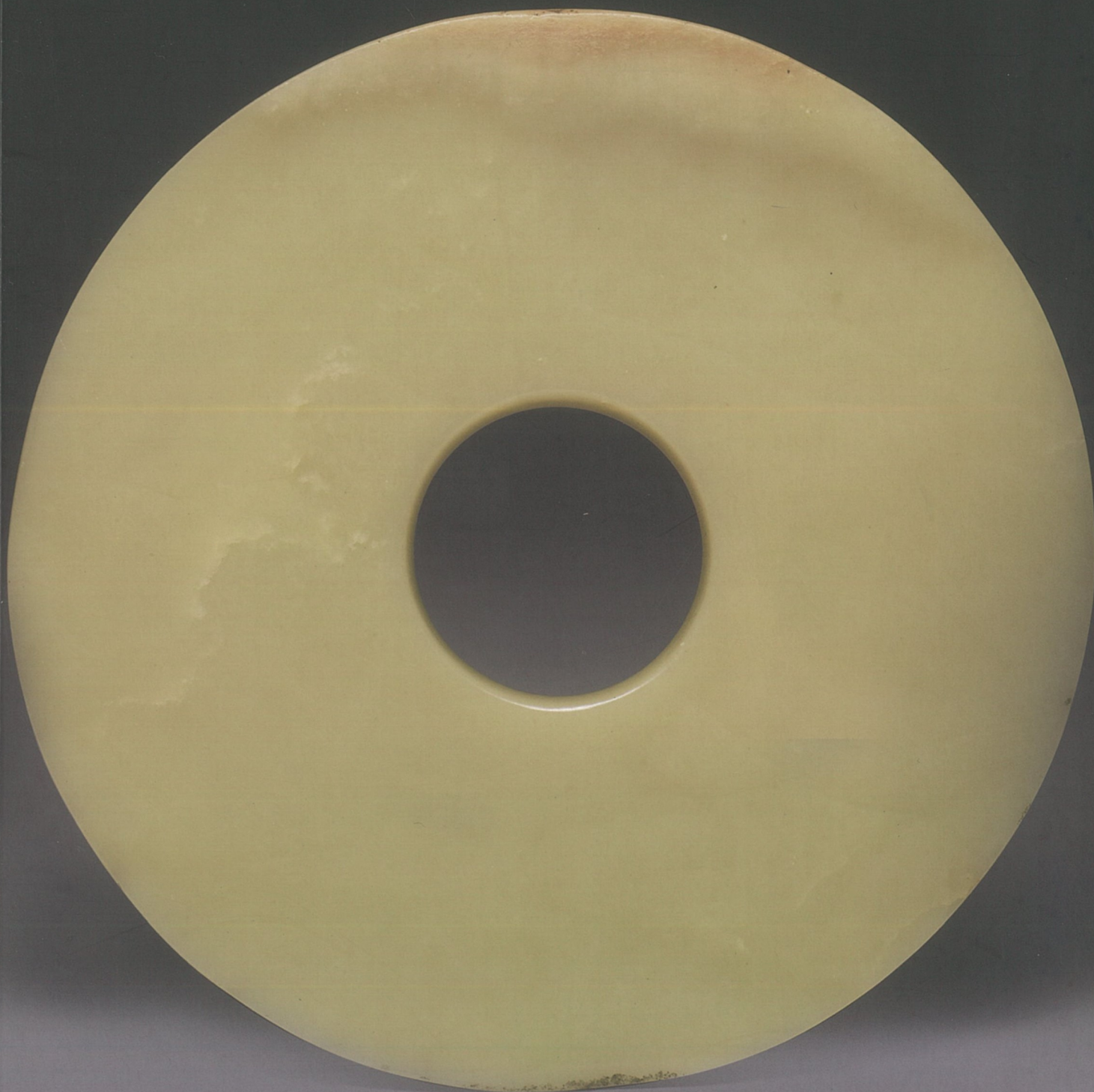


***Art in Quest of
Heaven and Truth***

—Chinese Jades through the Ages



Front Cover

See Plate 4-4-7

Jade *Bi* Disc, Kexingzhuang Culture

Back Cover

See Plate 7-4-3

Jade twin *Zun* Vessels in shape of *ruyi* (partial)

***Art in Quest of
Heaven and Truth***

—Chinese Jades through the Ages

Preface

The National Palace Museum, renowned for being the "treasure house of Chinese culture" has, in addition to its great collections of paintings, calligraphy, and carvings, a unique group of ancient artifacts which are not commonly found in other institutions. These "ancient vessels and objects" occupy more than half of the Museum's exhibition space, ranging from jades to bronzes, ceramics and so on. Abundant in quantity and superior in quality, they are displayed chronologically and by place of origin.

The physical shapes, patterns and hues, as well as pictorial symbols and inscriptions of such antiquities not only provide the visitors with an outline of Chinese historical and cultural development, they also allow viewers to explore one deep yet implicit spiritual aspect inherent in Chinese culture, that is "*Artifacts that Carry the Meaning of Dao*". In other words, these objects were made to represent the metaphysical Way of Nature, or *Dao* 道. Among them, jade emerged in the remotest antiquity, with its messages the most mystic, its development the most continuous, and its meanings the most profound. Jades are also the most beloved *objets d'art*, appealing to both refined and popular tastes.

In 2010, on the eve of the Centennial of the Republic, a much awaited new permanent exhibition of jades opened to the public after a four-and-half-year regretful interruption. From our entire inventory of jades, the Museum's team of experts selected over 470 of the finest sets of jade articles to feature in ***Art in Quest of Heaven and Truth—Chinese Jades through the Ages***. About 180 sets or items are shown for the very first time ever and they amount to one-third of all of the objects displayed. Recent decades of archaeological research have also provided valuable first-hand data in dating and analyzing ancient jades. The new exhibition aims to construct a systematic presentation and interpretation of jades, which are embedded with immensely rich cultural significance and connotations.

The exhibition ***Art in Quest of Heaven and Truth—Chinese Jades through the Ages*** consists of seven sections. The first six sections (gallery 306) include the mineralogical descriptions of jade, locations of jade deposits, the craft of jade carving, and the four development periods of the 8,000-year jade culture: the Spirit of Jade, the Virtue of Jade, the Blossoms of Jade, and the Ingenuity of Jade Carvings. These show how our early forebears learned from everyday life in developing a spiritual view of communing with Supreme God of

Nature via the medium of “beautiful stone” imbued with *jingqi* 精氣, the vital force of life. Then the mystical association gradually yielded to humanism, thus in the Zhou and Han dynasties, jades were used as pendants to express gentlemen’s virtues and enforce the established social order. From the subsequent Six Dynasties through the Sui-Tang era to the Song-Yuan period, foreign influences and reflections on ancient rituals led to a quintessential duality of jade culture: realism and archaism. The arrival of new jade materials and assorted gemstones further advanced the ingenuity of artisanship, which made creative use of natural tints and texture with rich cultural messages.

The seventh section (gallery 308) exhibits jadeite and a variety of gemstones, as well as a nephrite screen and jadeite vases that had been gifts by Wang Jingwei to the Japanese imperial family and later returned to China after the end of the Sino Japanese War. Most of the items in this gallery have been scientifically examined using the refractive index and Raman spectroscopy. The detailed information is published in the January 2011 issue of the *National Palace Museum Monthly*.

Jade best represents our national character. In celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic, the Museum presents the exhibition and this book, both titled ***Art in Quest of Heaven and Truth—Chinese Jades through the Ages***. They are a joint effort by our excellent research team consisting of members from the Department of Antiquities (Researcher Teng Shu-p’ing, Associate Researcher Chang Li-tuan, Assistant Researcher Tsai Ching-liang) and the Department of Registration and Conversation (Assistant Researcher Chen Tung-Ho, for Raman spectroscopy), and a joint celebratory present to the nation from both Departments.

Director
The National Palace Museum

Kungshin Chan

February, 2011
The 100th Year of the Republic of China

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Chapter I

Overview

Jade, cool and hard to the touch, yet gracefully beautiful and tenderly warm to look at, is the most constant element that withstands time. It is also a culturally rich object that more than anything else holds the deep feelings and profound thinking of the Chinese people.

As far back as over seven thousand years ago, our forebears had learned from the toil of life such as digging and logging that “jade” was a stone of beauty and eternity. With a glistening sheen believed to be high in *jingqi* (vital force or energy), just like the springtime sunshine, this beautiful jade was fashioned after the concept of *yin* and *yang* into round *bi* discs and square *cong* tubes, and marked with deistic and ancestral images as well as “encoded” symbols. A magic power of “affinity” born of “artifacts imitating nature”, so the ancients hoped, would enable dialogues with the Supreme God, who imparted life through mystical divine creatures and thus created humans. Out of this early animistic belief, came the unique Dragon-and-Phoenix culture of China.

Humanism arrived with passage of time and social development. Gradually dissociated from animistic properties, jade ornaments in the shape of dragon, phoenix, tiger, or eagle, originally symbolic of a clan-family’s spiritual gift or innate virtue, took on new interpretations as Confucian gentlemen’s five virtues: benevolence, rectitude, wisdom, courage, and integrity.

During the Six Dynasties and the Sui-Tang era, consecutive waves of foreign influences arrived and impacted the Chinese jade art significantly. Free from either spiritual or Confucian undertones associ-

ated with jade, the newly formed literati class in Song and Yuan dynasties was keen on both nature and humans; their art was in quest of verisimilitude and ultimately of truth. Along with realism, however, archaism existed in support of political orthodoxy, popularizing antiquarian styles for jades. Jade carving of the time exemplified the dual quintessence of the Song and Yuan culture.

Arts and crafts developed into an age of sophistication in Ming and Qing dynasties. Starting in mid-Ming, the region south of the Yangzi River enjoyed great economic prosperity; jade carvings became ever finer and more elegant under the patronage of literati and rich merchants. In the 2nd half of the 18th century, the conquest of the West Territory further gave the Qing court direct access to and control of the Khotan nephrite mines. Jadeite also started to come in from Myanmar with active development by Qing in the southwestern region. Driven by the imperial house’s taste, jade carving entered a period of unprecedented prosperity.

Throughout the nearly eight-millennium development, jade carvings first embodied the Chinese religion that was in awe of heaven and in reverence of ancestors. In the period following medieval China, art in pursuit of verisimilitude in both form and spirit peaked, expressing the academic tradition of Chinese scholars who sought the intrinsic nature of things. The two concepts have jointly attested to our national character as well as the deepest and most profound connotation of ancient Chinese jades, the art in quest of heaven and truth.



Pei Ornament in shape of phoenix 鳳形佩
Bi Disc with grain-pattern 穀紋璧
Late Warring States period to early Western Han dynasty
(See Plates 5-5-17, 18, and 19).

Chapter II

Definitions and Types of Jade

II-1 “Genuine” Jade in Broad and Narrow Senses

"Is this a genuine jade?" "Is this piece green enough to be a *feicui*?"

Questions such as these are so often asked that it shows that as much as Chinese people around the globe have an innate love and reverence for jade, many of them do not really know what jade actually is. The oldest available definition of *yu* (jade) comes from the first Chinese dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* (100 C.E. *Explaining Characters*), by Xu Shen, a philologist of the Eastern Han dynasty. It describes jade as a “beautiful stone with five properties (virtues)”, which are “gentle and subtle sheen”, “consistency inside and out”, “clear, melodious, and far-reaching sound when struck”, “hardness, breakable yet never bendable”, and “polished squareness without sharp edges”. According to Xu, these correspond to the five praiseworthy virtues characteristic of a fine gentleman: benevolence, rectitude, wisdom, courage, and integrity.

Many minerals fit Xu’s descriptions and more than 60 characters with *yu* as the radical (root) enter his dictionary, in five subgroups: beautiful *yu*, *yu*, stone resembling *yu*, stone inferior to *yu*, and beautiful stone. Geologically, turquoise, lapis lazuli, agate, rock crystal, and marble all share the traits and belong to this very broad family of *yu*.

Then over a century ago, western scholars identified two major minerals among what were commonly used as “jade” by a number of ancient cultures around the pan-Pacific region, such as the Chinese (East Asia), the Maori (New Zealand), and the Maya (Central America). Their chosen materials were generally of similar appearance, mostly green or white with green, and mainly either nephrite or jadeite. The two minerals henceforth have been recognized as the only “genuine jade” based on the combined data of anthropology and geology. All other beautiful jade look-alikes are considered substitutes in this narrow definition of *yu*.

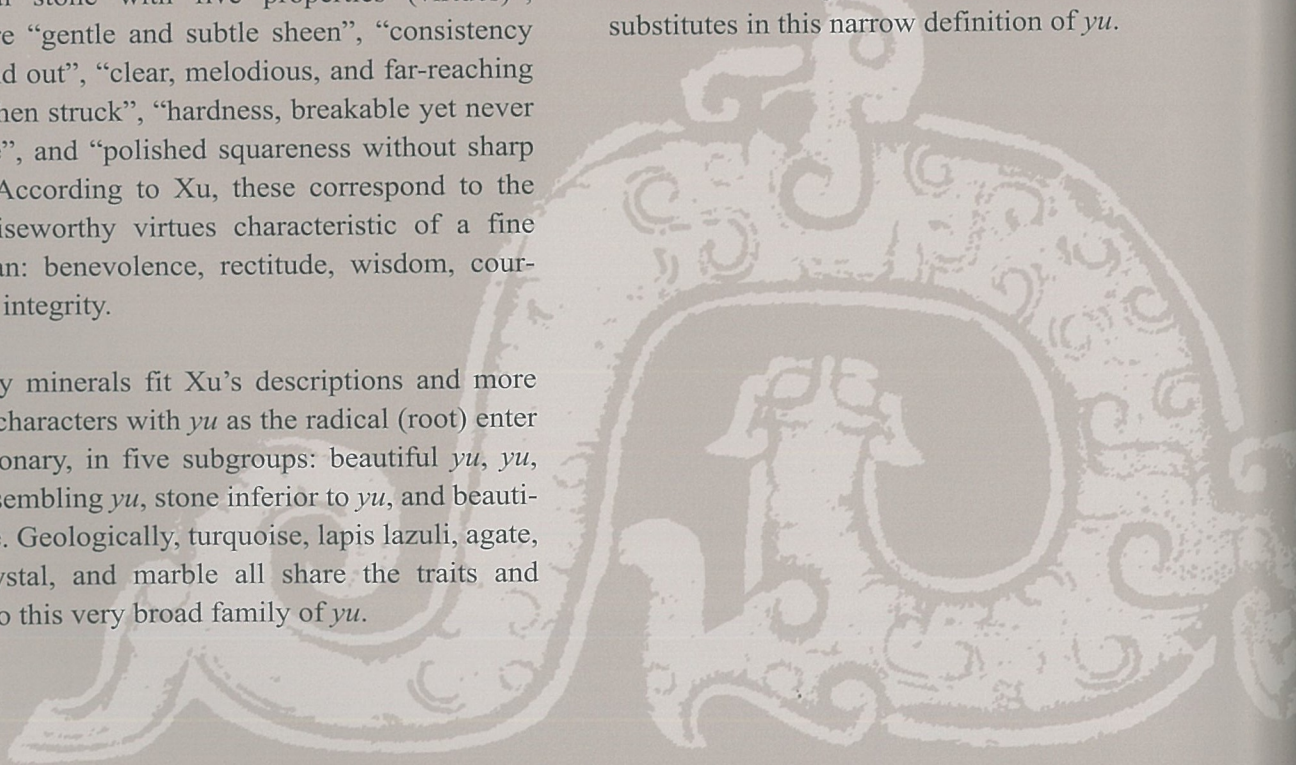




Plate 2-2-1
Nephrite (raw material cut off large boulder)
Fongtian, Taiwan
h. 26, w. 10, t. 16 cm (普贈 206)



Plate 2-2-2
Nephrite Pebbles
Khotan, Xinjiang, China
l. 10, w. 8.1, h. 4.1 cm (故玉 3618/金-1186-81)

II-2 What is Nephrite and What is Jadeite? Where are Their Deposits?

Nephrite belongs to the group of amphibole and jadeite to that of pyroxene. Professor Tang Liping, a geologist at Taiwan University, accordingly suggested the Chinese translations *shan yu* and *hui yu* to denote their respective mineral designations. The names have since gradually gained wide acceptance among the Chinese community, replacing the less logical terms “soft jade” and “hard jade”.

Shan yu (nephrite) exists as a tremolite-actinolite solid solution, mainly of calcium magnesium silicate. There are over 120 primary deposits worldwide in more than 20 countries, as well as a few secondary deposits. Twenty-two of the over 70 major nephrite locations are indicated in red dots on the map *World Distribution of Jade Ore Deposits* included in this chapter.

Nephrite forms in two ways. As a result of the metasomatism of ultrabasic rocks, it often comes in uneven shades of green, with ferrous oxide being the

main colorant, and with impurities in small black dots of chromite or graphite. The nephrite ore at Hualien, Taiwan (plate 2-2-1) belongs to this group and many prehistoric habitants of Taiwan, such as the famous Beinan Culture, made their jade articles using this kind of material. Similarly formed nephrite deposits are also found in the Kunlun Mountains (southern rim of Xinjiang province, China), Manas (northern foothill of the Tian Mountains, central Xinjiang), New Zealand (highly valued by Maori), Canada (often as substitutes for Taiwan jade) and other locations. (see pages 11 and 12).

The other type of nephrite results from the joint metamorphism of magnesium-calcium carbonate rocks. It is generally white or white with a greenish tint (plate 2-2-2). Permeation by graphite turns the rock gray or dark black, while ferric oxide gives the rock a brownish red skin in various shades, sometimes as distinctive as that of brown sugar hence the name “sugar jade”.



Plate 2-2-4
Brown Sugar Jade *Gong* vessel with relief of coiling *chi* tigers
糖玉蟠螭觥
Late Ming to early Qing dynasties
h. 15.4, diam. of mouth 8.5 cm (故玉2846/呂-1847-36)



Plate 2-2-3
Black and White Jade Flower Holder in shape of fish transforming into dragon
黑白玉鯢魚花插
Ming dynasty
h. 15.6, w. 9.6 cm (故玉 2171/呂-1949)
a. side view b. back view

Mineral paragenesis of nephrite ores with color variations provides great material for designing a *qiaodiao* (smart carving), such as the flower holder in black and white (plate 2-2-3), or the *gong* vessel in sugar brown and white (plate 2-2-4). The light yellow tint of the brush wash (plate 2-2-5) is among the rarest variations, attributed to the long-time permeation through cracks of iron oxide in the surface water.

The white or bluish nephrite formed from magnesium-calcium carbonate rocks often features a

fine and waxy texture. The best such ores, commonly known as “Khotan jade” and widely prized for their appealing subtle luster, are found along the 1,100 km stretch between Kashgar and Qiemo (both in Xinjiang) amid the Kunlun and Altun Mountain ranges (plates 2-2-2 through 2-2-5), while nephrite from the east end of the Kunlun Mountains into Qinghai Province tends to be of higher transparency with less oily fineness. There are also nephrite deposits of ultramafic igneous origin in the Kunlun region, with a more even shade of greenness than the usual kinds.



Plate 2-2-5
Yellow Jade Brush Wash with relief of coiling *chi* tigers
黃玉螭紋洗
Qianlong reign, Qing dynasty (1735-1795 C.E.)
l. 18.8, w. 8.5, h. 8 cm (故玉 2799/鹹-36)



Plate 2-2-6

Jade *Bi* Disc

玉璧

Miaodigou-II culture

outer diam. 10.3, hole diam. 53.6, t. 0.68 cm (購玉 327)

Nephrite from the rich deposits in Lintao, Gansu Province, China resemble Khotan jade in appearance, yet are generally embedded with “sugar jade” or some grayish seaweed-like inclusions. It was probably quarried in great quantity around four thousand years ago, as the major source of jade used by Qijia culture (plate 2-2-6). Then after some three thousand years in oblivion, it is now extensively mined again by modern forgers of Qijia articles.

Similar nephrite ores formed by carbonate rocks are also found at Liyan in Jiangsu Province, Xiuyan in Liaoning Province, Chuncheon City in South Korea, and Cowell in Australia. The two Chinese sites might have been mined as early as five thousand years ago by the ancient jade cultures in Liangzhu and Hongshan, respectively.



Plate 2-2-7
Jadeite (raw material cut off large boulder) Myitkyina area, Myanmar
l. 39.5, w. 30, h. 16 cm (故玉 9578/為-309)

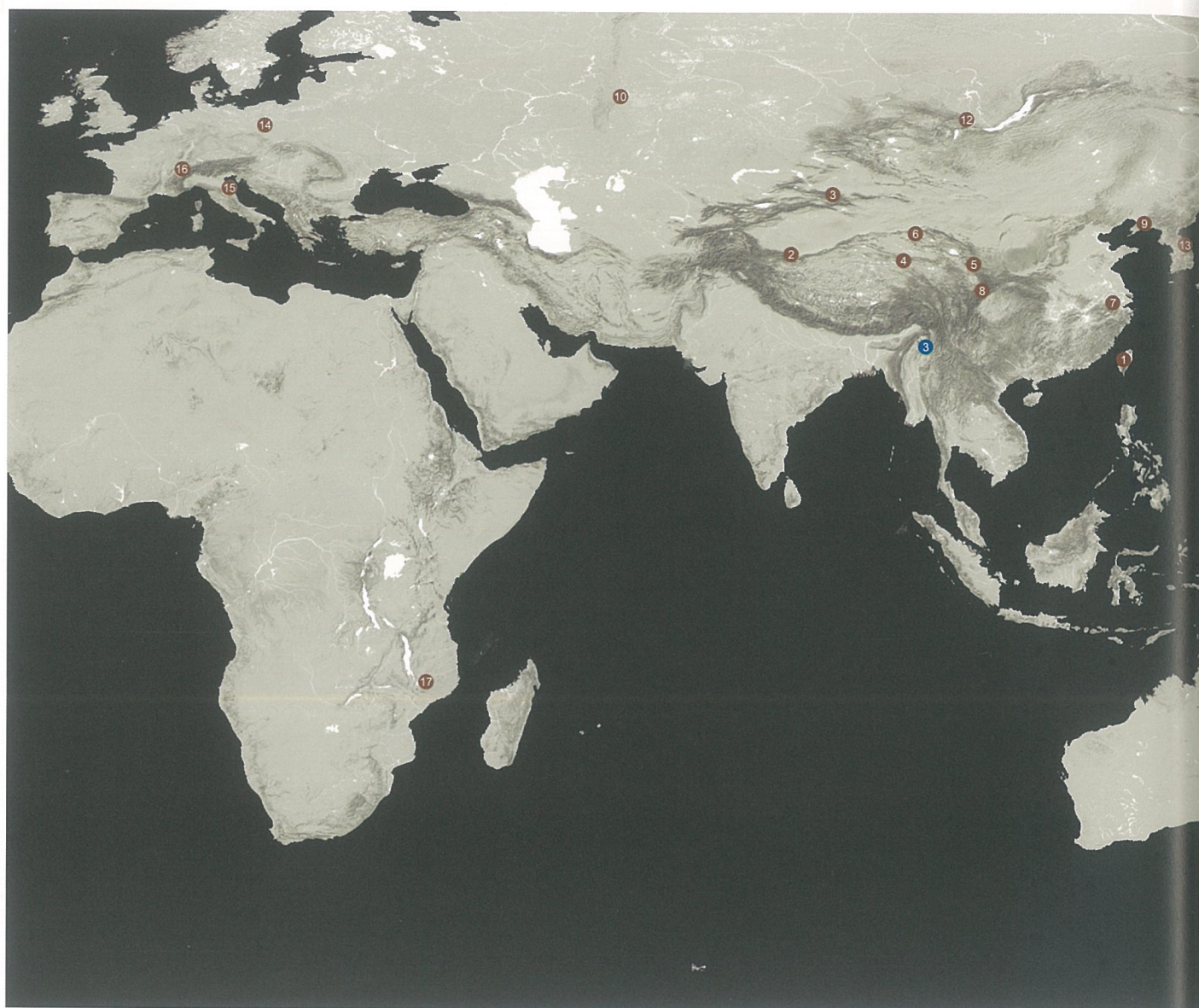


Plate 2-2-8
Jadeite Bangle
翡翠鐲
Qing dynasty
outer diam. 8.1, t. 1.05 cm (故王 1918/呂-1684-7)

Jadeite is a metamorphic mineral of sodium aluminum silicate, formed under high pressure and low temperature. It is rarer than nephrite, currently available in only seven or eight major locations. The most beautiful output comes from Myitkyina in northern Myanmar (plate 2-2-7) and often acquires a dazzling shade of emerald green (chromium) or brownish red (iron). Jadeite of such bright colors is

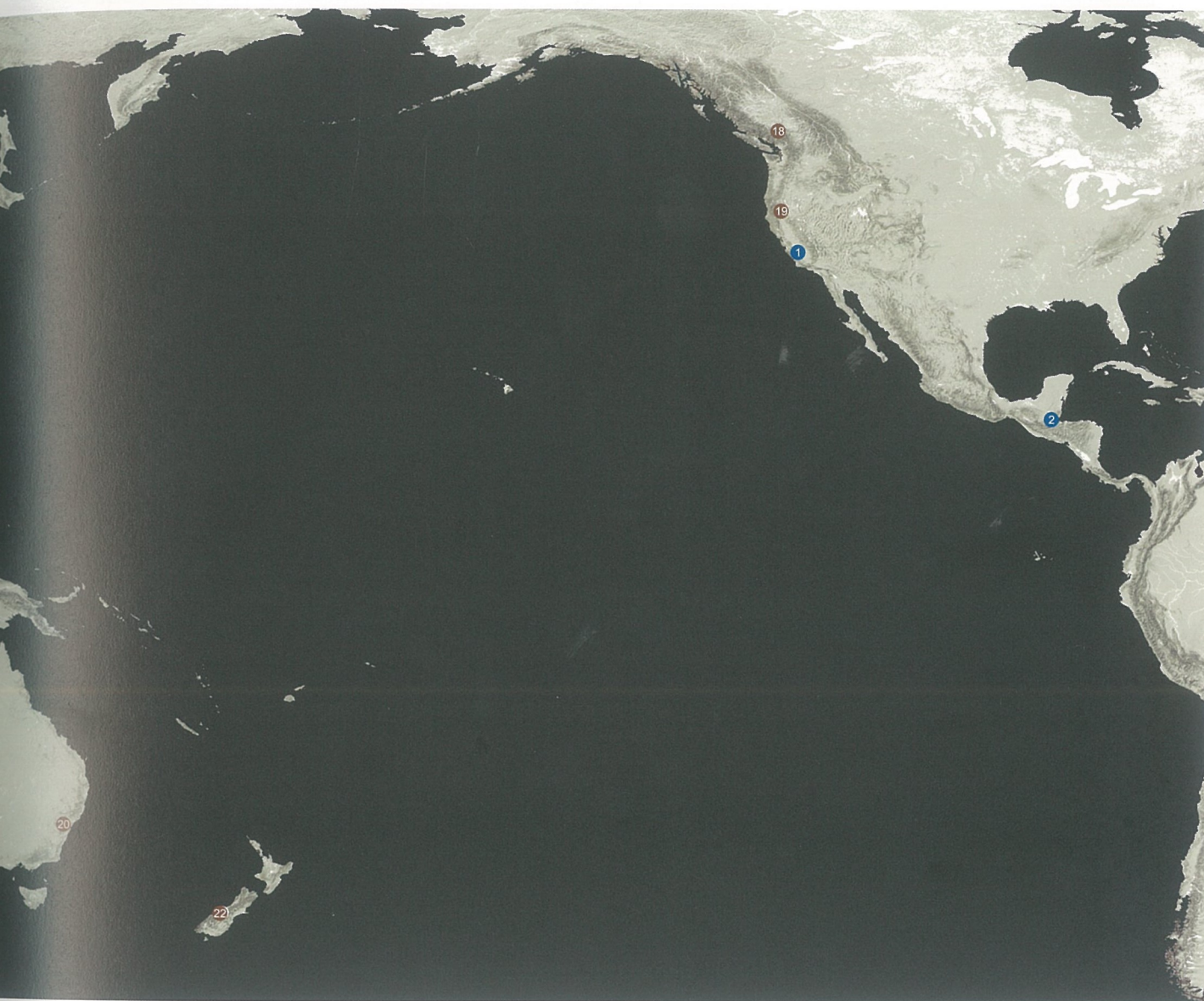
commonly known as *feicui* (kingfisher feathers), commanding premium prices in the market (plate 2-2-8). In even rarer cases ions of iron, manganese, magnesium and titanium combine to give the rock an unusual violet tint (plate 2-2-9). Main jadeite mines are marked with blue dots on the map *World Distribution of Major Jade Ore Deposits*.

World Distribution of Major Jade Ore Deposits



Major Locations: Nephrite

- 1. Fongtian, Hualien, Taiwan
- 2. Kashgar to Qiemo, Kunlun Mountains, Xingjiang, China
- 3. Manas, Tian Mountains, Xingjiang, China
- 4. Golmud, Qinghai, China
- 5. Lintao, Gansu, China
- 6. Subei, Gansu, China
- 7. Liyan, Jiangsu, China
- 8. Wenchuan, Sichuan, China
- 9. Xiuyan, Liaoning, China
- 10. Southern Ural Mountains, Russia
- 11. Outer Xingan Range, Russia
- 12. Lake Baikal area, Russia
- 13. Chuncheon, Gangwondo, South Korea
- 14. Jordanów Śląski, Poland
- 15. The Apennines, Italy
- 16. near Lake Bienne area, Switzerland



Major Locations: Jadeite

- 17. The border of Malawi and Mozambique
 - 18. British Columbia, Canada
 - 19. West Coast Ranges, U.S.A.
 - 20. New South Wales, Australia
 - 21. Cowell, Australia
 - 22. South Island, New Zealand
- 1. San Benito County, California, U.S.A.
 - 2. Motague River, Guatemala
 - 3. Myitkyina, Myanmar
 - 4. Niigata, Japan



a



b

Plate 2-2-9
Tri-color Jadeite Brush Rack in shape of mythical animals
三色翠玉異獸筆架
Qing dynasty
l. 15.7, h. 4.2, t. 3.1 cm (故玉 3090/金-1530-93)
a. front view b. back view

II-3 What Kinds of Jade Have Been Used in China?

Jade articles appeared in China's present territory as far back as seven to eight thousand years ago. Throughout this long period of time, from the prehistoric age until as recently as the late 18th century, nephrite was the main material used, while jadeite has only come onto the scene in the past 200 years and become the favorite jade of Chinese people.

Where did those raw nephrite materials come from? As mentioned previously, deposits in Xiuyan (Liaoning Province), Liyan (Jiangsu Province), and Lintao (Gansu Province) were among the likely sources for the various jade cultures from prehistoric to early historic times (ranging from 7,000 or 8,000 to 3,000 years ago). The Subei ores, also in Gansu, might have been mined during the Siba culture and until the Han and Jin dynasties (circa 4,000 to 1,700 years ago). Nephrite from both Gansu sites is mostly whitish green, very similar to that of Khotan, except that Lintao nephrite often features large brown marks and dark seaweed-like inclusions. The resemblance raises an interesting point worth further study. Geologists have inferred, through naked-eye obser-

vation, that Khotan jade was used in the Shang dynasty. Were modern scholars in fact misled by Gansu jade, which had been massively quarried in ancient times?

Physical evidence from archaeological excavation shows that Khotan nephrite, with its subtle luster, gradually became the major jade material starting in the late Western Zhou dynasty. Great figures of the subsequent Eastern Zhou dynasty, such as Guan Zhong, Qu Yuan, and Li Si, referred in their writings to the beautiful jade from the Kunlun Mountains. Aside from the mostly light-colored Khotan jade, however, green nephrite with tiny dark inclusions was suddenly adopted in large quantity for use in worship or burial across the vast Chu land of the Warring States period, an area extending from Shandong to Anhui, Hubei, and Hunan provinces (plate 2-2-10). Such articles often measure up to 30 cm wide. Are they made of green nephrite jade from the Kunlun mountains? Again further geological research is needed to answer the question.



Plate 2-2-10

Jade *Pei* Ornament in shape of dragon

玉龍形佩

Han dynasty

l. 21.2, w. 7.5 cm (購玉 644)