JADE
AND
THE ANTIQUE USE
OF GEMS

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THE ANTIQUE USE OF GEMS

The Appeal of Color and Rarity of Certain Minerals to Primitive as Well as Modern Man—Their Use as Charms, Symbols, and for Personal Adornment

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Among the ancient expressions of human culture which have been handed down to us throughout the ages, we find ample evidence that our prehistoric forebears began to appreciate the decorative value of gems and precious stones at an extremely early stage in their development.

The subtle charm that holds a Twentieth Century woman spellbound before a jeweler’s window doubtless prompted Mother Eve to devise ways of hanging these vivid scraps of color about her person, and of these decorative devices which have developed into our present day forms of jewelry, the necklace is without question the most ancient. From such rough assemblages of strung-together gem pebbles as the garnets found in a Bohemian grave of the Bronze Age to the most elaborate creations of the modern jeweler’s art, we can trace in unbroken sequence throughout the ages, and in most of the countries of the ancient world, the evolution of the necklace.

It would be highly interesting if we could conjure up a pageant of necklace wearers of all periods and races, but since this is beyond the powers of even our modern magic, we must content ourselves with the consideration of those relics that have come down to us from the past, a handful of beads here, a tarnished and battered brooch there, all that is left to tell us of forgotten beauties whose charms they enhanced before Helen wore her star-sapphires or Cleopatra her emeralds or Mary Stuart her garnets.

Among the Germanic tribes that roamed over Central Europe half a millennium before our era, amber washed up on the eastern shore of the Baltic and roughly shaped into round beads was a standard medium of exchange. A necklace of these rude, uneven, amber lumps was found in a grave of the period of about 300 B.C., mortal necklace of the goddess, Freyja, the famous "Brisingamen" of Norse mythology.

The Gallo-Roman inhabitants of France in the Third and Fourth Centuries A.D. were lovers of fine apparel and jewels. The necklace beads of delicately colored
ROCK CRYSTAL BEADS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

Representing a very early stage in the evolution of the necklace. They were probably made about the beginning of our era.

Agate and orange-red carnelian of this period show a wide range in quality of workmanship but are, on the whole, much better shaped than those of the softer amber of the previous example. Moreover, the heavier strings, some of which contain beads as large as an inch and a half in diameter, were undoubtedly worn by men.

The agate, carnelian, and rock crystal used by these early French lapidaries may well have come from France, since these stones are to be found today on French soil.

Turning to Persia we find necklace beads, fashioned out of a number of stones, whose rough shape and lack of finish indicate an early period in the development of this civilization. From Afghanistan came the deep blue lapis lazuli, one of the earliest stones to be used by man, and here wrought into roughly angular unpolished forms, mere lumps of stone with the sides rubbed smooth. From Europe came caravans bearing amber from the Baltic which was carved into flat cylindrical beads with rounded sides, quite different in appearance from those of Central and Northern Europe. And most important and significant of all, from the ancient mines near Nishapur in northeastern Persia came the turquoise which has so long been associated with Iranian culture, and which was carved into necklace beads, whose rude, thickened disks suggest those made today by the Navajo and Pueblo Indians of our own Southwest.

Almost incredibly old are the long, cylindrical beads of Chinese jade which represent one of the earliest uses to which inhabitants of the “Flowery Kingdom” put their national gem stone.

Only one civilization other than China has made use of jade for personal adornment. Necklace beads of jade, irregularly
rounded but nicely polished, have been found among the remains of the Zapotec culture of ancient Mexico which flourished at about the beginning of our era. Earlier beads from Central America are very roughly fashioned out of rock crystal, and a very recent excavation has brought to light beautiful necklace jewelry from Mexico in which brilliant, translucent, green jade has been combined with gold in a manner that would do credit to a modern designer.

In the bazaars of India, Ceylon, and Burmah, there sit today, as their forebears have sat for centuries, the East Indian gem cutters, fashioning necklace beads from the gem stones of their countries. Sapphires, rubies, garnets, a rich wealth of color go into these necklaces, the elements of which are sometimes roughly faceted, but more often of somewhat irregular rounded shape, following the time-honored custom of the East, that strives to produce the largest and heaviest gem possible from the fragment of material used.

The necklaces which have come down to us from the higher development in culture of the later Egyptian dynasties show a very considerable scope in the materials used. Amethyst, lapis lazuli, carnelian, turquois, jasper, rock crystal, garnet, and even emerald were freely combined with gold to produce bead jewelry forms of great taste and charm.

It is quite significant that Egyptian gem cutters seemed unwilling to alter such regular crystal forms as the hexagonal prism of emerald by cutting them into round or prolate beads. These forms were usually preserved intact in the bead design, and whereas the beads fashioned from amethyst, carnelian, or amazon stone were made spherical or cylindrical, the six-sided prisms of emerald were simply pierced in the direction of their axes, and left otherwise unworked.

The reason for this may lie in the reluctance of the artificer to waste any of the material of the rarer and consequently more precious stone, or possibly some symbolism may have been attached to its regular natural shape. At least this treatment of emerald may be observed not only in Egyptian jewelry but also in that of Cyprus and Etruria.

From the necklace composed of strung beads it is but a step to one in which the roughly shaped stones were encased in a metal setting. In Egypt we find this advance taking place at quite an early stage, as instanced by an example in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where a small, square plaque of gold enclosing an oval carnelian forms the middle element of a double string of unset carnelian beads.
The Gallo-Roman people of France in the early centuries of our era fancied agate for their necklaces, some of the heavier of which were worn by men. These two come from the Department of Gard in Languedoc.

From very early times until approximately the period of Ptolemaic kings we find the Egyptians making use of a sort of mosaic of gem stones, turquois, and lapis lazuli, set in thin gold boxes, the latter being shaped to the design so that, when the whole was polished, it had somewhat the aspect of the cloisonné work of Russia.

The transition from such primitive combinations of gem stones with the precious metals, to the more elaborate settings of Greece, Rome, and the later cultures of Europe and Asia is both easy and obvious, and once made, the development of jewelry forms was simply a matter of that artistic progress which follows so closely upon historic and political progress. As the needs of an ever advancing civilization called for more and more varied ornamentation of dress and person in gold and silver, it was inevitable that these ornaments should be embellished with gem stones that had already became familiar to man through the medium of earlier and simpler jewelry forms.

A striking instance of this adaptation of the earlier to the later usage is to be found in the necklace that constitutes the ceremonial trapping of a Vizier of Morocco of the middle of the Eighteenth Century. The roughly rounded aquamarines that furnish the larger jewels for the medallion settings that constitute this regalia are pierced, clearly indicating that they were once strung together to form a necklace of beads of a much earlier and more primitive type; how much earlier we can only conjecture.

The use of various minerals as materials from which objects for personal adorn-
ment were made, ancient though this use is, does not constitute the only, nor even the most deep-seated side of the question of the antique use of gems. It is safe to assume that from the very earliest period, when people began to recognize the beauty of certain stones, they also began to ascribe to them certain supernatural properties as amulets and talismans. And as far back as we can trace, they wore some material token in the form of a stone to guard them from the ills of life, real or imaginary. The wearing of such amulets is, in all probability, older than the wearing of jewelry, and, no doubt, the one grew by insensible steps out of the other. It was essentially a natural and logical act for the primitive man who found an attractive or unusual bit of stone to ascribe to it occult powers. As he advanced in culture, he shaped these bits of stone into increasingly regular forms, and finally as an added fetish, he scratched on them images of his gods and invocations to them. A talisman was supposed to be endowed with wider and more general powers than was an amulet, the function of the latter being to ward off evil. The addition of a magical combination of words would make either a talisman or an amulet a “charm.”

Some of the earliest amulets of which we have any knowledge are the little stone cylinders that were used among the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Hittites, as seals. These cylinders, some of which date as far back as 4000 B.C., are carved from various minerals, such as steatite, serpentine, hematite, lapis lazuli, jasper, amazon stone, chalcedony, marble, and rock crystal. Many of these materials
are esteemed today for their beauty as mediums for small carvings, proving that modern taste in this matter is at least founded upon ancient precedent.

The engraving was of course incised, both because this was the easiest and most obvious way of engraving hard materials, and because the impression made by rolling such a seal over a suitable soft substance was more natural and more easily read.

Considerable skill was displayed by these early lapidaries in cutting their designs, which included figures of gods, men, and animals, as well as inscriptions in cuneiform characters. The inscription often gave the name of the wearer, the name of his father, and the name of his god. The significance of this sequence becomes apparent when we consider that the official name given to every man upon coming of age placed him under the protection of a god, who forthwith made his abode in the body of this particular man subject to his good behavior. But should he be so unfortunate as to sin against his fellow men or against the gods, the divine presence left him and he immediately became the prey of some one of the seven devils.

Asiatic cylindrical seals of this type were not set in rings as are those of our day, but were hung around the neck, or fastened on the arm. A typical example of a Babylonian cylinder from among the small but representative series in the Morgan Gem Collection, is carved from limpid rock crystal and is approximately 3000 years old. This is engraved with an image of the storm god Rammon, who was identical with the Rimmon of the Old Testament (2 Kings, v. 18). He is here represented in a short robe holding a scepter in one hand, and accompanied by his wife, Sahla, whose figure in a long, flounced dress is shown on both sides of him.
RICH AND COLORFUL

The necklace of a Vizier of Morocco of the period of about 1750. The aquamarine gems of the large medallions have been pierced and were at one time a string of beads like that shown on page 8.

In Egypt the most popular amulet was the well known scarabaeus or scarab, the somewhat conventionalized image of a large black beetle regarded as a symbol of resurrection and immortality, since it was believed that no female of this insect existed. These carved beetles were engraved, as were the Asiatic seals, the inscription being cut on the oval underside of the conventionalized figure in idiographic characters.

Scarabs were even more typically amulets than were the cylinder seals of Babylon and Assyria, for although they commonly bore the name of the wearer, they were in many instances inscribed with magical charms taken from the Book of the Dead. Beautifully worked funeral or heart scarabs were often made from green jasper, amethyst, lapis lazuli, amazon stone, carnelian and serpentine, while the more precious emerald and turquois were not without representation among these figures of the sacred beetle that replaced the heart in the mummies of the Egyptian dead.

It was believed that when the soul of the deceased came to be judged before Osiris, his heart was weighed in the balance held by Anubis against his good or evil deeds in life. Consequently the charm inscribed on a heart scarab invoked the gods of the underworld to deal leniently with the heart of the dead. An example inscribed on a scarab of green feldspar would read:

Oh ye gods who seize upon Hearts, and pluck out the whole Heart, and whose hands fashion anew the Heart of a person according to what he hath done, Lo now let that be forgiven to him by you.

Hail to you, Oh ye Lords of Everlasting time and Eternity.

Let not my Heart be torn from me by your fingers.

1 Quoted from The Magic of Jewels and Charms by Dr. George F. Kunz, p. 319.
A NECKLACE FROM ANCIENT CYPRUS

Showing a charming combination of gold with agate and carnelian beads carved as turtles. This use of gold and gem stones reflects strongly Egyptian influence. (Specimen in Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Let not my Heart be fashioned anew according to the evil things said against me.

For this Heart of mine is the Heart of the god of mighty names, of the great god, whose words are in his members, and who giveth free course to his Heart, which is within him. And most keen of insight is his Heart among the gods.

Ho to me, Heart of mine; I am in possession of thee, I am they master and thou art by me; fall not away from me; I am the dictator to whom thou shalt obey in the Netherworld.

Among the peoples that were influenced by Egyptian culture, the scarab gradually became more highly conventionalized, losing much of its resemblance to a beetle as it lost its symbolic and esoteric significance. Thus we have the scaraboid, an oval dome-shaped seal, inscribed on the flat underside as was the scarab, but no longer with the magic charms of Egypt. In other words the scaraboid, a purely ornamental engraved stone, is literally the "stepping stone" between the scarab and the modern form of seal. A form of engraved amulet that came into use in Persia about the Eighth Century, and
that reached its culmination in elaboration from the Sixteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries, was made from polished, flat slabs of chalcedony and carnelian, varying in size and shape, but rarely more than two and a half inches in longest dimensions. These Persian seals belonged to the Moslem culture, and since the Mohammedan code forbids the depicting of natural objects, the engravers of these amulets were restrained from using the symbolism employed by peoples of other faiths. As a consequence they all bear texts from the Koran inscribed in Arabic characters, the engraving in many instances being beautifully executed. The quaint Arabic letters that look like some glorified kind of shorthand, are highly decorative, and were embellished with loving care by the Moslem engravers.

The smaller and older examples are mostly oval or more rarely cushion-shaped and were lettered with incised}

**AMETHYST BEADS**
A necklace of the early Christian Era (4th–6th Centuries) showing strong Egyptian influence. (Specimen in Metropolitan Museum of Art)

**AN EARLY EGYPTIAN BROOCH**
Here the design is formed by carefully shaped pieces of turquoise and lapis lazuli, each set in a little box of gold. This gem mosaic was the forerunner of jewel settings. (Specimen in the Museum of the New York Historical Society)
characters often deeply cut as though for use as seals. The larger and more elaborate forms have a broad, heart-shaped outline, and are representative of the later period. In these, the lettering of the central panel is very slightly raised against a matte background composed of fine crossed lines, so that the inscription stands out on a polished surface against a dead one. The surrounding border is lettered with a longer text in smaller incised characters.

Nothing can be more appealing than the exquisite delicacy and detail of this engraving as revealed when the light strikes across the polished face of the lettering. The effect is much the same, and achieved in the same way, as that which one sees on an old engraved sword blade.

It is quite frequent among the engraved chalcedony amulets of both the oval and the heart-shaped types to find a short text, or sometimes only the name of the Prophet, occupying the center of the design, and a longer text wrought as a border or panel around it. If also we meet with considerable repetition, a text of notable efficacy as a charm being used on many amulets. Here is one from one of the later seals, now a part of the Morgan Gem Collection.

A CYLINDER SEAL
Carved from rock crystal in Babylon about 2000 b.c. At the left is shown the impression made by rolling the cylinder over a piece of soft clay.

A PERSIAN AMULET
Carved from chalcedony and engraved with texts from the Koran. The Arabic lettering has the effect of an intricate and beautiful decoration.

CENTER: And the Thunder declares His Glory with His Praise, and the angels also for awe of Him.

BORDER: In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the Merciful. Allah is He besides whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by whom all subsist. Slumber does not overtake him nor sleep. Whatever is in the Heavens, and whatever is in the Earth is His. Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what hath been before them, and what shall be after them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the Heavens and the Earth, and the upholding of them both burdens Him not. And He is the most high, the great.

A notable exception to the almost universal use of quartz for these Moslem seals, is an irregular slab of turquoise in the Morgan Gem Collection, five inches by three, engraved with about two thousand words.
NEARLY twenty-four hundred years ago Confucius, speaking of the “jewel of Heaven” said, “In ancient times men found the likeness of all excellent qualities in jade.”

Perhaps nothing can so vividly present to us the remote antiquity to which we must turn to find the beginnings of Chinese carved jade than the words “in ancient times” from the lips of this old sage. And it may not be amiss for us to enquire into the questions of how and why these orientals should regard this stone as the embodiment of all virtues.

Under the general term “jade” are included massive varieties of at least two mineral species—a massive pyroxene known as jadeite, having the composition of a soda alumina silicate, and a tough, compact amphibole, called nephrite, and corresponding in composition to a lime magnesia iron silicate. So closely do these mineral materials resemble each other in texture and outward characteristics that it is often difficult to distinguish them apart, especially when carved.

Of the two, jadeite is slightly the harder, having a hardness of 7 in the Mohs scale as compared with about 6.5 for nephrite.

A FINGERING PIECE

Of white jade, in which a brown-colored area has been used for the ears and face of the “happiness” bat. The bulk of the piece represents a bag of grain (for prosperity). Below the bat may be seen the cords which tie the mouth of the bag. The whole carving is wonderfully smooth to the touch. Whitlock Collection
Also the specific gravity of jadeite is rather higher than that of nephrite; 3.34 as compared with about 2.95-3.00.

By reason of its toughness and relative hardness, jade was a favorite material for the fashioning of implements employed by primitive man. Wherever jade was obtainable, either from a native source or through trade, we find men of the cultural stage corresponding to the late Neolithic era employing nephrite, and occasionally jadeite, as materials for celts, axes, and other primitive tools and weapons, much as the natives of New Zealand at present make use of their local nephrite. But, although such jade implements of early man have been found in many places throughout the world, there are but two regions where the use of this material has risen in cultural degree from the purely utilitarian to the decorative stage that places it among the ornamental stones.

In the portions of the tropical Americas comprising Southern Mexico, Yucatan, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and possibly Ecuador and Peru, the pre-Columbian cultures furnished many carved jade objects of decoration well within the scope of ancient jewelry. There are now no known deposits of either jadeite or nephrite in these countries, and at the time of the conquest of Mexico by Cortez, jade was so rare and so highly esteemed by the Aztecs that it...
constituted their most precious possession, worth many times its weight in gold.

It is, however, among the Chinese that the high estimation of jade places it above all other gemstones. And it is in China that we find the use of jade not only extending back into vast antiquity, but furnishing us with a means of tracing through the countless examples of both ancient and modern carved objects the development of a highly interesting and attractive expression of the lapidary art.

As far back as the period of the Chow dynasty of the Eleventh Century B.C., we find nephrite used for carved designs, decorated chiefly with geometric motives.

Although jade of this early period was originally of some shade of green, corresponding to nephrite as we know it today, the green color has, in many instances been altered to some shade of brown, ocher, or dull red. This change is purely superficial, affecting only a very thin layer of the surface, and is due to the action of the weather during long periods of time, the iron oxides, which originally colored the stone green or grayish-green, having been replaced by higher oxides of the ocher or umber shades. Since the oxidizing agencies producing this surface change of color are those that operate best in the upper layers of the soil, it follows that jade pieces which have been buried for long periods of time exhibit it in the highest degree.

Nephrite from local sources in Shensi and other Chinese provinces, or brought from Eastern Turkestan, or possibly from a deposit near Lake Baikal, furnished most of the jade of this period. In color the stone from these deposits varied from white and gray-green, through leaf-green to dark laurel-leaf-green, the depth of color increasing with the amount of iron contained in the nephrite. Some jadeite from Shensi and Yunnan provinces of China, and from Tibet was no doubt also used for Chow carvings, as for the worked jade of later periods. It is however, difficult to separate the jadeite of this culture from nephrite on a basis of color alone, particularly as many of the carvings in both materials have been altered in color through having been buried.

The tendency to supplant the geometric formality, characteristic of early jade carv-
ing, with a freer and more graceful ornamentation culminated in the highly elaborate carving of the K’ien Lung period (1644–1912), with its undercut relief and open-work patterns. At this time also the beautiful green jadeite, from the Mogaung district in Upper Burmah, began to be imported into China, and much enriched the materials available for Chinese expression in carved jade. This choicest of the jade varieties is also the best known to the western world under the name of “imperial jade.” It is never found in large masses, always in relatively small areas disseminated through white jadeite which fact accounts for the mottled and streaked distribution of color observed even in some of the finest and most highly prized pieces.

Aside from the semitransparent apple-green of the imperial jade, the colors that characterize this ornamental stone run the gamut of tints from the translucent white of “melting snow” or the more opaque “mutton fat” varieties through various shades of green, to deep “spinach”-green heavily mottled, and even to the black of chloromelanite.

Among the rarer colors may be ranked the light ochre yellow of some Burmese jadeite, a blood red, met with in patches in white jadeite, and a still rarer light violet or mauve. A beautiful jadeite from Yunnan province is colored a mottled, opaque, grass-green, very much

THE FIVE POISONS
An amulet carved from white jade, representing a toad, a serpent, a spider, a lizard, and a centipede, the five venomous creatures whose images protect from evil. Whitlock Collection

WHITE JADE DISK REPRESENTING THE MOON
The white rabbit, symbolizing the Yin principle, is compounding the pills of immortality in a mortar. Drummond Gift Collection
A DRAGON
A white jade figurine of a dragon with somewhat lion-like proportions. Whitlock Collection

like the color of malachite, but differing from the latter stone in texture.

With increased elaboration in the carving of jade by the Chinese lapidaries there grew up a symbolism involving the subjects depicted in this art. Just as among more primitive people we find glyptic artists depicting gods and heroes, sacred animals and supernatural attributes, so among the Chinese carvers of jade we find myth and legend, philosophic principle and ritualistic symbols used freely and developed with increasing conventionalization as the forms and patterns were

A HORNY AND WINGED DRAGON
Intricately carved belt ornament of white jade. Note the elaborate pierced carving in the background. Drummond Collection Gift

handed down through many generations of artists.

To those of us who have seen large assemblages of Chinese carved jade a very familiar figure is that of a tall, graceful woman, represented seated or standing, and holding either a vase or a lotus flower in her hand. She is Kwan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, one who hears the cry or prayer of the world. According to the beautiful legend of the Chinese Buddhists,

DRAGON, HIGHLY CONVENTIONALIZED
Carved in old jade; of the period of the Chou dynasty. Note the archaic square turns of the body and the birdlike head substituted for a tail. Drummond Gift Collection

she was about to become an immortal, but turned back from the very gateway of the Western Paradise, when she heard a cry of anguish rising from earth. So by renunciation she achieved immortality in the hearts of the sorrowing throughout the centuries. Her shrine and her image is to be found in every Chinese temple, as
her prayer is always on the lips of countless mothers: "Great mercy, great pity, save from misery, save from evil, broad, great, efficacious, responsive Kwan Yin Buddha."

Whenever one finds six little men and two women carved in jade be sure that they are the famous Eight Immortals of Taoism. These legendary characters probably at one time actually lived, at least we have excellent reasons to regard some of them as historical personages. According to very old Taoist legends all of the Eight became immortal and each may be recognized by some article that he or she wears or carries, as the crutch and gourd full of magic medicines of Li T'ich-Kuai, or the magic feather fan with which Chung-li Ch'uan fans the souls of those who are to be immortalized back into their bodies. Some of the Eight Immortals are depicted alone, as Chang-Kuo who is shown seated on his marvelous donkey, which folds up like a piece of paper when not in use, and his bundle of magic rods, with which he wrought all manner of necromancy.

Chinese legend relates that long ago in the nebulous period that preceded the Chow dynasty there occurred a tremendous battle of the Gods in which demigods, Buddhas, and Immortals, not to mention fire dragons and other wonderful creatures, participated. It was an epic struggle, a sort of Chinese Siege of Troy or Mahabharata in the course of which Chun T'î, a Taoist warrior much gifted in magic, transformed his adversary into a red, one-eyed peacock upon whose back he rode through the sky to the Western Paradise. A little jade carving, no larger than a half dollar depicts this episode with detail and fidelity, even to the single eye of the peacock.

Disks of white jade sometimes show carved in relief a rabbit standing on its hind legs beside a conventionalized tree, engaged in pounding something in a mortar. The subject of this design emanates from the legend of Heng O, the wife of Shen I, the divine archer. She ate one of the pills of immortality and flew to the moon. Seized with a violent fit of coughing, she presently coughed up the coating of the pill she had eaten, which immediately became a rabbit as white as purest...
jade. Thus was created the ancestor of the yin, the negative or female principle of universal life, whose prototype is the moon.

The essence of the Yang or male principle resides in the person of the dragon, that mythical animal or being endowed by the Chinese mind with supernatural powers which are generally assumed to be exercised for good rather than evil, as when a dragon was invoked in times of drought to bring fertilizing rain. In this sense dragons were looked upon as veritable deities, and according to Berthold Laufer the manifold types and variations of dragons met with in ancient Chinese art are representative of different forces of nature, that is, of different deities. In a measure this would explain why dragons are so univer-
sally represented in jade carvings, and why they vary so richly and amazingly. Some are full-bodied like lions, while some are attenuated, convoluted, and very reptilian indeed. Some have branching horns and others are decorated with manes that are singularly like human hair. An old Chinese classic ascribes nine “resemblances” to the dragon: its horns are like those of a deer, its head that of a camel, its eyes are those of a devil, it has the neck of a snake, the abdomen of a cockle shell, the scales of a carp, the claws of an eagle, the soles of its feet are like those of a tiger, and its ear like those of an ox. Even in the matter of claws this miraculous beast holds to no fixed rule for, although the imperial dragon has five to each of its four feet, ordinary dragons have but four.

Perhaps because of the fact that Chinese designs and decorative motives

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A GROUP OF "WHEELS OF LIFE" CARVED IN WHITE JADE
Two have movable centers and can be rotated by holding the loose central piece between thumb and forefinger. The other one has a swastika for a center. Whitlock Collection
have been handed down from very ancient times, Chinese artists have learned to express these designs in highly conventionalized treatment. In no instance is this more obvious than in the treatment of the dragon in carved jade. His sinuous body has taken on angular bends or perhaps more frequently has divided and branched like a heraldic mantle. His feet have disappeared, or where present, the toes sometimes spread like the spokes of a wheel, the claws joining on to each other in a circle. Often a dragon holds or supports a round object like a pearl, which really represents the sun, prototype of the Yang.

Often associated with a dragon in designs of carved jade, is the phoenix, a highly conventionalized bird which ordinarily symbolizes prosperity. The phoenix, however, also stands for passionate love and is consequently an appropriate and symbolic love gift.

Much the same symbolism is attached to a pair of fishes or carp, whereas one carp often stands for power or literary eminence. Chang Tao-ling, who may be considered the actual founder of modern Taoism, is represented as riding on a tiger under whose paw are crushed the five venomous creatures: the lizard, snake, spider, toad, and centipede. Sometimes these five are represented together in carved jade in an amulet known as the “Five Poisons.”

When Buddhism was introduced into China from India in the Han dynasty in the first century of our era, it brought with it a very interesting series of symbols, known as the “auspicious signs,” most of which were said to have been stamped in the footprint of Buddha. These Buddhist symbols were favorite forms among the lapidaries of the Kien Lung period, and are often met with carved in white jade of that epoch. One of the most characteristic of them is the Wheel of Life, a disk represented within a disk, often

**A SYMBOL OF IMMORALITY**

Highly conventionalized butterfly carved from white jade

**TWO AUSSPIOUS SYMBOLS**

A peach blossom, also symbolic of immortality has been made a part of this butterfly design

**THE MYSTIC KNOT**

A very popular Buddhist symbol, carved as a buckle in white jade

Note the swastika in the center of the closed loops. Whitlock Collection
wrought with a very cleverly executed movable center about which the whole device may be turned. In this way we have the so-called "prayer wheels" dear to the hearts of Tibetan Buddhists in whose reverend fingers they revolve, in a measure taking the place of the bead rosary. The "spokes" connecting the two disks may number six or eight and the design of the central movable disk may represent the swastika, or the immortality symbol, or even the mystic yang yin.

Another very popular auspicious sign is the lotus, either represented with its leaves, embellishing other designs, or growing from a jar or vase, the jar being yet another of the eight treasures of Buddha.

A symbol much in favor is that "mystic knot," which is represented as having no beginning and no end. Not only was this sign one of those found in Buddha's footprint, but it is also said to have appeared on the breast of Vishnu. The Chinese, who love to ascribe auspicious meaning to their symbols, sometimes call it the "Knot of Everlasting Happiness."

Returning to the Taoist type of symbols, we have the magic gourd, sometimes depicted alone and sometimes accompanied by a monkey. In the legend of the monkey that became a god this famous gourd was the prized possession of the Demons who opposed Sun Hou-tzu, the Monkey Fairy, and his master, and was capable of containing a thousand people. Sun by a clever device exchanged it for a worthless gourd, which he made the Demons believe could contain the entire universe.

Because butterflies symbolize immortality in Chinese, as they do in Greek mythology, carvings of butterflies were buried with the dead, and no doubt the beautiful white jade butterflies of the K'ien Lung period are survivals of a symbol handed down from Han time. Like most of the other Chinese carved forms they have become highly conventional, often with peach blossoms and swastikas represented on the extended wings.

In the midst of the Western Paradise on the border of the Lake of Gems is the orchard of immortal peach trees whose fruit ripens every six thousand years. These celestial peaches have the mystic virtue
WHITE JADE GIRDLE PENDANTS

Carved with the luck character. To the left is shown the character unembellished, on the right it occupies the center of the design surrounded by a gourd, a mystic knot, a sun disk, etc. Whitlock Collection

of conferring long life, and thus by eating them the Immortals renew their immortality. That is why the Peach of Immortality is so often carved in jade, and why the immortal peach blossom is such an auspicious symbol.

Almost equally auspicious as one of the magic emblems of Taoism, is the Fungus of Immortality which was supposed to grow only on the sacred mountain Hua Shan in the province of Shensi. The contorted and involved shape of this miraculous plant lends itself well to the designs of girdle pendants and it was often carved in the white jade of the K’ien Lung period.

Not only are the Chinese fond of auspicious symbols, but they love a rebus, or as we would say, a pun. The Chinese word for happiness is *fu*, and the same word pronounced a little differently means a bat. So a carved bat becomes a symbol of happiness, and is very generally used either alone or combined with other favorable symbolic designs. Should you meet a design involving *five* bats you are to read it as meaning the “Five Happineses,” that is to say “Old Age, wealth, health, love of virtue, and a natural death.”

It would probably never occur to any one but a Chinese to use the somewhat complex graphic symbols of the Chinese language in a decorative way. And yet treated conventionally, as the Chinese treat all of their designs, these characters are capable of developing into balanced and well proportioned decorative forms.

One of the oldest as well as one of the most decorative of these “Sho marks” is the character that stands for longevity, or to give it a more mystic significance, immortality. The figure on page 14 shows the modern Chinese character for longevity and a series of its conventionalized variants mostly derived from jade carvings. This seems to be a favorite symbol for use as the movable center of the “prayer wheel” mentioned a few pages back.

Another character very popular with the carvers of girdle pendants in white jade is that which signifies happiness. This is, of course, often combined with
the happiness bat, as well as with dragons and other auspicious symbols. An interesting variation is the “doubling” of the symbol by representing two happiness characters side by side, adjacent parts being connected.

The jade pieces carved with this “double happiness” are appropriate gifts for newly married couples, and convey a wish that their union may be a long and felicitous one.

A somewhat rare conventionalized character in carved jade, rare because it does not lend itself readily to symmetrical design, is the one that signifies luck or good fortune. In the writer’s experience it has been used either alone, without decorative embellishments, or in a somewhat haphazard assemblage of symbols.

Certain designs lend themselves specially to the smooth, rounded contours of fingering pieces, such as are dear to the hearts of contemplative Celestials, who love to sense their cool, delicious feeling through what is to an Occidental the least developed of the senses. Perhaps if we cultivated a love for jade fingering pieces we would think more. Who knows?