disc, the stone of celadon green tone with some large areas of dark and oatmeal inclusions..





9 **JADE CEREMONIAL BLADE, *YUE***
玉钺

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 6 ¾ inches, 17.3 cm
Width: 3 ¾ inches, 9.2 cm

A jade ceremonial blade, *yue*, of roughly rectangular shape. Two circular holes are pierced at the top and one down the side. The stone is of non-translucent variegated grey tone.

The *yue* is a symbol of power and used for honour guards and rituals.





10 **A JADE RITUAL BLADE, ZHANG**
玉戚

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 13 inches, 33 cm
Width: 3 inches, 7.5 cm

A large jade ritual blade, zhang, of typical shape. The sides are flared and the bottom edge is rounded. It has two wing-like extensions to the neck. The translucent stone is of predominantly yellow tone with some russet markings.

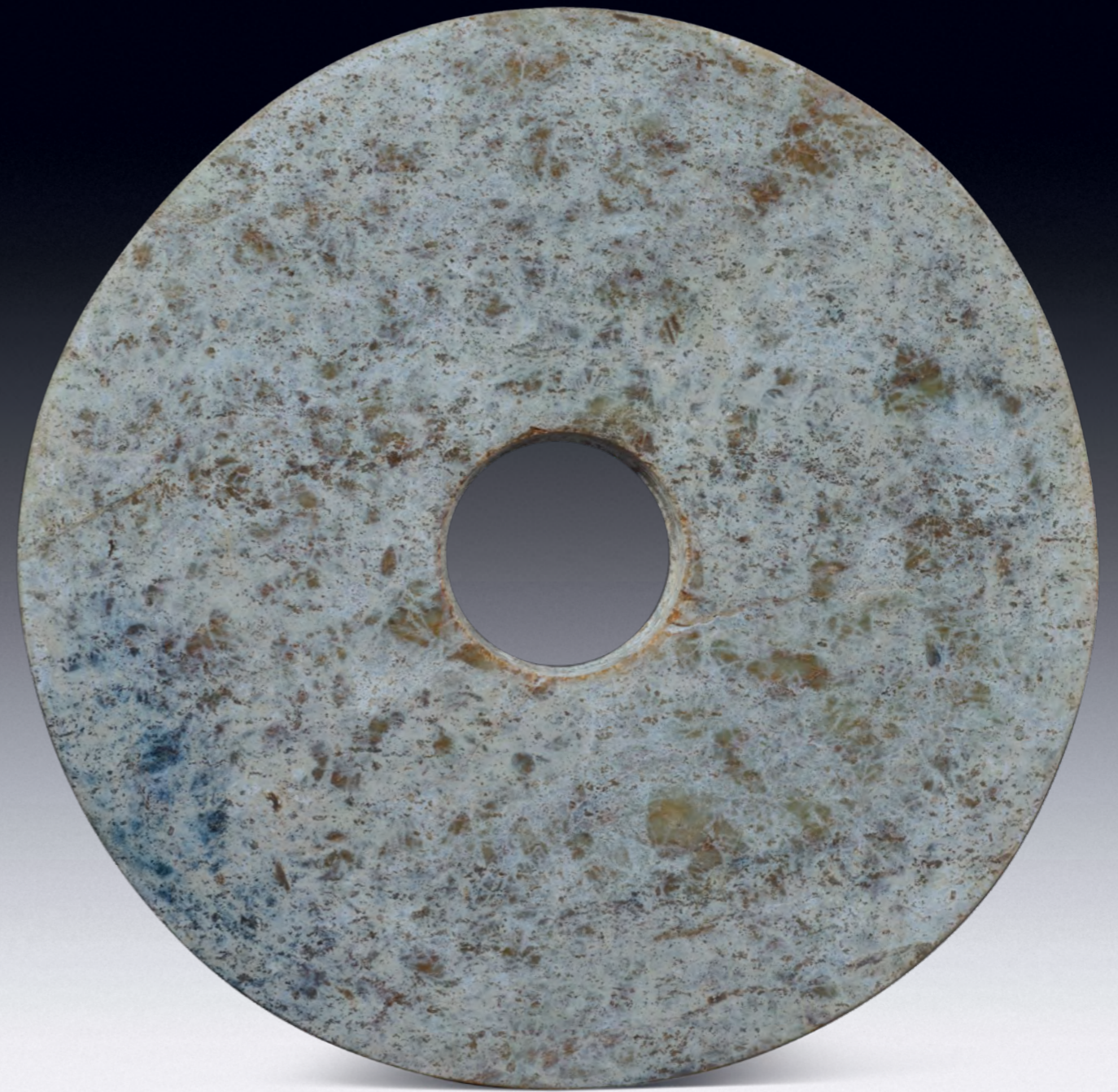




11 **JADE BI-DISC**
玉璧

Late Neolithic period to Western Zhou dynasty,
c. 3000 BC – 9th century BC
Diameter: 7 ½ inches, 19 cm
Thickness: ¼ inch, 1cm

A jade *bi*-disc, the central aperture drilled from
two sides. The stone of predominantly whitish
tone with some green inclusions.



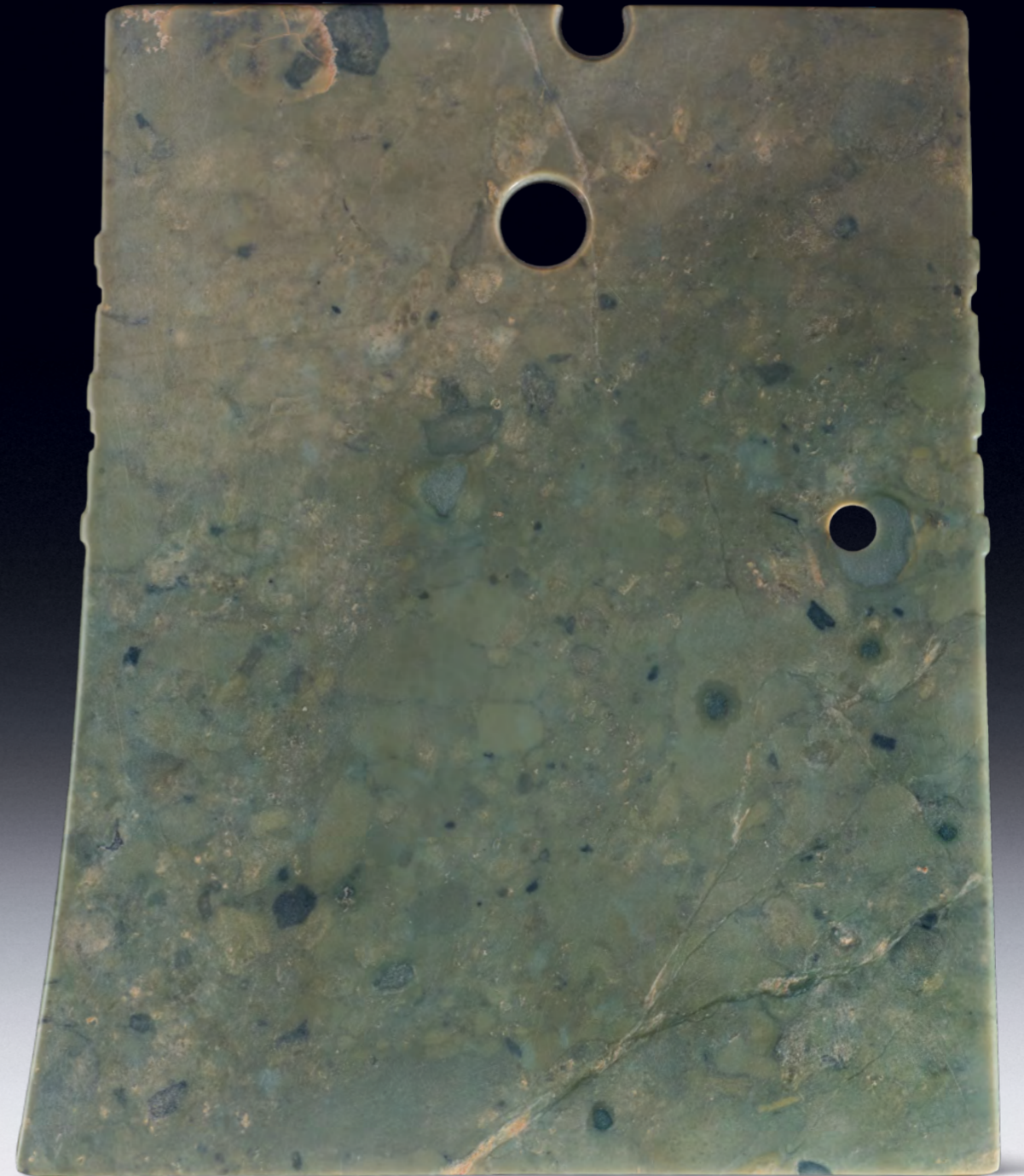


12 **JADE CEREMONIAL BLADE, *qi***
玉戚

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 8 ¾ inches, 22.3 cm
Width: 7 ¼ inches, 18.5 cm

A ceremonial blade, *qi*, of typical shape with a sharp, flared edge at the bottom and notched sides. The blade has a single circular aperture at the top and another smaller at the side. A half circular aperture can be seen at the top. The stone is of variegated grey-green tone with some black flecks.

The *qi* blade is used as a high-level *yue*





13 **JADE RITUAL BLADE, *GE***
玉戈

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 11¼ inches, 28.5 cm

A jade ritual blade, *ge*, in the form of a knife.
The blade terminates in a sharply pointed edge.
The handle is reduced in width. The stone is of
uniform mottled green tone.

The *ge* is a symbol of bravery and strong national
fighting force.





14 **STONE AXE, YUE**
石钺

Neolithic period, 3000 – 1900 BC
Length: 6 inches, 15.2 cm
Width: 4 ¼ inches, 10.8 cm

A stone axe blade, *Yue*, the top with a circular hole for attachment and a rounded edge. The dark grey stone has semi-circular inclusions.



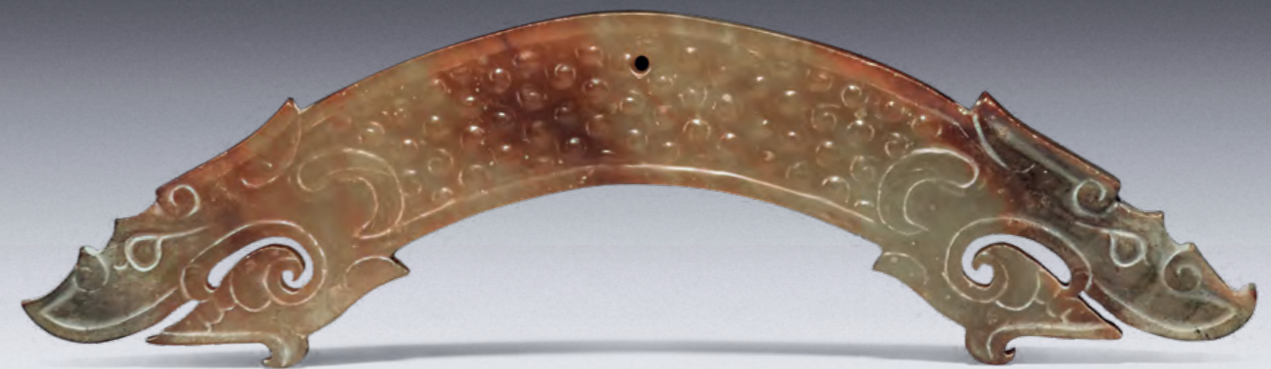


15 **JADE PENDANT, HUANG**
玉璜

Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period,
475 - 221 BC
Length: 5 ½ inches, 14 cm
Thickness: ¼ inch, 0.5 cm

A jade pendant of arched form, *huang*, terminating in pronounced dragonheads at either end. A small hole for suspension is drilled at the top of the arch. The semi-translucent stone is of even, yellowish tone and has brownish patches and calcified areas in places.

This exquisitely carved jade *huang* pendant was originally a component part of a set of pendants, strung in rows with beads, together creating a tingling sound when worn.





16 **THREE JADE SWORD POMMELS**
玉剑首三个

Qin or Han dynasty, 3rd – 2nd century
Diameter: 1 ½ to 1 ¾ inches, 3.7 to 4.4 cm

Three jade sword pommels of disc form, each carved with a wide band of comma-shaped ornament, forming a so-called 'rice-grain' pattern. The stone varies from a calcified white to a grey-green colour.

In the Zhou and Han dynasties, short bronze swords were often embellished with a jade pommel, and the scabbard with fittings such as guards, chapes and slides. The disc-type pommel with 'rice-grain' pattern was developed at the end of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, around the third century BC.





17 **JADE PENDANT, HUANG**
玉璜

Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period,
475 - 221 BC
Length: 3 ¼ inches, 8.5 cm
Width: ¾ inch, 1.5 cm

A jade pendant of arched form, *huang*, the surfaces covered in so-called "rice-grain" pattern. The top and bottom are engraved with panels of archaic decoration. The stone is of dark-green colour with areas of calcification.





18 **JADE SWORD GUARD**
玉剑戣

Han dynasty, 2nd – 1st century BC
Length: 2 ¼ inches, 5.6 cm
Width: 7/8 inch, 2.3 cm

A sword guard carved as an approximately triangular shape with a central hole. The original yellowish jade is heavily calcified all over and has adopted a creamy white colour.





benjanssens.com
info@benjanssens.com

Ben Janssens Oriental Art Ltd
27 Moreton Place
London SW1V 2NL
United Kingdom
tel. +44 (0) 207 976 1888
mob. +44 (0) 7770 476122

Design
Peter Keenan

Reproduction
Richard Harris

Photography
Richard Valencia

Text
Ben Janssens
Rongyu Wu

Printing
Pureprint

benjanssens.com
info@benjanssens.com

Ben Janssens Oriental Art
27 Moreton Place
London SW1V 2NL
United Kingdom
tel: +44 (0) 207 976 1888
mob: +44 (0) 7770 476122