

Ancient Civilizations: Asia

Japan and China



Japan: Jomon Period 11,000-300 BCE



Key Ideas: Jōmon Period

- Neolithic hunter-gatherers begin to make and use ceramics
- Oldest ceramics tradition of any culture in the world (dated from 10,000 BCE or earlier)
- Jōmon (joh-mohn) period takes its name from the distinctive “cord marked” earthenware vessels
- Not tomb objects – come from domestic sites
- Bronze technology comes later to Japan (about 300 BCE) than to the mainland (about 1700 BCE)

Reconstructed buildings in Sannai-Maruyama site, Aomori Prefecture







Middle Jomon, Bowl
with four projections,
2500-1500 BCE,
82.9.1

“fire-flame” style





Middle Jomon, Deep Jar,
2500-1500 BCE, 82.9.2



Final Jomon, Stem cup, 1000-400 BCE, 2004.53



Final Jomon, Jar with broken rim, 11th-5th c. BCE, L2015.33.280

China

Neolithic Era (About 3500 - 1500 B.C.)



Key Ideas: Neolithic Era

- Settlements emerge along main river systems
- Settled communities rely on farming and domesticating animals
- Discrete artistic traditions evolve; objects are decorated/painted/“carved”
- Objects are from tombs: reflect formal ceremonial practices and belief in an afterlife
- Bronze technology dates from 2000-1700 BCE



Neolithic Cultures of China (6000-2000 BCE)

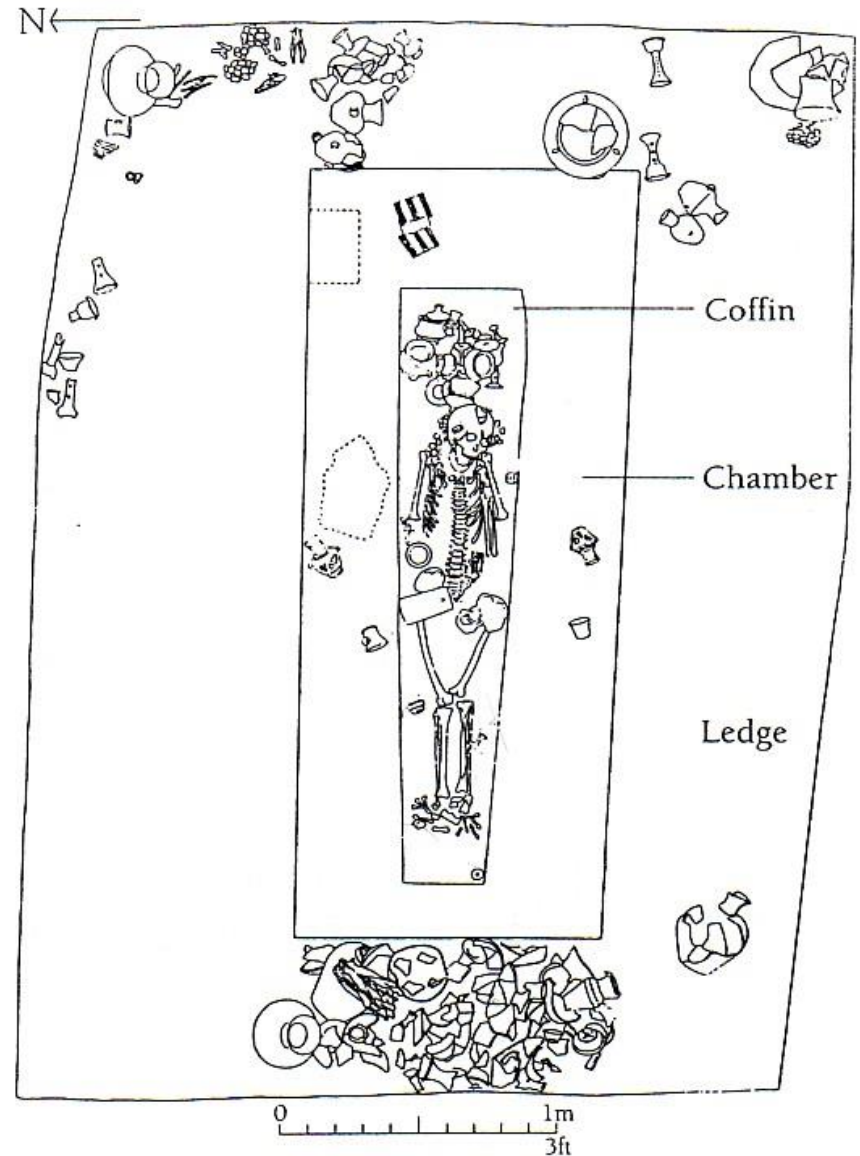
www.chinaknowledge.org

Microlithic Cultures



4000 BCE: ruins with 100 dwellings around a communal center, cemetery, and kiln (near Xian)

Pre-Longshan pit-grave containing over 200 objects, mostly on a ledge above the burial chamber

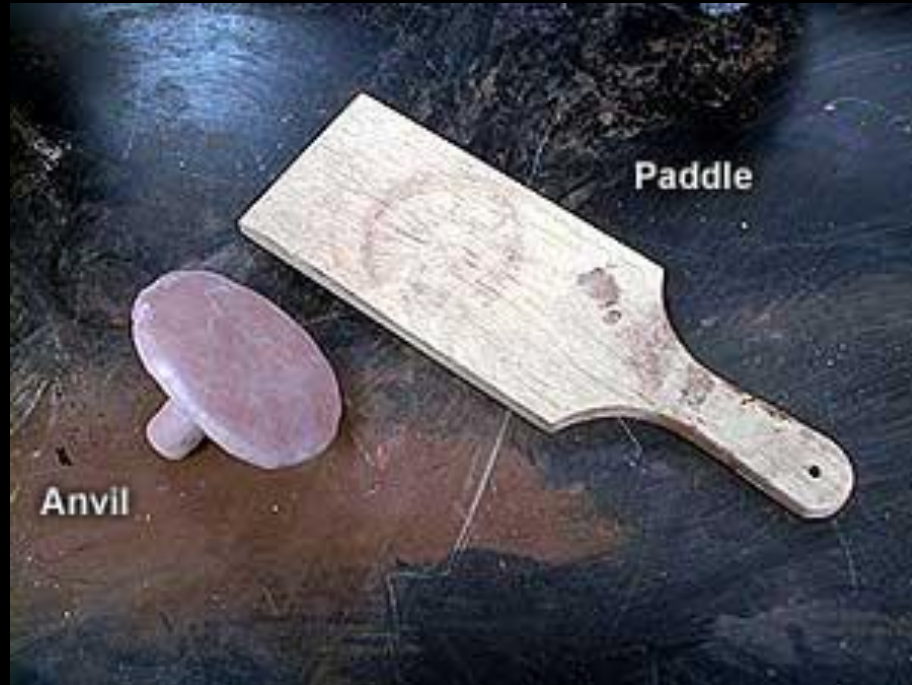


Ewe and Ram, 3000-2500 BCE, 2002.217.2

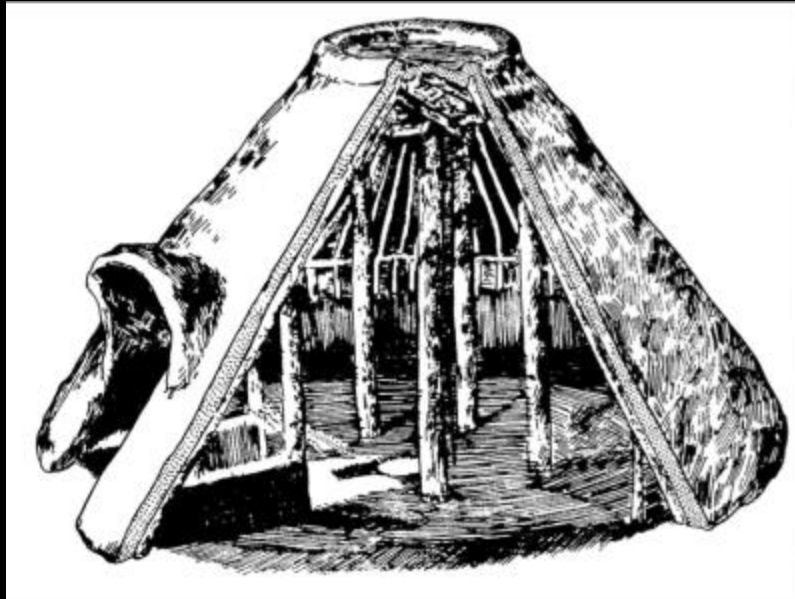




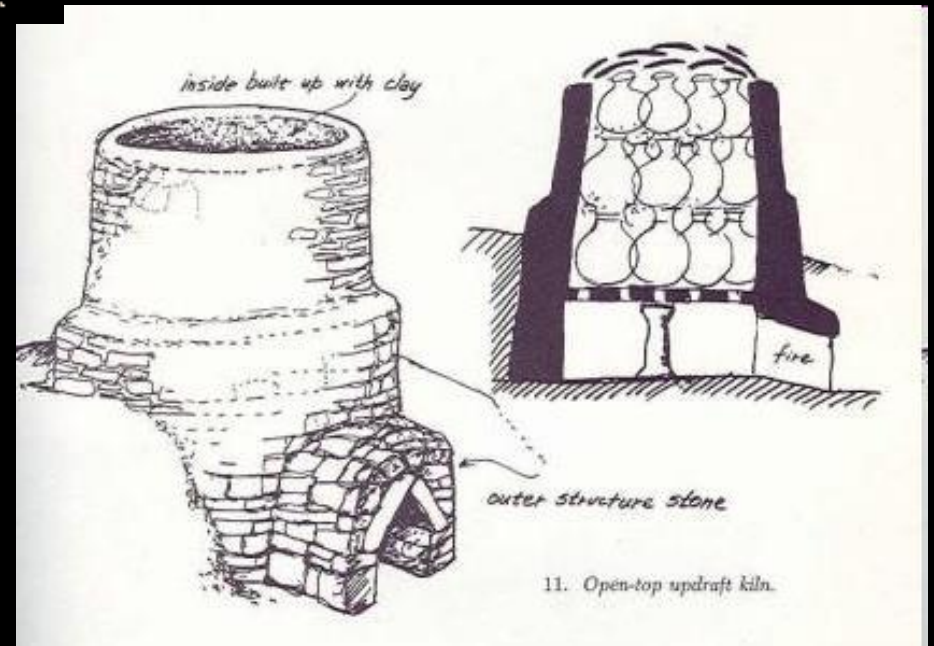
Storage Bottle, Yangshao culture,
Banpo type, 5000-4000 BCE,
98.125



Banpo Neolithic Village Museum



A Cave or Bank Kiln



Basin, Majiayao culture, c. 3000
BCE, 2003.200.1



Storage Vessel, Majiayao culture,
c. 3000 BCE, 2003.200.6

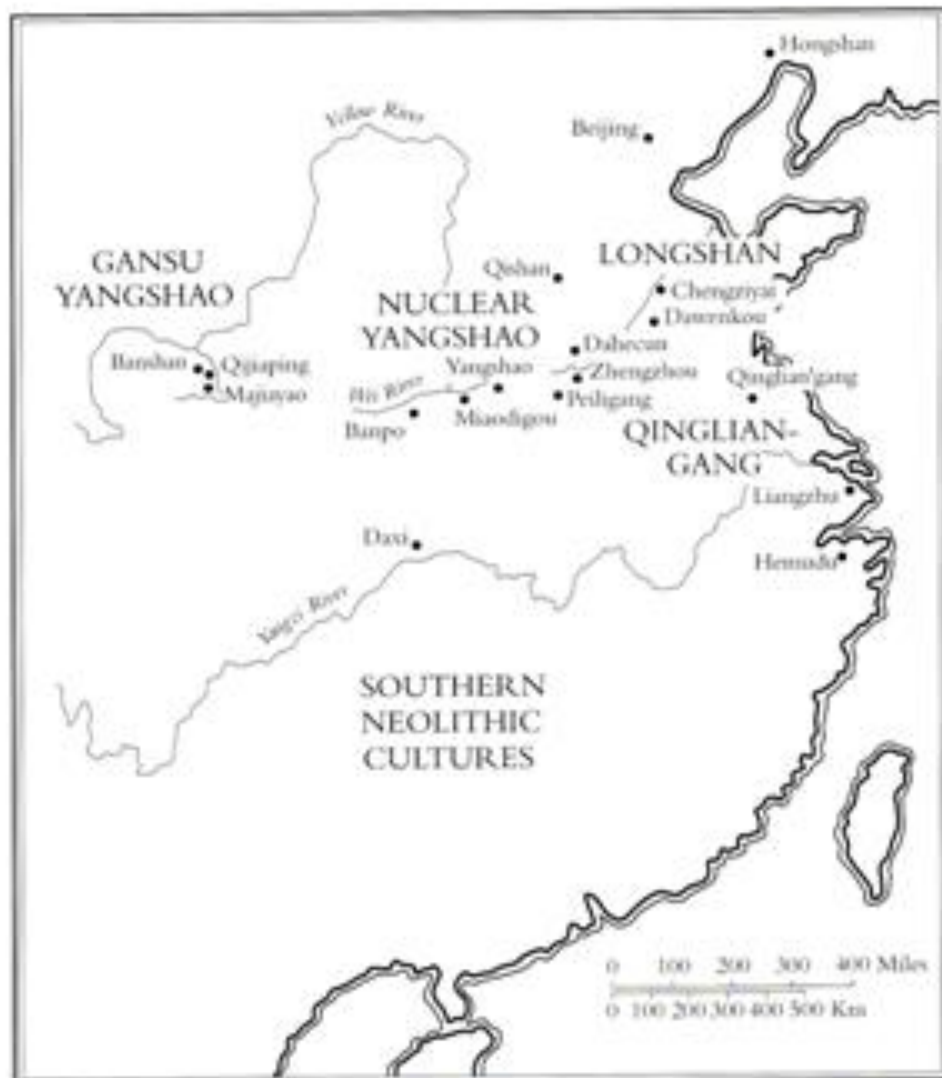


What do the lines suggest to you?

Funerary Storage Jar, Majiayao culture,
2300 BCE, 89.49



What does the form suggest to you?





Xiajiatian, Tripod jar, late 2nd-
early 1st millenium BCE,
2000.144.1

Longshan culture, Ceremonial Stem Cups, 3000-2000 BCE

2000.156.1

94.63

93.60.1



Key Ideas: Neolithic Jades

- Neolithic period marked beginning of one of China's oldest artistic activities: jade working
- Most commonly worked "jade" was nephrite
- "Lithic" (stone tool) art as it involves only the action of stone against stone
- Concentration of jades in graves suggests a ritual function
- Believed to be symbols of religious or political power and prestige

Neolithic Jades, 3500-1500 BCE





bi – round (heaven)
cong – square (earth)



Liangzhu and Longshan culture
Jade blades for ceremonial use



Liangzhu, Human-face ornament, c. 3300 BCE,
calcified tan-grey jade 50.46.230



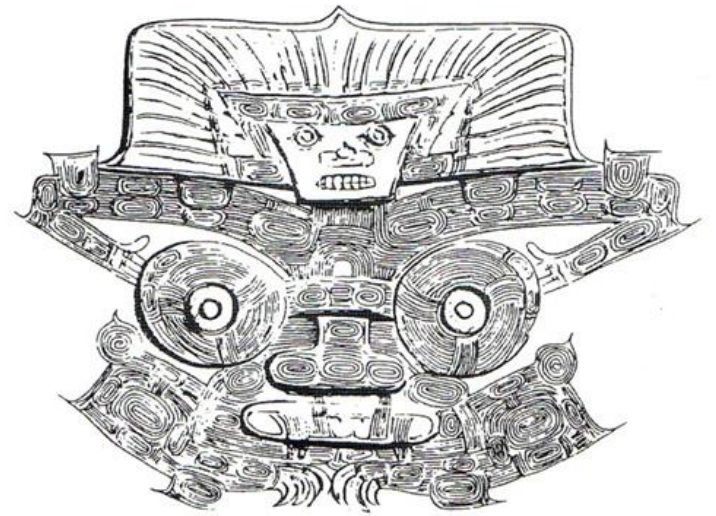
Several Jades of the
Neolithic Period
50.46.230

China's Long Neolithic Stone Age
culture produced various ritual
objects with "ritual" significance and
was distinguished from the earlier
cultures of the Neolithic culture in the
Yangtze valley. It is the earliest
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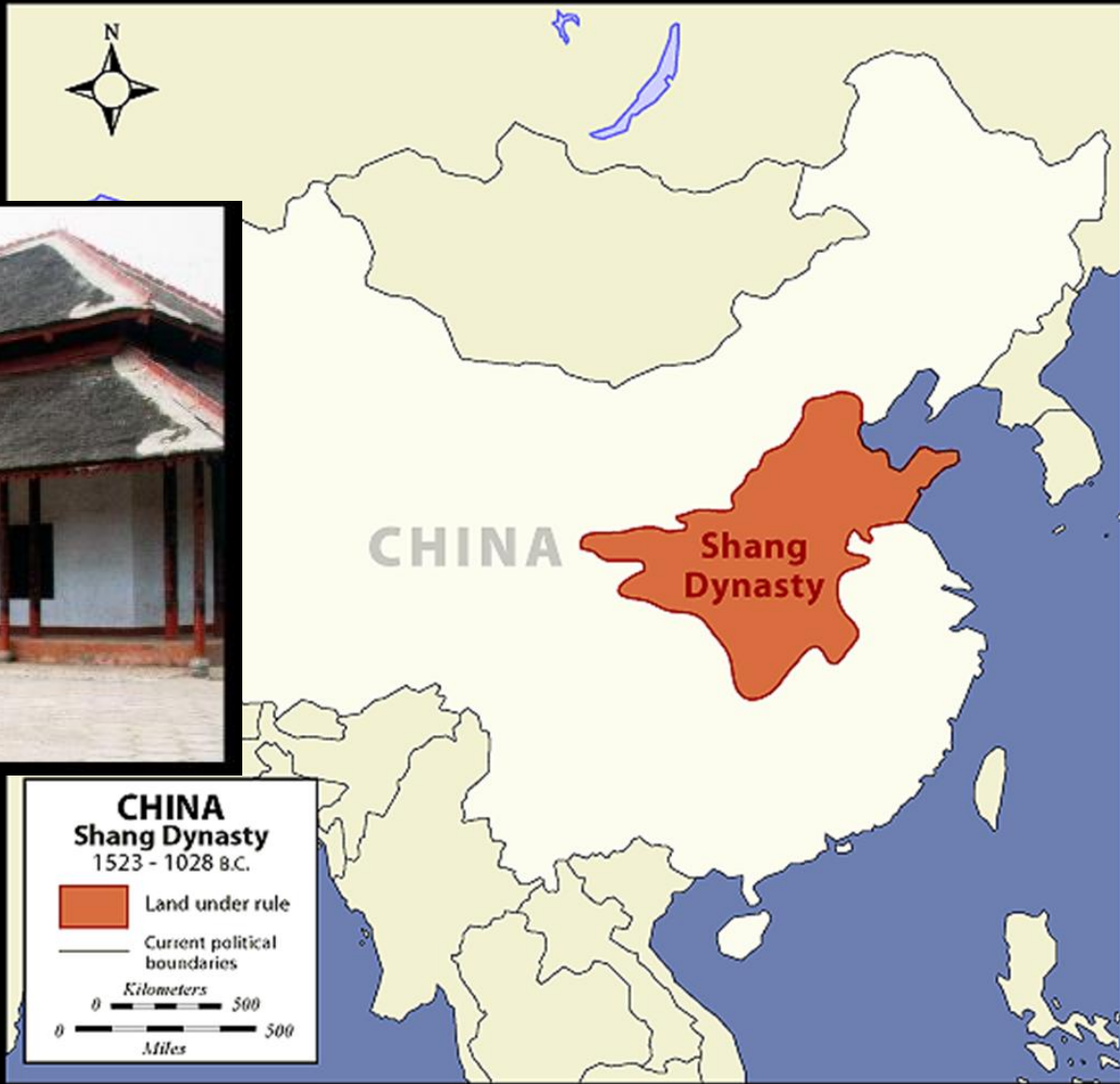




predecessor of *taotie* mask



Shang Dynasty



Key Ideas: Shang Dynasty

- Marks beginning of uninterrupted period of more than 3000 years of dynastic rule in China
- Rulers are intermediaries between heaven and earth
- Permanent settlements, domesticated animals, and agriculture coincide with increased leisure time, stratification of society, ritual worship, and formalized burial practices
- Bronze Age begins: piece-mold casting emerges independently; used for weapons and ritual vessels
- Burial practices signal belief in the afterlife and respect for ancestors that continues today
- Ancient pictographic script is related to modern written Chinese

Anyang, Oracle Bone (tortoise shell), 14th-12th c. BCE





bi – round (heaven)
cong – square (earth)

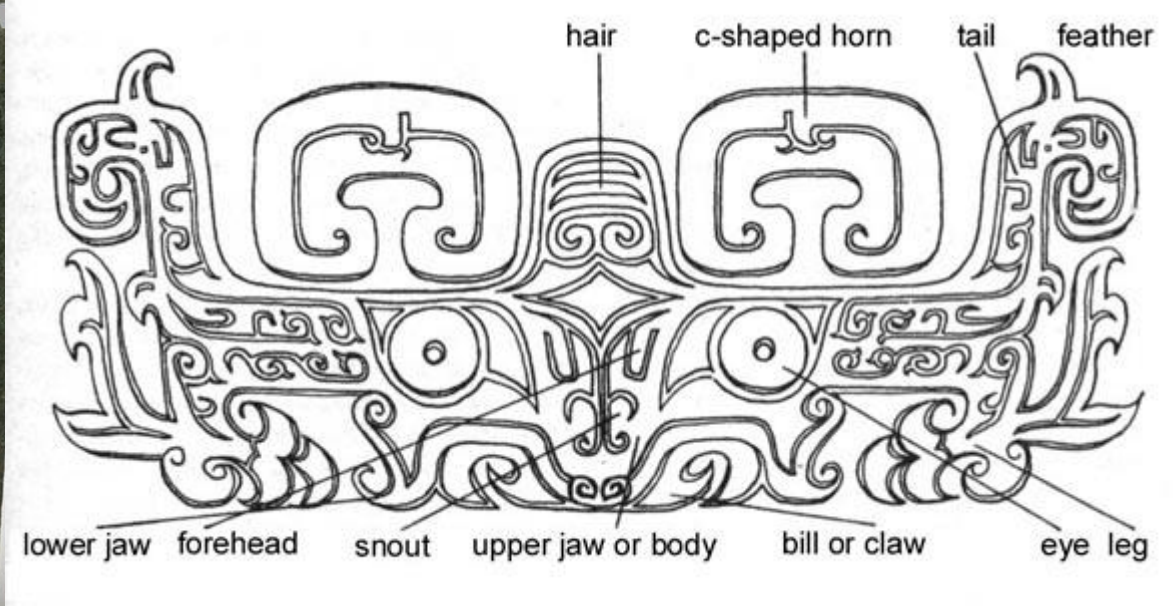
Tomb of Lady Fu Hao: found intact with bronzes inscribed with her name; her lacquer coffin had rotted away

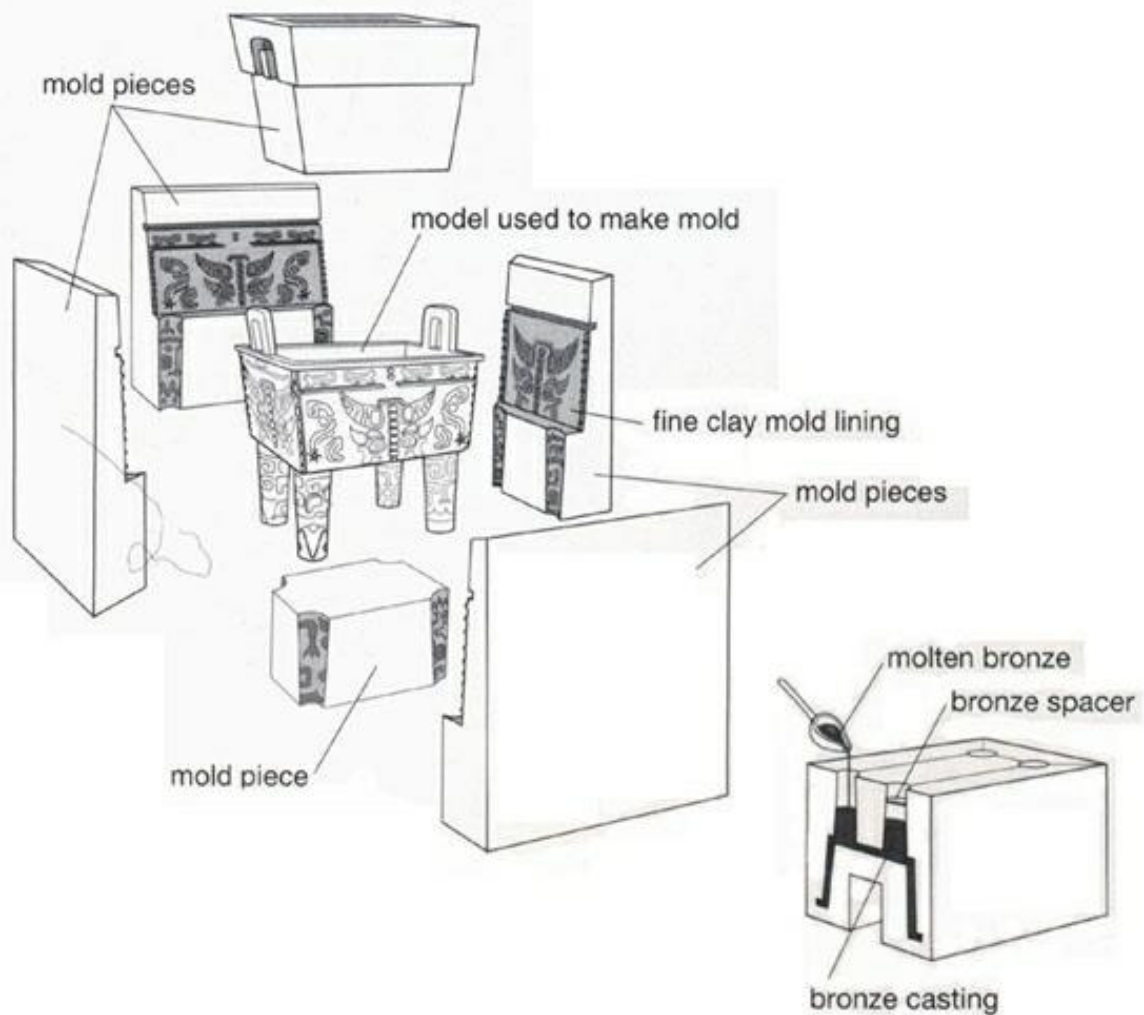


Altar Set, Shang and Western Zhou dynasties, late 11th c. BCE



Fang I (ritual wine vessel), 13th-12th c.
BCE, 50.46.6a,b





section view of mold assembled and overturned for casting

Piece mold casting

Yu (food vessel), 12th-11th c. BCE, 50.46.121



Ku (ritual wine vessel), 1400-1027 BCE, 50.46.45



Jue (ritual wine vessel),
1600-1400 BCE, 98.80.2



Zun (wine vessel) in the shape
of an owl, 13th-12th c. BCE,
50.46.116





Chariot finials with birds, 11th c. BCE,
50.46.91, etc.





Li (tripod ritual vessel),
13th-12th c. BCE, 99.66.3



Xiajiatian, Tripod jar, late 2nd-
early 1st millenium BCE,
2000.144.1

Tripod ritual vessel, replicated in clay and then in bronze, 13th-12th century BCE (after Neolithic form)



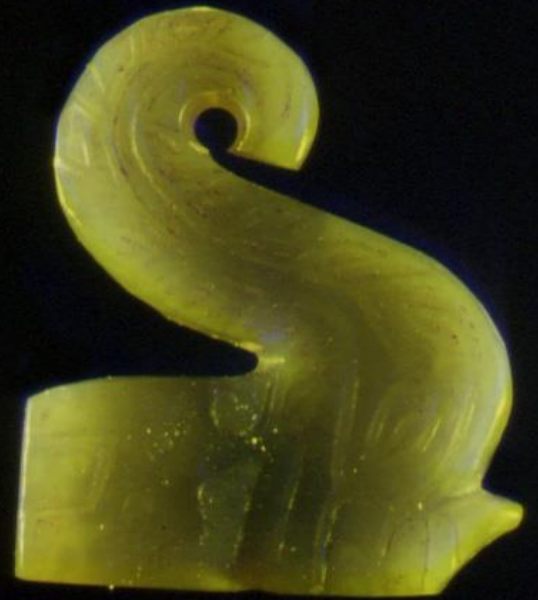
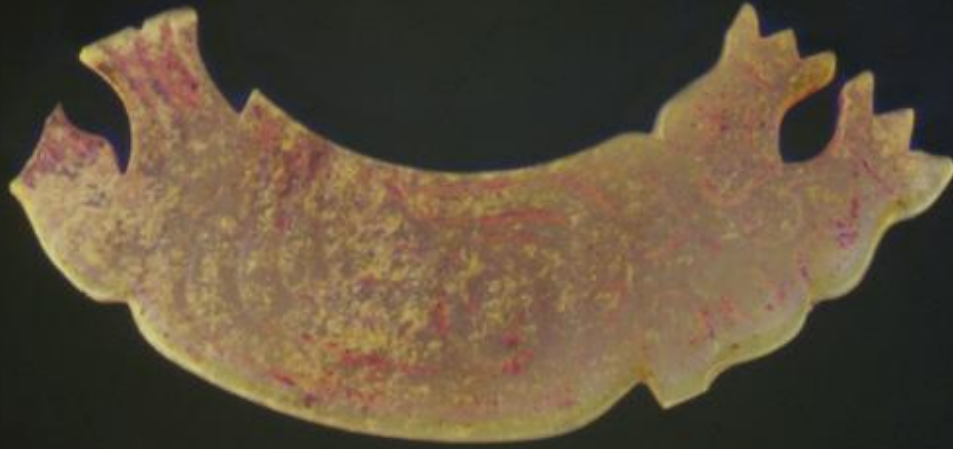
Fu (axe scepter), light green jade



Ge (ceremonial daggers), jade blade with bronze handles



Jade ornaments





Bone ornaments



Western Chou (1027 B.C.-771 B.C.)



Key Ideas: Zhou Dynasty

- Feudal society develops: city-states oversee surrounding farm villages
- King rules with “Mandate of Heaven”: an unjust ruler will be replaced
- Longest lasting dynasty, yet marked by challenges to their rule
- Great philosophers, Confucius and Laozi emerge
- Burials take place on even larger scale than before but with new emphasis on status in human world
- Taotie image evolves to more intricate and stylized designs

Gui (ritual food vessel), 10th century BCE, 50.46.119



Shang, Yu (food vessel), 12th-11th c.
BCE, 50.46.121



Western Zhou, Gui (food vessel),
10th c. BCE, 50.46.119





Zun (wine vessel), 10th century BCE, 50.46.120





Large Storage Jar
10th-9th c. BCE, 2008.46 – use of
stamped decoration

Jar, 10th c. BCE, 97.12.1 – use
of brown ash glaze as precursor
of celadon





bronze imitates ceramic



Eastern Chou (771 B.C.-256 B.C.)





Yongzhong (ceremonial bell),
6th-5th c. BCE, 50.46.110



Eastern Zhou, Ceremonial Bell,
6th -5th c. BCE, 50.46.110



Eastern Zhou, Model of Bell,
yellow-green glaze, 4th c. BCE,
2001.36





Bo (ritual bell), 600-400
BCE, 97.81



Eastern Zhou Dynasty



Jian (water basin), early 5th c. BCE,
50.46.103

Pan (tripod basin), 6th-5th c. BCE,
2000.145.3



Hu (wine vessel) with hunting scenes,
c. 600-221 BCE, 50.46.9



Lei (ritual wine vessel), late 4th century BCE, bronze with gold, silver, and copper inlay 50.46.112



Chariot Fitting, 3rd-2nd c. BCE, bronze with silver inlay, 2001.135.2

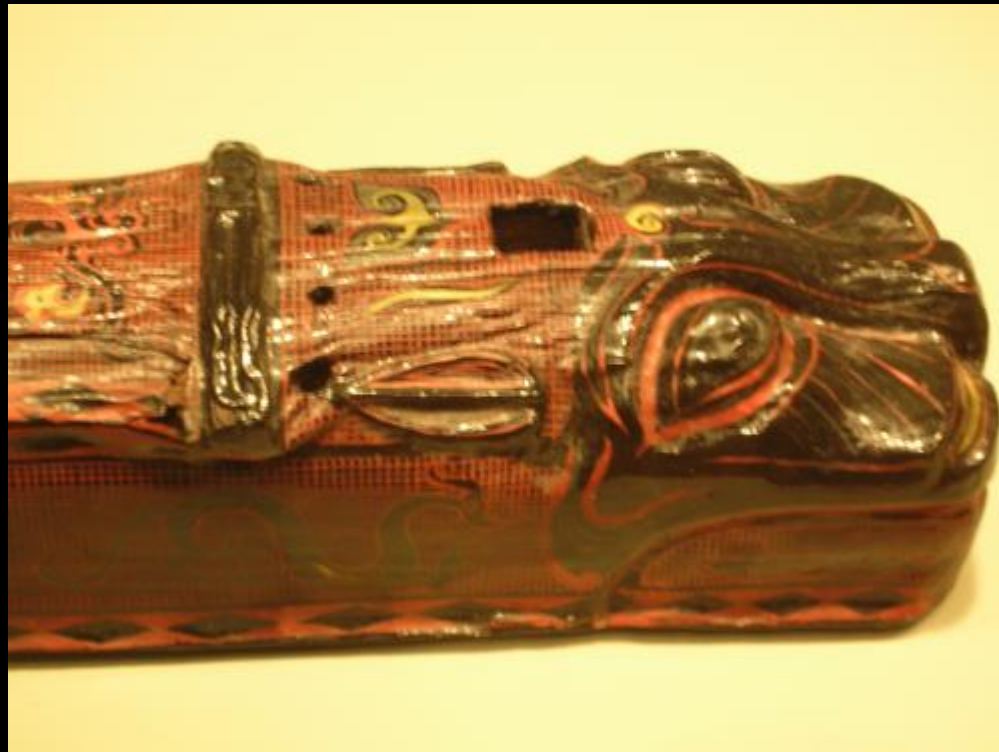


Dish, 3rd to 2nd century BCE, lacquer over wood core, 2000.38.4





Qin (Zither), 475-221 BCE, 2002.8



Yuan Dynasty, Small circular box, black lacquer with red and yellow layers, 2001.74.2a-b

