A000-Asia-China-Liangzhu-Jade-Trapezoid-Pei Figure-3200 BCE





Figs 1-2. China-Liangzhu-Jade-Trapezoid-Pei Figure-3200 BCE

Case no.: 5

Accession Number:

Formal Label: China-Liangzhu-Jade-Trapezoid-Pei Figure-3200 BCE

**Display Description:** This jadeTrapezoid-Pei Figure has a cartouche-like panel representing an anthropomorphic shamanic mask suggesting meditation on this disk would induce a shamanic trance. This iconography undoubtedly harkens back to a pre-Neolithic period when shamanic imagery was the symbolism of hunter-gatherers and was the imagery that was inscribed on petroglyph panels. Indeed, Hayashi Minao argues that the name of the cong/tsung derived from zhu/chu meaning "master" which we expand to "master of animal powers" (Hayashi 1990:6).

The ritual paraphernalia of the Liangzhu culture that were used in worship in the Neolithic period do not represent spiritual beings in either human or animal shape that were believed to animate nature but were the objects themselves at a time when the concept of the spirit of a thing was not yet separated from the thing itself. In this context this object is a true effigy, the image of the Sun deity and emblazoned on it in bas relief is the image of a son of the Sun, a ruling ancestor whose property this was as it was used in rituals according honor to the Sun in its various seasonal manifestations. In fact, this jade idol corresponds to the oldest form of Chinese graph designating the Sun.

**LC Classification:** NK5750.2.A1

Date or Time Horizon: Liangzhu culture, lower Yangzi River Valley, early Liangzhu Period, ca. 3200 BCE Geographical Area: Liangzhu culture, lower Yangzi River Valley

**Map:**



Fig. 3. Source: Google Earth



Fig. 4. Detail of Liangzhu site complex surrounding Taihu. After Zhou Ying 2007.



**Fig. 5.** Detail of Liangzhu site proper. After Zhou Ying 2007.

**GPS coordinates:**

Northeast corner: N 30°24'48", E 120°00'17"

Northwest corner: N 30°24'41", E 119°58'58"

Southeast corner: N 30°23'20", E 120 00'19"

Southwest corner: N 30°22'55", E 119°58'28"

Cultural Affiliation: Liangzhu culture, lower Yangzi River Valley, 3300-2250 BCE

Medium: Jade

Cultural Affiliation: Liangzhu

Medium: jade

Dimensions:

Weight:

Condition: original

Provenance:

**Discussion:**

Liangzhu (3400–2250 BCE) in Yuhang County, Zhejiang, was a highly stratified Neolithic jade city-state in the Yangtze River delta where élites controlled a sphere of influence north to Shanxi and south to Guangdong.

DNA recovered from Liangzhu graves shows high frequencies of Haplogroup O1 linking it with modern Austronesians. Hence, Liangzhu is thought to have been the original Austronesian homeland (Freeman Foundation. 2007; Jiao 2007).

The use of jade and other expensive wares (such as silk, lacquerware, and ivory) in grave sites characterized the social symbolism of Liangzhu élites. About 4200 BP Liangzhu succumbed to a series extreme floods since the cultural layers are interrupted by intrusions of mud and sand. It is also possible that an asteroid created Taihu lake 4500 BP, which contributed to its demise.

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