

VESSEL (*p'ing*)

Chinese, Neolithic period, 5th millennium B.C.

Yang-shao; red pottery with impressed string pattern

14½ × 6 in. (36.8 × 15.2 cm.)

Gift of the Honorable Edgar Bromberger, 1956 (2164.1)



Unpainted vessels in the shape of the Greek amphora are found alongside a variety of hand-painted wares throughout the range of the Yang-shao culture in northern China (one of the first basic cultural horizons of the Neolithic period), but the particular shape of this example is apparently limited to the area of Shensi province. The vessel, with its pointed bottom, continuous convex contour, and lug handles, is similar to those recently excavated near Pan-p'o Ts'un in Shensi. One vessel, identified as a *p'ing* and found in a burial pit with a child's corpse adorned with a body-band of beads, is nearly identical with this example. Both vessels have been dated to the fifth millennium B.C., the period of the excavated site, and are thought to be water jars, since their shape, lug handles, and balance make them ideal for lowering into a stream. This *p'ing* has been judged to be one of the oldest known Chinese water jars in the West. HAL

JADE

Jade was found at Neolithic sites, many around modern Shanghai. Jade objects were found only in graves of persons of high status and were apparently symbols of religious or political power and prestige. Jade is actually a misnomer. The word is commonly used for both nephrite and jadeite. Only nephrite was available in ancient China. Jadeite, which comes from Burma, does not seem to have been worked in China until the 17th or 18th century.

Two important types of ritual objects that first appeared on or near the body in late Neolithic graves were the round disk, *bi*, and the squared, cylindrical shape called the *cong* (ts'ung). We know that in later times (from the Zhou Dynasty *Book of Rites*), these objects represented heaven and earth and were used in annual sacrificial rituals. It is speculated that they served the same or a similar function in the stone age.

Ritual Object (*bi*)

China, Neolithic period
Nephrite
14 1/8 in. diameter
Gift of Anna Rice Cooke, 1927 (1150)



Ritual Object (*cong*)

China, Neolithic period,
probably 3rd millennium B.C.
Calcified dark green nephrite
6 1/8 x 7 1/2 in.
Acquired through gifts of Mrs. Charles
Spalding, J. Lionberger Davis, and
Arthur Wiesenberger, 1967 (503.1)

Bi disks, most often interpreted as a symbol of heaven, were usually placed beneath the corpse. The *cong*, square jades of varying height, perforated in the middle, are said to have been placed on the abdomen of the corpse in ritual burials. In one late Neolithic burial, thirty flat, faceted *bi* and *cong* were arranged end to end encircling the body, indicating a protective function.

