Case 5-Asia-China-Hongshan-Boar Cicada Amulets aka Pig Dragons

Case 5-Asia-China-Hongshan-Liaoning-Boar Cicada Amulet aka Pig Dragon-Jade-紅山 - 遼寧 - 豬龍-玉-2.4 in



Figs. 1-3. Hongshan-Liaoning-Pig Dragon-Jade-紅山 - 遼寧 - 豬龍-玉-8.5 in

**Case no.: 5**

**Accession Number: A000**

Formal Label: Hongshan-Liaoning-Pig Dragon-Jade-紅山 - 遼寧 - 豬龍-玉-8.5 in

**Display Description:**

This Hongshan “Boar-Cicada Amulet” (previously and erroneously called a “Pig-dragon”) is a jade carving from Liaoning (紅山-玉--豬頭龍--建平--遼寧).It is a zoomorphic, figurine with a boar-like snout and pointed ears on an elongated, serpentine, limbless body, coiled around a central axis which emulates the larval stage of the cicada, which incorporated important religio-philosophical principles in Hongshan China.



Cicada Larvae after https://www.flickr.com/photos/marielosp/139126776



Boar-Cicada Amulet-Jade

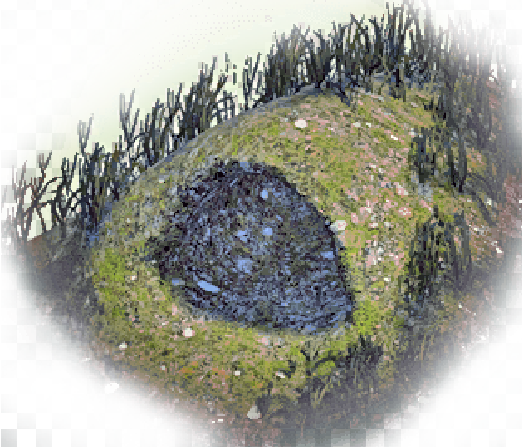
野豬作為蟬玉

Yězhū zuòwéi chán yù - H 8.5 in

Early Hongshan “Boar-Cicada Amulet” jade carvings (ca 5000 BCE) have stout, pig-like bodies, while later Hongshan examples (ca 3000 BCE) have slender, serpentine bodies. Since “Boar-Cicada Amulet” jade carvings have been excavated as Hongshan grave goods (Howard 2006), and since boar bones have accounted for 60 percent of animal bones recovered from Hongshan sites, it is inferred that boars were important not only for the Hongshan economy but also for their symbolic significance. The melding of a larval cicada shape with that of a boar coupled an important economic icon with the cicada, the symbol of resurrection, producing a powerful Hongshan foundational image.

This cicada resurrection amulet in traditional China was based on the life cycle of the cicada which begins as a nymph that having hatched from an egg on a tree branch, falls to the earth, burrows in the ground, and attaches to rootlets where it is sustained by the root's nourishment for as many as seventeen years when they are mysteriously called into the light of day, climb the trunk of the tree, their skins split open, and their wings unfurl as mature cicadas.

The resurrection metaphor can be applied to either that of the dead being resurrected into new life or in the case of the philosopher emerging from the darkness of the enclosed study being resurrected into the world of light. As De Groot (1892, Pt. 2: 16) remarks "the Chinese regard death as a separation of the vital spirit from the body, and they cling to the belief that the spirit keeps hovering about the body, even after the latter has been deposited in its final resting place." The present figurine of a boar-cicada couples the power of the boar (economically and physically) with the assurance of the emergence into the light of day from the boar’s underground den.

Left: Two wild red boars emerging from an earthen den much like the cicada does in its life cycle. After https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images. Right: a red boar’s den. After https://bddatabase.net/items/ui\_artwork/ic\_04126.png.

Red Boars have excellent tunneling skills, and they can accommodate several Red Boars in a single den.

**LC Classification:**

**Date or Time Horizon:**

**Geographical Area:** Liaoning Province

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:** Hongshan

**Medium:** jade

**Dimensions:** **H 2.4 in, W1.5, D 0.7 in**

**Weight:**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** Jianping

**Discussion:**

In contrast to the Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian-Muslim notions of the soul as the essence of a human being, the Hongshan people of ancient China regarded the soul as the source of their material sustenance that is composed of beings, both animal and human, that personify the bodily essence of their native selves.

To the Hongshan people the pre-eminent animal was the wild boar that was originally hunted in the Mulanshan -- mountains of great, natural wilderness. Images of Mulanshan were conceived by Hongshan sculptors of jade, the stone of immortality, as rounded summits with burrows of the wild boar as circular hollows within these mountains. Images of the wild boar were sculpted on the ends of these mountains -- with their hollows -- making the identity of the sculpture explicit. Thus, this entire sculpture – boar, mountain and burrow -- became the emblem of the Hongshan essence of life.

To further exemplify the source of this essence of life, images of the wild boar as a curled-up fetus about to emerge from the womb, were also sculpted from jade. These sculptures ranged in size from personal amulets to large figures hung in ritual sanctuaries. Their presence was intended to recall the time when these wild boars were first captured and then later domesticated for animal husbandry, thereby marking the moment at which the Hongshan culture emerged from its hunting-gathering existence into a Neolithic, sedentary existence capable of creating such provocative reminiscences of the ancient past.

The Hongshan conception of culture and community required that all participate in this memory of the ancient ways of hunters who could assume the personae of the hunted so that the life of their communities could be sustained in an otherwise alien world. To understand the Hongshan self, one needs to be open to assume this shamanic posture of ecstasy, of being able to stand outside of one’s self and to assume the identities of nature -- both wild animals and humans -- without alterity or division. Furthermore, this was a call to assume the blending of souls, the breaking down of one’s ego and one’s acceptance of the Other. Only this opens a window into one’s own identity and alterity, and with it one’s extension of the self into nature, both of animals and humans, where alien types of being and memory can become palpable.

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2) Hongshan-Liaoning-Cicada Larva Amulet-Jade-4700-2920 BCE

This example of a Cicada Larva Amulet (note hole for suspension) emulates the larval stage of the cicada as it first enters its hibernation stage underground. H 5.4 cm, W 5.4 cm, T 2.4 cm. Atlantica Collection.

**Formal Label:** Asia-China-Hongshan-Cicada Larva Amulet-Jade-4700-2920 BCE

**Display Description:**

This example of a Cicada Larva Amulet symbolizes the life cycle of the cicada which begins as a nymph that having hatched from an egg on a tree branch, falls to the earth as a larva, burrows in the ground, and attaches to rootlets where it is sustained by the root's nourishment for as many as seventeen years when it is mysteriously called into the light of day, climbs the trunk of the tree, its skin splits open, and its wings unfurl as a mature cicada.



Cicada Larvae after https://www.flickr.com/photos/marielosp/139126776

The resurrection metaphor can be applied to either that of the dead being resurrected into new life or in the case of the philosopher emerging from the darkness of the enclosed study being resurrected into the world of light. As De Groot (1892, Pt. 2: 16) remarks "the Chinese regard death as a separation of the vital spirit from the body, and they cling to the belief that the spirit keeps hovering about the body, even after the latter has been deposited in its final resting place." The present figurine according to this interpretation would signify the hovering spirit of the deceased prior to its final emergence as a cicada. Three phases of the emergence of the resurrected spirit represented in Chinese jades from the anthropomorphic, to the quasi anthropomorphic to the true cicada are in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (Harman 1974)**:**

**References:**

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[*Artibus Asiae*,](http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.mit.edu/action/showPublication?journalCode=artibusasiae)  Vol. 36, No. 1/2, pp. 55-64

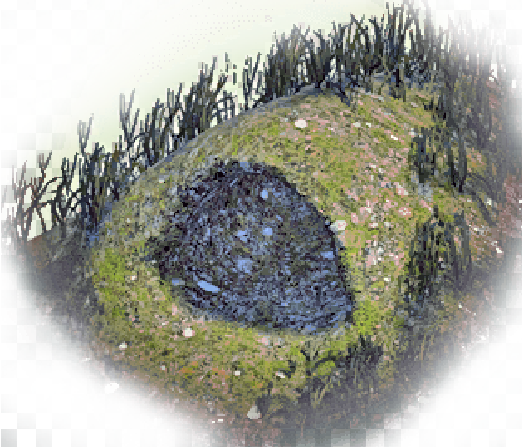
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3) Hongshan-Two Boars and Three Dens Amulet-4700-2920 BCE

The resurrection metaphor can be applied to either that of the boar emerging from his den into the light of day or in the case of the philosopher emerging from the darkness of unknowing into enlightenment. As De Groot (1892, Pt. 2: 16) remarks "the Chinese regard death as a separation of the vital spirit from the body, and they cling to the belief that the spirit keeps hovering about the body, even after the latter has been deposited in its final resting place." The present figurine of a boar-cicada couples the power of the boar (economically and physically) with the assurance of the emergence into the light of day from the boar’s underground den.

Left: Two wild red boars emerging from an earthen den much like the cicada does in its life cycle. After https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images. Right: a red boar’s den. After <https://bddatabase.net/items/ui_artwork/ic_04126.png>. Red Boars have excellent tunneling skills, and they can accommodate several Red Boars in a single den.

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4) Hongshan- Boar-Cicada Amulet-Jade-4700-2920 BCE



野豬作為蟬玉

Yězhū zuòwéi chán yù -

This jade Boar-Cicada Amulet has a blunt snout of *Sus scrofa* and the serpentine shape of the cicada larva. However, in this rendition the cicada shape is enlarged for greater emphasis on the metaphysical sense of the cicada’s re-emergence or resurrection into life.

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**5) Sheep sculptures as Hongshan Culture Expands Trade and Exchange into Mongolia**

Sheep sculptures were added by artisans to their porcine repertoire as Hongshan trade and exchange with Mongolian sheep herders developed. This suggests increasing cultural complexity and stability, although the degree of complexity and Hongshan connections to other emergent Neolithic cultures in Mongolia and Central Asia are still under debate (Guo 1985).



Rare mid-late Hongshan sheep sculpture, ca 2500 BCE, Atlantika Collection

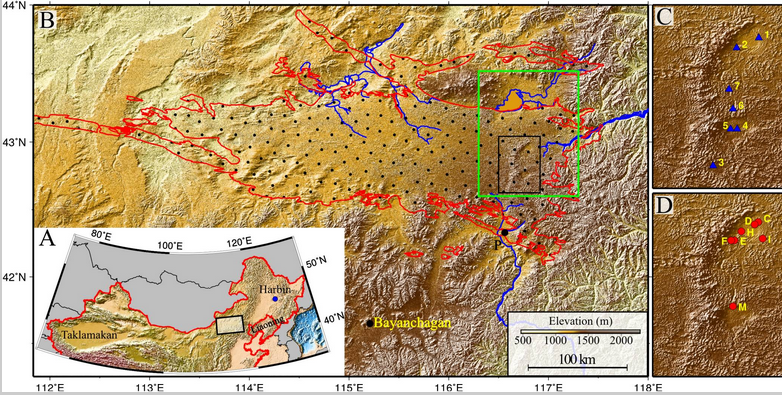
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**6) Climatic fluctuations 4000-2200 BCE**: **development and demise of the Hongshan culture.**

Between 3678-3400 cal. BCE the climate was colder and drier than today. Then, from 3400- 2800 cal. BCE the climate was much warmer and wetter. Between 2800-2300 cal. BCE the climate was persistently cold, with an exceptionally cold event occurring between 2600-2300 cal. BCE. This cold event was recorded at several other localities in Northern China and in the Northern Hemisphere. It played an important role in the emigration of Inner Mongolian people from the Hunshandake Sandy Lands of Inner Mongolia (Yang et al. 2015) to immigrate to the Yangtze River delta and in turn they forced the Hongshan people to emigrate to Taiwan by 2200 BCE, a date that corresponds to the demise of the Hongshan culture which has been an enigma until now (Jin and Liu. 2002).

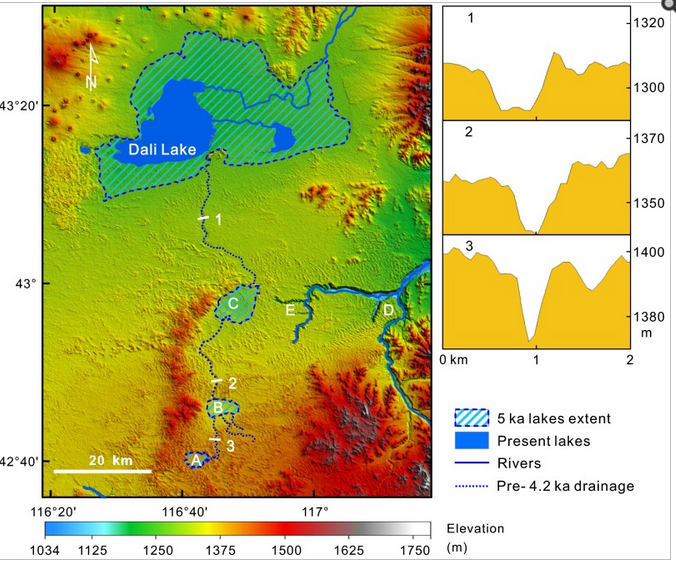


Map showing location of Hunshandake Sandy Lands outlined in black.



Geographical location of the Hunshandake Sandy Lands (A) and its area (encompassed by red line in B).

The black rectangle in B marks the location of the enlarged maps C and D on the Right, and the green rectangle shows the location of [Fig. 2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4311860/figure/fig02/). Map C shows the localities of water samples, and map D shows the localities of stratigraphy The sand–paleosol section P ([Fig. 3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4311860/figure/fig03/)) is on the southern margin, and the site Bayanchagan marks the coring site to sample the paleosols (Jiang et al. 2006). Rivers with headwaters in the Hunshandake likely formed by groundwater sapping are marked in blue. Drainages to the southwest and west are currently undergoing groundwater sapping, with substantial spring-driven flow found at the current river base level. From <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4311860/figure/fig01/>



Map of the desiccation of Holocene lakes and channels in the Hunshandake Sandy Lands at selected epochs (Yang *et al*. 2015). Upper, middle, and lower lakes are indicated by points A, B, and C, respectively. Xilamulun River (point D) drains to the east. Groundwater-sapping headcuts at the upper reaches of incised canyons (point E) suggest a mid-Holocene interval of easterly surface flow, followed by groundwater drainage beginning at the ca. 4.2 ka event. Northern and central channels at point E are currently abandoned, and groundwater sapping has migrated to the southerly of the three channels shown. (Right) Cross-sections of the predrainage shift, northerly drainage into Dali Lake (Localities shown on the Left), showing the increase in widths of channels downstream (Vertical exaggeration ∼30:1).

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