

JADE HALL

Popular mythology was the subject matter of many Late Chou jade carvings.

It is in the Late Chou that we find the first records of the elaborate myths that have survived among the common people of China down to the present day. The philosophical essence of Taoism became overlaid in the popular mind with the myths of immortals and dragons, spirits of wind and water. The spirits and gods were invoked in religious ceremonies by shamans. Dragons, the most important of these spirits, inhabited water and clouds and controlled the rains so important to an agricultural society. The raised knobs on these jade dragons may represent grain. In later times the dragon became the symbol of the emperor and the essence of the masculine principle, yang. Dragons also appear on the bronze mirror; such semi-abstract geometrical forms were characteristic of Late Chou bronzes. The reverse side was polished to provide the reflecting surface.

Specimens top to bottom:

◦ Jade dragon	127343 (D) - ng# 74364
◦ Jade dragon	116544 (C) - ng# 2905, 35449, 74356-7
◦ Jade dragon	183143 (A) - ng# 74341, 74351, 74353, 101662
◦ Jade dragon	183496 (R) - ng# 66666, 67824, 75387
◦ Jade dragon	127342 (D) - ng# 549270?, 74342, 101968
◦ Bronze mirror	183463 (R) - ng# 102865
◦ Pottery shaman	117841 (C) - ng# 35393

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On a lucky day with an auspicious name,
Reverently we come to delight the Lord on High.
We grasp the long sword's haft of jade,
And our girdle pendants clash and chime.
Jade weights fasten the god's jeweled mat.

The god has halted, swaying, above us,
Shining with a persistent radiance.
He is going to rest in the House of Life.
His brightness is like the sun and moon.
He yokes to his dragon car the steeds of God.
Now he flies to wander round the sky.
The god had just descended in bright majesty,
When off in a whirl he soared again, far into the clouds.

From the Ch'u Tz'u, tr. by David Hawkes

additional copy

dishes dishes

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