~A000-Asia-China-Liangzhu-Stave-Jade-Early Liangzhu-3400–3000 BCE





Figs. 1-3. China-Liangzhu-Stave-Jade-Early Liangzhu-3400–3000 BCE

**Case no**.: 5

**Accession Number:**

**Formal Label:** China-Liangzhu-Stave-Jade-Early Liangzhu-3400–3000 BCE

**Display Description:**

This shamanic baton or stave parallels the evolution of Liangzhu shamanism that combined an animal mask or Taotie *below* that of a human mask or Animal Master. The rôle of the shaman is, therefore, elevated *above* the animal, i.e., Heavenly Knowledge *above* Earthly Knowledge. This suggests that the shaman’s psychological control of the animal as Animal Master was *not* yet subsumed by a more rationalistic rôle as a rationalistic shaman-astronomer, even though the three-post jade has the essentials of the pole star’s movement engraved on it.

Towards the end of the Liangzhu Period (2800-2250 BCE) the animal mask was eliminated from Liangzhu iconography and with it the Animal Master referent was also eliminated. The human mask alone on congs of that period may have symbolized only an historical referent, perhaps, the succession of ancestors. If this is correct, then this ritual implement combining both the Jade Stave and the Jade Three-Post probably dates to the early Liangzhu Period ca 3400-2800 BCE, before shamanic symbolism was curtailed from Liangzhu iconography and ancestor worship took precedence in Late Liangzhu rituals. This combination of both a Jade Stave and a Jade Three-Post may help document the origins of Liangzhu shamanic élites as they acquired more astronomical knowledge.

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

**Date or Time Horizon:** Mid-Liangzhu Period-3000-2600 BCE

**Geographical Area:** Liangzhu culture, lower Yangtze River delta

Maps:



Fig. 4. China, Neolithic Period, ca. 8000 - ca. 2000 BCE after https://etcweb.princeton.edu/asianart/assets/map\_china\_neolithic.gif



**Fig. 5. Liangzhu (300 ha)** showing the packed earthen perimeter wall, canals, residences and the central rectangular Mojiaoshan 莫 角 山 ritual center after an artist’s conceptualization **after** <http://p3.pstatp.com/large/615f00050b7a0d5bc064>.



Fig. 6. **Liangzhu (300 ha) model** showing the packed earthen perimeter wall, canals, residences and the central, rectangular Mojiaoshan 莫 角 山 3 ha, 10 m-high, ritual center. In addition, there were smaller, rammed-earthen platforms, some of which were constructed of fired adobe bricks. After an artist’s conceptualization **after** <http://p3.pstatp.com/large/616100014bf6036976ba>.



Fig. 7. Liangzhu complex with subsidiary sites and dams after https://www.degruyter.com/view/j/char.2016.16.issue-1/char-2016-0010/graphic/j\_char-2016-0010\_fig\_002.jpg



Fig. 8. Detail of major Middle Liangzhu associated sites. After Zhou Ying 2007.

1, Gaochengdun 高 城 墩; 2, Zhaolingshan 赵 陵 山; 3, Shaoqingshan 少 卿 山; 4, Guangfulin 广 富 林; 5, Pingqiudun 平 丘 墩; 6, Daimudun 戴 母 墩; 7, Xindili 新 地 里; 8, Pu’ anqiao 普 安 桥; 9, Zhangjiabang, 赵 家 浜, Xujiabang 徐 家 浜; 10, Heyedi 荷 叶 地; 11, Xubuqiao 徐 步 桥; 12, Miaoqian 庙 前; 13–18, Yaoshan 瑶 山, Fanshan 反 山, Huiguanshan 汇 观 山, Boyishan 钵 衣 山, Shangkoushan 上 口 山, Mojiaoshan 莫 角 山; 19, Yangjiabu 杨 家 埠; 20, Yannan 堰 南.

**GPS coordinates: ca** N 30°24', E 120°

**Cultural Affiliation**: Liangzhu culture, lower Yangtze River delta, 3300-2250 BCE

**Medium:** Jade

**Dimensions:** H 2.12 in, 53.79 mm; L 3.6 in, 91.34 mm

**Weight:**

**Condition:** original

**Provenance:** Yuhang County, Zhejiang Province

**Discussion:**

The bas-relief, engraved Taotie motif (a bi-laterally symmetrical animal mask) surmounted by a bas-relief, engraved shaman with a feather headdress, who has mastery, literally, over his animal spirit below. This iconography undoubtedly has its origins in the Paleolithic Period when shamanic imagery characterized the symbolism of hunter-gatherers who depended on wild boars and other animals for part of their sustenance (see Biot 1851).

Accordingly, animal taotie imagery was also pecked and inscribed as wild boar animal mask petroglyphs.

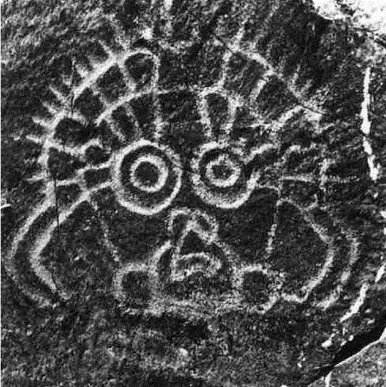


Fig. 9. Petroglyph of wild boar animal mask from Ningxia, China, after https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Face-like-motif-at-the-Helankou-site-Helan-Shan-Ningxia

By 3000-2600 BCE during the Mid-Liangzhu Phase, Liangzhu culture achieved a pinnacle of early cultural, engineering and economic development in a city with a size of about 300 ha that involved exquisite jade artistry, hydraulic planning and commerce. A suite of expertly designed and manufactured jade objects in élite burials provide a glimpse of the élite artisans who conceptualized and executed mythological, religious and ideological symbols into jade artifacts. This symbolism had evolved from a hunter-gatherer shamanic background into an animal husbandry of domesticated wild boars, that played an important economic and symbolic rôle in the development of Liangzhu culture. The ritual center of Mojiaoshan reflects a social cohesion that also enabled the organization of large-scale, collective, hydraulic engineering endeavors, including the construction of reservoirs, levees, dams, and canals that facilitated improved transportation and rice agriculture (Liu 2017).

Archaeological artifacts from the Mid-Liangzhu Phase (3000–2600 BCE) mostly came from the following sites (Fanshan, Gaochengdun 高 城 墩, Nanjing and Jiangyin 2009, Yaoshan, Zhaolingshan burial M77, Shaoqingshan 少 卿 山, Suzhou Museum 1988, and Guangfulin 广 富 林, Shanghai Archaeology 2008). However, the provenance of the current artifact is uncertain and so is given with the GPS coordinates of the original Liangzhu site.

DNA from Liangzhu culture sites around Taihu Lake exhibit high frequencies of Haplogroup O1 which was absent in other archaeological sites that were sampled inland of the Liangzhu Complex. Haplogroup O1 is common to modern Austronesians and Taiwanese Austronesians (TAN) (Li *et al*. 2007). O1 probably came from those Liangzhu Austronesians (LAN) who had been displaced from the mouth of the Yangtze River delta by an economic crash of the LAN ca 4500 BCE possibly induced by a meteor that struck at the present location of Taihu Lake, a meteoric crater (Erkang *et al*. 2002). Recent studies show that special micro-fractures in quartzite were formed during the unloading process after the compression at the peak of an impact event (Wang, Wan, Xu 2002). Bayesian phylogenetic analysis allows us to reconstruct a history of early Austronesians arriving in Taiwan in the north ~4,000 BCE, spreading rapidly to the south due to this catastrophic event (Ko *et al*. 2014). Those LAN culture sites that reformed round Taihu Lake took 800 years, from 4200 BCE until 3400 BCE, to recover at the Early LAN Period. Later, ca 2200 BCE at the Late LAN Period, a series extreme floods from diversions of the Yangtze River indicated by intrusions of mud and sand into the cultural layers of Late LAN Period sites mark this event and a second wave of LAN emigrating to Taiwan. Subsequently, one trajectory of TAN migrants began to sail east via the Buka Strait in the Solomon Islands, which became a staging area for the populating of Polynesia ca. 2000 BCE (Ko *et al*. 2014). Another trajectory of TAN migrants sailed north to Luzon in the Philppines (Hung 2005 a,b)

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