



Analysis of the Reasons for the Popularity of Jade Fish in the Shang and Zhou Periods

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Abstract. Jade fish is a kind of fish-shaped jade ornaments in ancient times, the use of jade fish throughout the history of Chinese jade culture. The Shang Dynasty was the heyday of jade fish development. Due to the unique religious form of the Shang Dynasty, the jade fish of this period not only has wearing value, but also adds a touch of mysterious color. This paper categorizes and explores the functions, uses, and cultural implications of the jade fish, an image of ancient jade culture, and reveals the meaning behind the popularity of the jade fish in the Shang and Zhou periods and the culture, folklore, and lifestyle it implies.

Keywords: Jade Fish, Shang and Zhou Dynasties, Jade Culture, Functions

1. Overview of the development and image characteristics of the jade fish in the Shang Dynasty and Zhou Dynasty

Jade fish were first excavated in the late Neolithic period, and gradually came to prominence in the Hongshan and Liangzhu cultures, and later artifacts and works with fish as the subject matter were commonplace. The Shang Dynasty was the first peak period in the history of jade artifacts in which jade fish appeared, and the style of wearing fish also began in the Shang Dynasty. During the Zhou Dynasty, the form of the fish and its vivid and rich modeling became even more glittering on the basis of its predecessor, and had a far-reaching influence on later generations. The so-called jade fish (Fig. 1), which is a fish made of ruled jade, was a common subject for playthings and accessories. During the Shang and Zhou periods, the development of jade fish products reached its peak, and they were widely used in all kinds of jade jewelry for the aristocracy. According to Mr. Xia Nai's book "Classification, Designation and Usage of Jade Objects of the Shang Dynasty", jade fish of the Shang Dynasty can be classified as decorative, ceremonial and instrumental^[1]. The image of the early Shang Dynasty jade fish can be summarized as simple, long, flat and flaky (Fig. 2). The technique of jade treatment was simple and concise, and it can be seen from the works that key features such as fins and tails of the fish were represented by shaded lines. By the Zhou Dynasty, the curved body of the fish, in the form of a jade juan, was used as a necklace or as a component of a group of jade pendants. Jade Juan was one of the "Six Weapons", and functional jade pendants in the form of a Jade Juan as the main body of a Jade Fish had already appeared in the early Western Zhou Dynasty to represent status symbols and the virtues of a gentleman^[2].

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Fig1. Western Zhou Jade Fish (in the National Museum of China)³



Fig2. Shang Dynasty Jade Fish (in the National Museum of China)⁴

2. Roots of the development of the jade fish

The jade fish of the Shang and Zhou dynasties had a profound influence on later generations, both in terms of quantity and the development of craftsmanship. The economic prosperity of the Shang Dynasty, in which the handicraft industry is the most developed, this period of handicraft production also has a fine division, such as: bronze industry, ceramics, jade workshops, etc., the production of a rich variety of products, the production process is mature^[5], and exquisite craftsmanship, the development of the process of bronze utensils for the treatment of the jade technology undertaken to pave the way for the carving of jade technology has greatly improved, coupled with the cultural implications of the fish of this natural subject, the scope of its use as well as In addition to the cultural significance of the fish as a natural subject, there is a rich variety of its use and function, and the Jade fish is one of the most common animal-shaped jade ornaments in the Shang Dynasty. 75 pieces were found in the tomb of Muhao alone, all of which were carved in relief in the form of flakes, and there are two types of fish, large and small

(Fig.3). It can be seen that the development of jade craftsmanship and the social environment at that time thus nurtured a flourishing style of jade fish.

As an ancient and mysterious dynasty in China, the most significant cultural feature of the Shang Dynasty was the theory of the "Godhead", that is, all aspects of the country's political and social life were determined by the will of Heaven. People's superstitious degree of fate far exceeded that of other countries in the same period, from national politics, down to the people's lives, to make any decision to divining and consulting the will of heaven^[5]. In addition, the Shang Dynasty also realized the cultural phenomenon of "ancestor worship" combined with "God worship", and this theocracy had far-reaching influence on later generations. The rulers' theory of "godhead" was not only limited to the heavens and ancestors, but also believed that the mountains, rivers and mountains of the natural world were all gods, and that they needed to obtain blessings through the sacrificial activities of these gods^[5]. The unique religious culture of the Shang Dynasty gave the jade fish, an image of ancient jade artifacts, a special mysticism, and put the jade fish into the context of the Shang Dynasty culture to explore the symbolism behind it^[5].

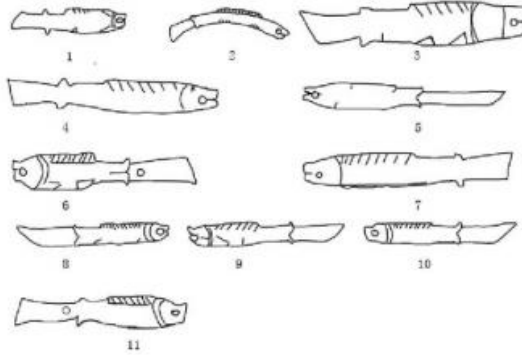


Fig3. Jade Fish in the Tool Category Unearthed from the Tomb of Women's Hao⁵

The cult of life and reproduction

Regarding the origin of the Jade Fish, Totem Worship describes that in ancient times fish was one of the most important foods in human life. Fish is related to the survival and life of primitive human beings. During the Shang Dynasty, people's desire for fertility and prosperity never waned^[6]. Fish is an oviparous organism, fish seed, is a symbol of "fertility", on behalf of the "progeny" of the imagery, the fish to symbolize life, naturally become the object of worship of the merchants. View of the former, Yangshao culture period excavated colored pottery - human face fish pattern colored pottery pots (Fig. 4), painted inside the fish according to archaeology, at that time also represents a kind of reproductive reproduction, the family thriving^[7]. Japanese scholars, jinzhen, believe that the ancient Chinese used the abundance of fish to symbolize the fertility of women and the abundance of crops.



Fig4. human face fish pattern colored pottery pots(in the National Museum of China)⁸

Symbols of Marriage

In traditional Chinese culture, "fish" is often used to express love or to refer to beautiful women. In "The Winds of the Kingdom - Chen Feng - Heng Men": "If you want to eat fish, you must go to a boat in the river. If I want to take a wife, I will take the ginger of Qi. If I want to eat fish, I will eat carp from the river ^[9]." Taking a wife" is opposite to "eating fish", and the symbolic meaning is obvious. Wei Feng - Shuo Ren" "The river is full of water, and the north stream is alive. Large fishing net, tuna fishing"[9], "the pleasure of fish and water" indicates that husband and wife are in love and harmony. Ancient people to express their love and affection to the euphemistic and introverted, so often use some things alluding to the love ^[10], due to the image of the fish and its close relationship with people in social life, there is also the classic story of the proverb "moistening each other with a foam" has been passed down. The ancestors used the fish as a symbol of marriage and love, so they often used the fish or fish-related things to refer to marriage and love. Fish is also a metaphor for husband and wife and partners, and the two-fish totem, which often appeared in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, is a manifestation of this meaning (Fig. 5), expressing that husband and wife are in love with each other and are in love with each other for a long time. The ancestors also decorated the jade fish on their hair buns to form hair ornaments, and wore them on their necks, chests, and waists to form accessories (Fig. 6), which not only served as decorations, but also contained the wish for the couple's harmony and sweetness and love.



Fig5. Jasper double-fish flower arrangement (in the Palace Museum)^[11]



Fig6. Shang Dynasty fish-shaped pendant (in the National Museum of China)^[12]

Funeral goods

Funeral jade fish were mainly used as burial objects or decorations on coffins during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. A jade piece put in the mouth of the dead upon burial, according to archaeological findings in the Daxi culture tombs, there are the deceased with fish bones in their mouths, which sent the simple concept of life of the ancestors who expected that the weather would be favorable and the food would be around for a long time^[13]. In the Shang Dynasty, many tombs were found with jade fish in the mouths of the tomb owners. Later, in the funeral culture of the Zhou people, the head of the deceased was very important^[14]. According to Zheng Xuan's commentary, the "Jade artifacts over the dead man's face" is said to be a piece of fabric with a black face and red lining and filled with silk floss¹⁵, which is then placed over the face of the deceased^[16]. According to archaeological evidence, it is also common for Zhou tombs to have small jade objects sewn onto silk fabrics, which were then combined to form a jade overlay with the five senses of the face (Fig. 7). The Jade artifacts over the dead man's face began to flourish during the reign of King Gong of the Zhou Dynasty and reached its peak in the middle to late Zhou Dynasty, and the jade overlay found in different areas and tombs varies greatly. The use of jade fish in jade overlapping surfaces was mainly to arrange them in a row to serve as a certain organ. For example, there are two jade fish in the Jade artifacts over the dead man's face unearthed in M93 of Jinhou's tomb^[17], one as an eyebrow and the other as an ear. This suggests that the ancients used the jade fish as a protective shell for a certain organ, which was used to protect and entrust the dead to rest in peace.

Jade for coffins first appeared in the early period of King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty, and was most prevalent in the mid-to-late Western Zhou and the fortnightly period. In the decoration of coffins, the image of fish must have had a special meaning in the conception of the Zhou people, and had its unique representative significance. In the middle and late Western Zhou Dynasty, copper fish, jade fish, and clam fish were the most common objects, so the real function of the jade fish in this period was to be used as a coffin decoration, scattered between the coffin and the inner and outer coffins, and around the jade fish, there were also some small shellfish scattered around the coffin and the inner and outer coffins. Referring to the fish reproduction theory put forward by Mr. Wen Yiduo, it is believed that fish and shellfish were used as symbols of vitality and reproduction in ancient China, and through the practice of carving fish patterns on the coffins, hanging jade fish (Fig. 8) in the coffins and placing them in the mouths of the dead, it

was even more so that merchants gave the dead the hope that their lives would last forever and continue to exist in the other world^[18]. There is also a popular view in ancient times, that the fish and the River Bo have a certain connection, the ancients gave the fish as a guide to the nether world identity, under the command of the fish lead, the soul can ride to guide the soul to ascend to heaven function. It can be seen that jade fish were mainly used in the funeral culture of the Shang and Zhou dynasties: coffin ornaments, jade pearls, jade grips, the Jade artifacts over the dead man's face and other functions. The variety of functions of jade fish played an important role in the Shang and Zhou cultures. The use of jade fish as coffin ornaments is unique to the Western Zhou Dynasty and to the entire history of funerals^[18]. This special historical phenomenon is attributed to the Zhou people's funeral customs, funeral system and even closely related to the concept of the soul, cosmology and ancestor sacrifice.



Fig7. Jade inlaid mask covering the face of the deceased(in the National Museum of China)^[19]

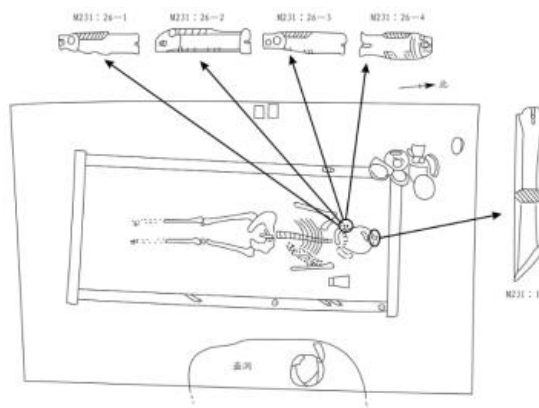


Fig8. Jade Fish Unearthed from the Head of Tomb Master M231 in Yingguo Cemetery, Pingding Mountain^[2]

Symbols of Nobility Status Levels

The Western Zhou Dynasty was the culmination of the development of slavery in China, and jade was used as a symbol of hierarchy and etiquette, and then evolved into an instrument for measuring people's character, giving jade a personalized connotation. For example, "a gentleman is more virtuous than jade", "a gentleman of old must wear jade", "a gentleman has no reason not to go to the body of jade", and so on. Therefore, different materials, sizes, colors, shapes and decorations symbolize different statuses and grades (Fig. 9).

The Zhou Dynasty was also the core period for the development of jade pendants, and fish-shaped pendants were common on jade pendants^[20] (Fig. 10). In the Zhou Rites, the Spring Officials' Code of Order, it is written: "The nine destinies of the Lord of the Shang Dynasty were all nine sections of the state, the palace, the flag, the clothes, and the etiquette. Marquis of seven lives, his country, palace, flag, clothes, etiquette are all seven for the festival^[21]." Guo Zhong Tomb M2009 was buried with nine tripods and eight gui, which indicated that the state of Guo was strong and powerful, and that Guo Zhong, as the king of the state, had a prominent position as the ninth life of a Shang Gong^[17]. Guo Ji tomb M2001 unearthed 7 pieces of tripod, group jade pendant with seven Juan; Rui M27 Huan cemetery also buried 7 pieces of tripod, with seven Juan, both to seven for the section. According to the inverse of the Zhou son of heaven and queen wear group jade pendant with Juan number, then the son of heaven should wear nine Juan group jade pendant, queen wear seven Juan group jade pendant^[22]. Therefore, we call this phenomenon the "Juan norm" to indicate the noble status, and the more Juan the number, the more noble the status.



Fig9. Group of jade pendants (in the Palace Museum)^[23]



Fig10. White nephrite openwork carving of a two-fish scented sachet (in the National Palace Museum)^[24]

Revival of Dragon Culture

During the Paleolithic period, animals, humans, plants and even nature were viewed as a continuum of life, and thus evolved into clan symbols, totems. Totems represented the clan itself and served as its protectors, such as the fish and the dragon. In ancient times, the transformation of fish into dragons, dragons into fish, and fish and dragons into each other was a relatively common cultural perception ^[25]. For example, according to Cai Cocoon Magazine, "A fish is a young dragon." In "Biography of the Immortals", it is recorded that Qing Gao learned the art of longevity and said to his disciples one day, "I went into the water of Zhuo to fetch a dragon", but the "dragon" that I rode on when I came back was a red carp, and the text explains that it can be interpreted as a red carp is also a dragon ^[26]. Many places here reflect the simple understanding that the ancients regarded fish as dragons and equated dragons with fish, and that fish and dragons can be intertwined. In the Tang Dynasty, the famous poet Du Fu made an ancient poem "orange cypress ferry" in: "Xuanzong, the second Lizhou Yichang County, crossing the Jibai River, there are two fish between the boat and jump, the discussants thought that the dragon ^[27]", here, also the fish and the dragon is regarded as the same thing. The most famous example of fish and dragon mutualization is "carp leap dragon door" legend, also produced "fish and dragon change" and other idioms. It can be seen, all kinds of legends and data cited, fish and dragons can be mutualization ^[26]. According to check the "Classic of Mountains and Seas" recorded: "Wind Road to the north, the day is a large water spring, the snake is transformed into a fish", meaning that the snake is the embodiment of the dragon, and the snake transformed into a fish, so it can also be converted into the ancient dragon into a fish. The close relationship between fish and dragon can also be analyzed from ancient books and many kinds of literature, and people often regard fish and dragon as connected ^[25]. Influenced by the Hongshan culture, the Shang Dynasty began the revival of the dragon culture, the dragon this creature as the totem of China, after all, we did not actually see, out of reach, so it happens to be some of the fish and the dragon's characteristics of the interlinked, people will be fish and dragon interchangeable to show more of the pro-people and their own good prayers.

Conclusion

The jade fish, a form of jade artifact, has a long history and far-reaching significance. The influence of the jade fish during the Shang and Zhou Dynasties is reflected in various aspects such as material achievements, ritual systems and spiritual fruits, covering almost all areas of life. Taking the jade fish of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties as a representative, exploring the cultural uniqueness shown by the jade fish as an artifact, we find that the development of the jade fish is a physical reflection of the ancient people's worship of life, reproductive reproduction, awe of funeral culture, and symbols of status and class. The symbolism and cultural connotation of the jade fish itself has also become an indispensable part of Chinese jade culture

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