

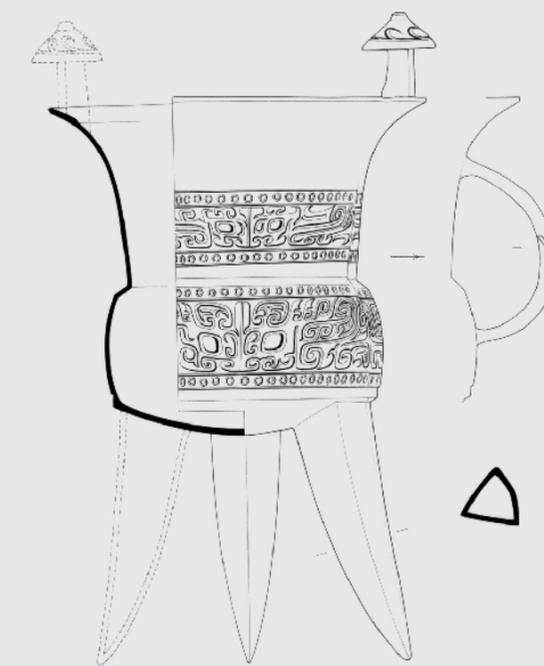


罍 **Jia** Cat. 10
Period I of Middle Shang Dynasty, H. 28.5 cm

The body of this wine-pouring vessel consists of a convex lower part and a concave upper part that flares outward to the rim, making an unusual kind of S-shape. The three hollow-pointed legs are open into the body and not quite triangular in cross-section (fig. 1). The two inner surfaces are convex, while the exterior has two symmetrical facets separated by a central casting seam. These central lines of the legs align with the three seam lines in the two registers of decoration and through the two posts and the bow-shaped handle. The two small, capped posts, nearly rectangular in cross-section, are decorated with a whirligig pattern of intaglio lines and cylindrical finials. They sit on a raised band on the inside rim, their thickness at their lower ends matching the width of this raised band. The handle is convex with a raised seam

line on the outside and concave inside. Both the lower and upper ends of the handle are placed slightly above the horizontal middle lines of the lower and upper parts.

The decoration, mainly in relatively wide band relief, consists of two circular registers – one on the lower part and the other on the upper part. Both registers are trisected by seam lines and framed by two rows of small rings sandwiched between two rows of bowstrings – a hallmark of the period. There



is one *taotie* unit in each section (fig. 2). The relief decoration exists in three planes; the highest is reserved for the eyeballs. The body of the *taotie*, the ring band and bowstrings are in the primary plane raised above a ground plane.

In the beginning of the Shang period, the Shang people replaced the *he*, the most popular wine-pouring vessel previously used by the Xia people, with the *jia*, which was probably inspired by an antique pottery type. The evolution trajectories of Early and Middle Shang *jia* can be described by four design elements. The body changed from fat to slim. The decoration changed from none,

then less to more, from just bowstring, to one register, then two registers. The cross-section of legs changed from quadrilateral to triangular. The post caps changed from none, to hemispherical, to umbrella-shaped.¹

Three similar examples found in Zhengzhou (App., Cat. 10, 2: 1–3) were dated to the early stage of the so-called “Upper Erligang” phase.² In addition, several similar examples were excavated at Panlongcheng 盘龙城, Huangpi 黄陂, Hubei. Most of these pieces (89HPCYM1: 2, PYWM11: 31) were dated to Period VII, which are contemporaneous to the so-called Baijiazhuang 白家庄 phase at Zhengzhou,³ while others (PYWM4: 4) were dated to Period VI. The MacLean Collection piece

is most similar to those excavated at Panlongcheng. The early stage of the “Upper Erligang” phase belongs to the end of the Early Shang dynasty, while the Baijiazhuang phase represents Period I of the Middle Shang,⁴ approximately corresponding to the reign of King Zhongding 仲丁 and his younger brother Wairen 外壬, around 1400 BC. Based on the above comparison, the MacLean *jia* should be dated to Period I of the Middle Shang or the very end of the Early Shang.⁵

¹ *Zhongguo kaoguxue: Xia Shang juan*: 173–74. Li Weiming 2001: 25–33.

² *Zhengzhou Shang cheng*: 807–8, fig. 543 : 5, fig. 544: 5–6.

³ *Panlongcheng*: 253, 74, 282, 445–46.

⁴ *Zhongguo kaoguxue: Xia Shang juan*: 173–74.

⁵ Another similar *jia* was found at Yaozhuang 姚庄, Mancheng 满城, Hebei (see *Hebei sheng chutu wenwu xuanji*, no. 45). Similar pieces are also found in museums: four in the Shanghai museum (see Chen Peifen 2005: 75–81); one in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (see Lefebvre d’Argencé 1977: 18–19).



fig. 2



fig. 1