Case 5-Asia-China-Niuheliang-Dragon-Jade-Hongshan Neolithic culture (4700 to 2920 BCE)





Figs 1-5. Asia-China-Niuheliang-Dragon-Jade-Hongshan Neolithic culture (4700 to 2920 BCE)

Case no.: 5

Accession Number:

Formal Label: Niuheliang-Dragon-Jade-Hongshan Neolithic culture (4700 to 2920 BCE)

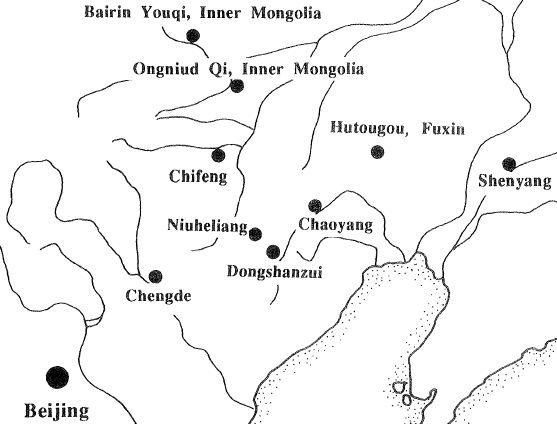
**Display Description:** The Hongshan Neolithic culture (4700 to 2900 BCE) is named after Hongshanhou Chifeng. Site discovered by the Japanese archaeologist Torii Ryūzō in 1908 and extensively excavated in 1935 by Kōsaku Hamada and Mizuno Seiichi. The present Dragon Head appears to have been a central votive object of an otherwise unknown ancient Hongshan religion practiced at a shrine at Niuheliang (牛河梁) in Liaoning Province, Northeast China, which was discovered in 1983. This site includes an underground temple complex with painted walls —which included an altar, a repository (aka Goddess Temple, nüshenmiao 女神庙) of clay figurines of larger than life-size goddesses (?) including a clay female head with jade inlaid eyes, and cairns which entombed jade turtles and dragon heads like this one as votive objects (Liaoning 2008; UNESCO. 2005).

**LC Classification:** NK 5750.2 C6

Date or Time Horizon: Hongshan Neolithic culture (4700 to 2920 BCE)

Geographical Area: Niuheliang (牛河梁) in Liaoning Province

**Map:**



After Barnes and Guo 1996.

**GPS coordinates:** N 41°16′15″ , E 119°27′9″

Cultural Affiliation: Hongshan Niuheliang Religion.

Medium: jade.

Dimensions:

Weight:

Condition: original.

Provenance: Liaoning.

**Discussion:**

Two ceremonial sites of Dongshanzui and Niuheliang have been identified so far (Li 2003). Niuheliang consists of thirteen tomb clusters on hill promontories, a large double cruciform-shaped pit structure, and a summit with four compounds. A cadre of jade sculptors and accomplished ceramicists who provided élite burial goods suggest an organized labor body. An artificial hill at Niuheliang contained three rings of marble-like stones and several high cairns with elaborate interiors and a 22 m-long building which contained fragments of life-sized statues. One of the fragments was a face with inset green jade eyes. Elite burials of at least three ranks (Nelson 1996) suggest of a ranked society. These burials include decorative possibly iconographic jade objects such as this dragon amulet. Non-élite interments have not been found.

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