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Auctioned Chinese Antiques



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## **Guide to the Use of This Series**

1. "Highlights of Auctioned Chinese Antiques" comprises five volumes, namely, "Bamboo, Wood, Ivory and Horn Carvings", "Porcelain", "Jadeware", "Bronzeware" and "Ancient Furniture". Each volume contains around 150 representative items put up for auction from 1995 to 2010 at auctions held by dozens of auction companies from cities like New York, Nagel, London, Hong Kong, Macau, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Kunming, Chengdu and Jinan. The selection of the items is based on the style, texture, form, decorative pattern, workmanship, function, cultural implication and value of the antiques in question, including some items which have not yet been transacted.

2. Each volume retains the original record of auctions and the items are arranged in order of dynasty, name, dimension, transaction price (or estimate price), auction company, date of transaction and item analysis.

3. Due to different origins of auction companies, the prices of the antiques in US dollar, Euro, Great Britain Pound, Hong Kong dollar or Taiwan dollar, have been converted into RMB according to current exchange rates.



# Preface

With the in-depth research of academic circles on jades both unearthed from ancient tombs and handed down through the ages, the collection of jades has become an unprecedented craze, and in some cases, the transaction of jades has become a means for exorbitant profits. In spite of a number of fine items in private transactions and public auctions held by auction companies, the phenomena of passing off shoddy items as certified items, new items as old items, fake items as genuine items, those of later times as those of earlier times and items of other materials as items of jade do exist. This has thrown the messy jade market into considerable disorder. To give our readers a better understanding of the jade market and the reliability of their collected articles so that their collections would be worth their value, we recommend the following points of attention in the purchase and collection of jades.

## I . A good understanding of the definitions of jade and jades

A prerequisite for the study and collection of jades is the understanding of the concepts of jade and jades in order to distinguish jade from stone, glass and other jade-like materials. As is put by Mr. Yang Boda, "Jade is a special kind of mineral with social and jewel values, selected by people in their practice of choosing stone materials for the making of implements over thousands upon thousands of years." [1] According to *Shuowen Jiezi* (an analytical dictionary of Chinese Characters), Yu (jade) refers to "Stone of Beauty". *Ci Hai* (a complete Chinese dictionary) defines Yu (jade) as "smooth and lustrous stone of beauty". This is what we now call Yu (jade) in a broad sense, which includes not only Hetian jade and jadeite, but also Xiuyan jade, Nanyang jade, crystal, agate, amber, coral, turquoise, lapis and other traditional jade. Modern mineralogy divides jade into hard jade (jadeite) and soft jade (nephrite, mainly Hetian jade from Xinjiang), the latter being the definition of Yu in a narrow sense. In China, Hetian jade from Xinjiang was used on a large scale after the Shang Dynasty and in times preceding that, raw materials for jades in many places had basically been stone of beauty of various kinds acquired locally. Therefore, we can not simply refer to modern mineralogical standards when defining Yu (jade), but should proceed from historical perspectives, respect traditional customs, as well as study and collect jades with Yu (jade) in the broad sense.

We hold that jades in the broad sense should have the following three features: meeting the requirement of “stone of beauty” in terms of raw materials; having the basic shape and pattern of typical jades in terms of shape; and being produced with special workmanship and techniques, such as milling, grinding and drilling, rather than with ordinary stone making technology [2].

## **II . Ability to distinguish various raw materials and the basic features of jades from different time periods**

After understanding the concepts of jade and jades, there should be an overall knowledge of the attributes and time periods of various jades. Hetian jade is the most influential in Chinese jade culture for its thousands of years of history as the earliest and most often used jade. Jadeite from Myanmar was not imported to China in large quantities until after the mid-Qing Dynasty. Xiuyan jade from Xiuyan County, Liaoning Province, falls into soft jade (nephrite) and serpentine, which were used in large quantities during the Hongshan Culture Period and were rarely found in the historical periods that followed. However, it is now excavated on a large scale and large numbers of artifacts are made of it. Due to its great outputs and low hammer prices, many people use it to make imitated and fake jades. Qinghai jade and Russian jade, excavated over the past thirty years, are both soft jade (nephrite) with a tremolite content slightly lower than that of Hetian jade, but it has been storming the Hetian jade market and many people just mix them up to cheat customers. Therefore, the ability to distinguish various raw materials is extremely important for the appraisal and collection of jades.

Jade collectors should also have a good understanding of the origins, varieties, decorative arts (including modelings and patterns) of jades and the development (history of jade development) of jade-carving technology (workmanship). According to archeological findings, the earliest jade articles found in China date back to the early Neolithic Period about 7,000 to 8,000 years ago. Jades were widely found in the south and north of the Yangtze River in the mid-Neolithic Period, and towards the end of this period, they were popular in the vast semicircular area from the Hongshan Culture of the Liao River valley in the northeast to the Shixia Culture of Guangdong in the south. Early jades were used as personal ornaments, implements or properties, but they were by and by associated with primitive religions and primitive worship and were gradually used for ritual purposes. The development of ancient Chinese jades witnessed three peaks. The prehistoric jades, jades of the Hongshan Culture, jades of Lingjiatan and jades of Liangzhu Culture marked the first peak of the development of ancient Chinese jades. The second peak made its appearance in the Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties. With the deification and the rise of status of jade, jade ritual objects became very popular in the society at the beginning of the Shang Dynasty. However, owing to the impact of the man-centered doctrine of the various schools of thought in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Period, the number of jade ritual objects decreased, but the number of jade ornaments increased dramatically. With the appearance of jade sword decorations, belt hooks and other personal ornaments, jade production entered the practical realm and reached its peak in the Han Dynasty. The time period of the Three Kingdoms Period, the Western Jin Dynasty, the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Southern and Northern Dynasties witnessed a decline in the development of jade. The unification and prosperity of the country during the Sui and Tang Dynasties brought about another recovery of jade-carving technology. But the good time was short-lived. After the fall of the Tang Dynasty, there were the Five Dynasties, in which the development of jades slowed down. With the reunification of the country, the prosperity of urban economy and the expansion of the citizen stratum in the Song Dynasty, the development of jades entered a period of



prosperity and jades became more and more secular and ornamental. The development of ancient Chinese jades reached its climax in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, marking the third peak of Chinese jade making history.

After thousands of years of inheritance and development, the varieties, decorative patterns and modelings of Chinese jades were continuously enriched and developed. It developed from the primitive simplicity of prehistoric times to the vigorous and unconstrained style in the Qin and Han Dynasties, and then to the exquisite, delicate, extensive and profound form in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and experienced the historical process of "object to deity to man to object", making it a different product of different time periods, different places and different ideologies. In addition, the development of jade art was subjected to the impact of the artistic and cultural trends of a specific historical time period. Jade art fell into the category of arts and crafts and it was by no means isolated in its development. It was influenced by the painting and carving arts of the same time period, and was, at the same time, closely connected with other forms of arts and crafts. A closer observation reveals that the jades, ceramics, goldwares, silverwares, bronzewares, etc. of a specific time period had a lot in common in modeling and decorative pattern. For example, most of the decorative patterns of jades in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties were similar to those of bronzewares in the time period involved. For another example, jades in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, influenced by the carving and painting arts based on the realism of the Qin and Han Dynasties, presented the following characteristics. The modeling of jade implements, influenced by that of goldwares and silverwares, was elegant, poised, plump and smooth; animal-shaped jade carving, nurtured by carving art, had distinctive features with bulging muscle; and figure jade carving was simple and vivid. This reflected a major breakthrough of realistic jade art in the subject matters of decoration. From all these, we can see that the development of jade art was closely related to the artistic trends of the time period concerned.

Jade carving progressed with the development of the times. The separation of jade making technology from prehistoric stone making technology marked the beginning of jade making, and the use of the emery wheel, a major tool for jade carving, indicated that jade making entered a period of maturity. Jade carving technologies, such as cutting, modeling, carving in relief, carving in intaglio, embossing, circular carving, piercing, drilling, using of original color and shape, running ring, curved composition, gold and silver inlaying, gem embedding, and polishing, etc. became more and more exquisite and skilled with the progress of the times and the development of productivity. The history of Chinese jade development is in fact the history of its jade making technology. A good understanding of the varieties and features, together with the typical modeling, decorative art and carving technology of different time periods, of jade through the ages is a foundation for the study and collection of jades.

How can we achieve a good mastery of the basic characteristics of jades of different time periods? We think that this should start with the study of jades. We must keep abreast of the latest results and development of jade researches in academic circles, as this will serve as a scientific and theoretical guide for the evaluation and collection of jades. With the dramatic increase of unearthed jades in the past thirty years, there have been a "jade" craze and a "collection" craze. The study of ancient jades, which had fallen into oblivion for decades, has attracted the attention of the academic circles, various kinds of academic seminars on jades have been held every year, collections of essays and books on jades with considerable academic value have been published, and countless

papers have been published in a myriad of academic journals. These publications have presented studies of either jades excavated with scientific approaches or ancient jades handed down through the ages, which have been examined and evaluated by cultural relic appraisal committees at national or provincial levels. These appraisals can be regarded as criteria for determining jades, [3]and the mastery of these criteria will be of great importance for the study and collection of jades. It is worth mentioning here that publications by major standard jade collecting institutions, such as museums, archeological institutes and cultural relic shops, are very influential and authoritative. [4]These works, excellent in both illustration and text with typical items of all time periods, can be taken as the criteria for the naming and the determination of the time periods and the value of jades. Besides, jade exhibitions in many big museums, such as Beijing Palace Museum, Shanghai Museum, Capital Museum, Nanjing Museum and Henan Museum, provide people with good opportunities to face each collected object and perceive all its features. In a word, a closer look at the real objects and pictures of jades and an in-depth study of their cultural connotation and related issues are undoubtedly a great help for the mastery of the fundamental characteristics of jades of all ages and for the grasp of the essentials of jade appraisal. Only in this way can one be equipped with penetrating eyes to face the messy jade market and distinguish real jades from fake ones at first sight.

### III. Ability to differentiate imitations of ancient jades

With the rise of epigraphy following the Song Dynasty, the collection of ancient jades became the order of the day. However, the limited number of ancient jades could not meet the demand of the ever-increasing number of collectors, and imitations rose to the moment. The jade market was flooded with imitations of ancient jades, and, through development in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, series of jade imitation facilities came to the fore. Ways of making imitations of ancient jades were introduced in a number of books, such as *Essentials of Archeological Investigation* by Cao Zhao of the Ming Dynasty, *Taste and Appraisal* by Gao Lian of the Ming Dynasty, *An Illustrated Account of Ancient Jades* by Wu Dacheng of the Qing Dynasty, *Epoch of Jade* by Chen Xing of the Qing Dynasty and *Identifying Ancient Jades* by Liu Datong of the Republic of China. Jades of these time periods are imitations, but there is collection value because they fall into the category of ancient jades.

We should now pay close attention to the making of modern imitations because, made of inferior jade with modern technology, they are low in cost, real in imitation and tricky to customers. As far as we know, there are countless tricks and sophisticated means in counterfeiting ancient jades. The following are features of this practice. First, total imitation of ancient jades. Second, partial imitation with slight modifications. This practice has been common since ancient times, especially with some jades of the Qing Dynasty, in which ancient modeling was partially imitated but were not made to seem ancient. However, in order to gloss over their intention and to fool the customers, modern imitators made some changes in the patterns so that people were totally confused by these works. Third, splicing. This is a method applied in all imitations, in which parts of different objects are joined together to make a new product. When you examine it, you will see that every part is good. But the overall style is neither fish nor fowl, and there are even cases in which parts of objects from different time periods with different styles are joined together. Fourth, imagination. This kind of objects looks somewhat ancient, but rests on sheer imagination. Its bizarre modeling and seemingly ancient workmanship confuse the customers as to what it is and what it is used for. The sellers can always fabricate many fascinating stories about it. Therefore, special attention should be paid to objects of this kind. Fifth, blurring. This is a method to make jades



seem ancient, in which decorative patterns on the surface are blurred and those in the details are dim and vague to give the false impression that the ancient jade ware has been eroded through the ages. There are often cases in which some patterns of these objects, which should not be blurred, are dim and vague. The cereal patterns on some imitations of bi (circular jade with a hole in the center) and huang (semi-circular jade pendant) are blurred by artificial means. Sixth, redecoration. This means adding ancient decorative patterns to ordinary jade wares, for example, adding symmetric curved patterns or coiled dragon patterns of the Warring States Period to square pads. So when identifying ancient jade wares, one should not only examine the pattern but the modeling as well to make sure that the pattern agrees with the modeling. Seventh, dyeing. Artificial dyeing is usually applied to make imitations look ancient. Many objects have more than one color, the most commonly seen being eroded lacquer black, jujube red and lime white. Eroded lacquer black is dark brown and jujube red is dark red, a heavy color that can cover the original color of the jade material. The counterfeiter burns the surface of the jade ware till it is mottled, and then applies this color to the pits. He may also burn the surface of the jade ware till it is white and translucent, or make spots in the shape of lime paste or patches on the surface of the jade ware. Eighth, special modeling. Oversized or commonly seen objects with complex compositions usually give people a special sense. If they look similar to jade wares in the pictures you have seen or are partially the same with some bronzewares or ceramics, we must make a careful study of them to determine whether they are modeled after ancient objects.

Materials for modern imitations are generally Xiuyan jade (Nan yang jade), Dushan jade, Xinjiang jade, Qinghai jade, Russian jade, Xinjiang greenish-white jade and Gobi Desert jade.

The following are commonly seen methods of making imitations after ancient objects:

Acid etching. Jade is soaked in the solution of hydrofluoric acid, nitric acid, sulfuric acid and hydrochloric acid, and then it is heated and dyed, chrysoidine used for red, potassium permanganate for yellow, and mercuric sulfide for black. The effect varies with the proportion of acid, time of soaking and ingredients. Finally, the jade is coated with tooth and bone powder, epoxy resin (phosphorus benzene diformate acid, DBP and ethylenediamine) or crystal clear lacquer, and then is polished to produce a glass luster.

Burning. Jade is coated with sodium hydroxide and wrapped up with calcium oxide (lime), and then is smoldered in sawdust for two days. It becomes chicken bone white when it is taken out. If it is dipped into cold water while it is hot, it will acquire ox-hair patterns; if potassium permanganate is added to the cold water, the jade will acquire blood-red ox-hair patterns. If dyeing is needed, the jade is dipped into the dye while it is hot (300 degrees Celsius). Finally, it is polished with lard on abrasive paper.

Baking. An imitation is degreased through alkaline water boiling, prune water boiling, acid etching or alkaline etching. Then it is coated with organic or inorganic dye or pigment and baked over an electric stove or coal stove, or in a baking oven to bake the color into the interior of the jade. Blend colors are mainly used for imitations of this kind, for example, the use of shoe polish for black, brown sugar for red, and curcuma longae or dragon's blood for yellow brown.

High pressure. After jade is polished, mercuric sulfide (black) or ferric chloride (yellow) is applied to parts of the jade to be dyed and is wrapped up with a mixture of certain proportions of sodium hydroxide,



sodium carbonate and sodium silicate, together with lard. Then, it is put in a closed stainless autoclave with high pressure (80 to 120 atmospheric pressures) and high temperature (160 to 200 degrees Celsius) for four days. Finally, it is taken out of the autoclave, blown dry with hot carbon dioxide wind and reduced with sulfuric acid. In this way, the jade surface is grayish white, glass-like glossy and lustrous.

Smoking. Imitations are made by means of smoking, in the same way as white walls are smoked dark and grey. The main colors are yellow, brown and black to give the wrong impression that the new jade is age-old. The jade can be smoked in a kiln or an oven with smoke from firewood and oil, and the time of smoking varies. After the smoking is done, the jade is cleaned and the soot is wiped up. The smoke, oil and other impurities in the fissures of the jade and the grinding slits on its surface, together with the yellowish color of the surface, give the impression that this imitation is an ancient object.

Frying. In this method, oil is heated till it gives off smoke, and then an imitated jade at normal temperature or one just out of an refrigerator is quickly put into the hot oil. The oil seeps into the jade through the fissures and the jade takes on the color of the oil. This method can also be used to make ox-hair imitations. The oil can be either colored, such as soybean oil and cottonseed oil, or colorless, such as walnut oil and hair oil. Colorants can be added to colorless oil.

Boiling. Jade is boiled for a long period of time in stale water or in water with various pigments, so that the jade will take on the color of the dirt in the water.

Mottling. An imitated jade is heated to 300 degrees Celsius, a pigment is dripped onto the hot jade with a dropper and mottles form on the jade. Hematic mottles can be formed if potassium permanganate is dripped.

Clay coating. Clay is made into mud and coated onto the jade. When the mud is dry, the fluid mud on the surface of the jade is wiped off and some is left in the fissures, so that the jade looks like an unearthed object.

Imitations after ancient objects can be made in kilns, baking ovens, microwave ovens, coal stoves, electric stoves and firewood stoves, and auxiliary materials include dried apricot, prune, curcuma longae, dragon's blood, grass paperboard, castor oil, sawdust, shoe polish, asphalt, brown sugar, spice, carrion, various kinds of acid and alkaline salt, organic paints and pigments, etc.

If one has a good understanding of the features and methods of counterfeiting imitations in all ages, especially those of modern imitations, and has the ability to make judgments on imitated jadewares, he will be able to avoid failures on the jade ware market. This is an indispensable accomplishment for jade ware collectors.

#### **IV. A good knowledge of the jade ware auction market in the past years and the trend of investment**

From 1992, when the auction market for works of art started, till now, jadewares, as articles of arts and crafts, have occupied an important position in the auction market. According to the statistics of Yachang Artnet, tens of thousands of jadewares have been sold through auction companies of all kinds

from 1994 to the present. The time periods of these jadewares cover all cultures of the Neolithic Period, the Xia, Shang, Western Zhou Dynasties, the Spring and Autumn Period, the Warring States Period, the Qin, the Western Han, the Eastern Han Dynasties, the Three Kingdoms Period, the Wei, Jin, Southern, Northern, Sui, Tang Dynasties, the Five Dynasties, the Song, Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Republic of China and the modern times. These include almost all the varieties of jadewares throughout history, comprising ritual articles, weapon and sword decorations, burial objects, furnishing articles, household implements, articles of the study, plaque-, figure-, animal- and plant-shaped ornaments and curios. These are a reflection of the development of Chinese jadewares over the past thousands of years and a demonstration of the jade carving techniques and artistic styles of all time periods throughout history. All these can serve as a vivid and lively textbook of Chinese jade carving art.

A careful study of the auctioned jadewares of recent years reveals the following characteristics.

First, though there are jadewares of all historical time periods, the overwhelming majority dates back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties, among which the bulk is from the Qing Dynasty, so they have distinctive characteristics of that time. Jadewares tracing back to the reign of Emperor Qianlong sell best. Of the top 100 auctioned jadewares from 1996 to 2005, 82 are from the Qing Dynasty, of which 52 are from the reign of Emperor Qianlong. The top 10 include 3 jadewares from the reign of Emperor Kangxi and 6 jadewares from the reign of Emperor Qianlong. One of the 52 jadewares from the reign of Emperor Qianlong, named "Hetian white jade boundless longevity bowl with running rings and double-dragon handles", was sold by Hong Kong Christie's in 2004 at the hammer price of RMB 20,487,000, ranking third among the top 100 auctioned jadewares. Therefore, investing in jadewares from the reign of Emperor Qianlong is a wise choice.

Second, the hammer prices of jadewares have been rising each year. The hammer price of a specific item has been rising as time goes by. A case in point is the "White jade figure of the concubine" (Auction number: 945) from the mid-Qing Dynasty. When it was sold by Beijing Hanhai Auction Company on November 15, 1996, the hammer price was RMB 396,000; when it was sold by Christie's on November 27, 2007 (Auction number: 1573), the hammer price rose to RMB 748,125; and when it was sold by Zhejiang Qiantang Auction Company on July 3, 2010 (Auction number: 241), the hammer price soared to RMB 1,456,000. Such phenomena are often seen on the auction market. Therefore, a specific jadeware which appears time and again on the investment and auction market or a similar jadeware has a wide margin of appreciation.

Third, there are a lot of fake artifacts and imitations on the auction market. This is associated with the overheated collection of and investment in ancient jade in recent years. The great values of ancient jade and insufficient supply on the antique market have led to the mass production of imitations. Imitations run rampant on the jadeaware market and the jadeaware auction market is also seriously affected. In recent years in particular, large numbers of imitated jadewares have been found on the jadeaware auction market. Investors must have sharp eyes in order to avoid losses. Fresh investors should select jadewares of quality material and fine workmanship. Good articles are made of genuine materials, which are usually not used in imitations. It is suggested that one should not invest in jade from remote antiquity (before the Han Dynasty), as, from a rational perspective, it is impossible for such jade to appear in large amount on the market. It will also be a good choice to reinvest in excellent modern works of art by famous jade carvers



or those of quality materials and exquisite workmanship. Jade is a nonrenewable resource, quality jade material has considerable value, and jade carved by famous carvers can be very expensive.

Fourth, the hammer prices of jadewares are conditioned by many factors. Generally speaking, even for jadewares of the same category, quality and color, the more ancient ones are more expensive than more recent ones, ones with bigger materials are more expensive than ones with smaller materials, and ones by famous masters are more expensive than ones by average craftsmen. Hammer prices of jadewares of the same time period vary with their category, shape, workmanship, technique, function, use and texture. In addition, the hammer prices are also influenced by collectors' personal penchant. Collectors must have an understanding of the auctioned jadewares in recent years in their investment analysis. The almanacs and a series of books on the auctioned jadewares of recent years, published by Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, are excellent both in illustration and text, and present in-depth analyses of major auctioned jadewares or offer records of their basic information. All these are an account of the real situation of the auction market, which provides an information platform for collectors and enthusiasts to get to know the jade ware auction market and to have a direct perception of the varieties, quantities and hammer prices of the auctioned jadewares in recent years. As a direct reflection of the market, one shortcoming lies in the fact that some modern imitations of high transaction hammer prices are included in these publications. This requires collectors to distinguish them from ancient articles. After that, collectors must make a thorough comparison of the potential articles for investment to determine the range of hammer prices for their collections.

In short, only when one acts after he sizes up the market conditions and the trend of investment can he reduce unnecessary losses and get genuine objects at fair hammer prices.

This book includes more than 150 typical jade objects auctioned in the past ten-odd years. It deals with jadewares in the broad sense (except for jadeite, which is to be dealt with in another book) and divides the varieties of different time periods into six categories, namely, ritual objects, weapon and sword decorations, jade burial objects, furnishings and household implements, articles of the study, as well as ornaments and curios. When choosing objects under each category, we have managed to pick out those with the distinctive features of the time periods concerned and those with considerable hammer prices, made a thorough analysis of each item in terms of texture, shape, pattern, technique, style of the time, function, cultural connotation and value, and come up with the essentials of appraising each item, with the purpose of helping our readers understand the situation of jadewares on the auction market, learn the methods of appraising ancient jade and develop their ability to differentiate ancient jadewares with the aid of the analyses of typical jadewares in this book.

Due to the limited size of this book, some varieties and items rarely seen on the auction market are not included. We welcome and appreciate any advice and suggestion from our readers on the errors and oversights in the book.

## Notes:

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