

EXPLORING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JADE IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE SOCIETY: A THEMATIC REVIEW

Miao Su,

Department Of Industrial Design, Faculty Of Design And Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia. College Of Innovation And Design, Guilin University Of Electronic Technology, Beihai 536000, China. Her Research Focuses On Culture And Handicraft Design. gs60320@student.upm.edu.my

***Velu Perumal,**

Department Of Industrial Design, Faculty Of Design And Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia. He Has Published A Lot And His Research Focuses On Ergonomic, Product Design, Safety, Sustainability Design. Velu@Upm.Edu.My

IrwanSyah Md.Yusoff,

Department Of Resource Management And Consumer Studies, Faculty Of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia. He Has Published A Lot And His Research Focuses On Ergonomic, Product Design, Safety, Human Factor, Sustainability Design. Irwansyah@Upm.Edu.My

Yue Wu,

Department of Industrial Design, Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia. Her research focuses on Graphic Design. gs60214@student.upm.edu.my

Ying Liu,

Department Of Industrial Design, Faculty Of Design And Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400, Selangor, Malaysia. Her Research Focuses On Artistic Therapy. Gs62692@Student.Upm.Edu.My

Abstract

Jade, in the context of traditional Chinese culture, assumes the role of an invaluable artifact, acting as a conduit for the preservation and documentation of China's rich historical legacy, encompassing its religious, cultural, and ideological progress. Despite the numerous publications on jade, there is a lack of thematic reviews that specifically address cultural and social characteristics. This review aims to present the findings of a thematic review on jade from the perspective of cultural symbolism, focusing on the knowledge and methodologies intrinsic to culture-based jade design.

The data for this study were gathered through a thematic review of 20 publications spanning from 2013 to 2022. Additionally, the results of the ATLAS.ti 9 coding applied to the literature review reveal discernible patterns as identified by the researcher. The analysis uncovers four central themes prevalent in current research on Chinese jade, namely: 1) Chinese jade culture; 2) the textual study of the cultural symbolism of jade; 3) cultural-oriented jade design development; and 4) a case study of pictorial representations of Chinese jade. The results will provide fresh perspectives on new study trends in jade cultural design principles.

Keywords: thematic review; jade; ATLAS. ti 9; cultural symbolism; Chinese culture; traditional Chinese society

1. Introduction

China is a vital jade-producing country (Zhang et al. 2021). It has a long history of jade extraction, treatment, and use (Yang 2005; Barnes 2018). The history of Chinese jade can be traced back to the Neolithic age (ca. 10,000-5,000 B.C.E.) (Zhu 2009). Tucker (1982) points out the Chinese were carving jade before the fall of Troy (about 1184 B.C.). Because of archaeological, ethnographic and aesthetic reasons, the world is interested in Chinese jade, and the study of it has never ceased (Wang and Shi 2020). Studies of ancient Chinese jade objects include investigating the jade materials and their alterations, forms, styles, carving techniques, functions, and cultural significance associated with such relics (Bao et al. 2020). However, some scholars have criticized the focus on object typology at the expense of ancient texts, arguing that this approach does not fully capture the richness and complexity of China's jade tradition (Lucas et al. 2015; Huang 2016).

The jade object has provided a plethora of visual graphics motifs for design over the centuries (Wang 2011). Unfortunately, the Chinese jade market is plagued by counterfeit antique products and low-quality imitations that contribute to a lack of spiritual and cultural depth in contemporary design (Lucas et al. 2015; Tian 2020; Lu and Pan 2016). Traditional designs are frequently reduced to visual copies that fall short of capturing the rich cultural and spiritual symbolism that forms their foundation (Lu and Pan 2016). The preservation of China's jade legacy is threatened by the lack of thorough discussion and analysis of the cultural significance of Chinese jade (Han 2014). Despite these challenges, domestic consumers continue to value designs that capture the "Chinese soul" in jade carving (Lucas et al. 2015). However, Lucas et al. (2015) point out how thinking in Chinese terms is a problem for designers.

Jade has played a deeply significant role in the history and culture of China over many centuries, from its earliest origins to the present day (Gdańsk and Łakomska 2020). In Chinese jade culture studies, jade is often related to a wide range of interrelated concepts of kingship and authority, wealth and prestige, cosmological centrality, and immortality (Tucker 1982). The literature data from the past decade demonstrates the diverse ways in which jade was utilized by individuals and social groups of varying status, with its meaning evolving over time. Jade objects possess the ability to communicate with ancestors and deities and are closely associated with encoded symbols. Moreover, jade artifacts served as decorative embellishments for the privileged class, symbolically reflecting their elevated social standing and embodying esteemed qualities associated with power (Rawson and Michaelson 2002). Consequently, jade objects fulfilled significant spiritual and secular functions.

In this study, it is necessary to elucidate the correlation between the symbolic significance of Chinese jade artifacts and socio-political culture. The primary objective of this investigation is to critically examine the existing body of literature and prospectively explore the scholarly endeavors published in recent years regarding the cultural symbolism attributed to Chinese jade. Additionally, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the scholarly discourse on the relationship between jade design and traditional society from a socio-political-cultural perspective.

2. Methodology

A thematic review design is employed to conduct a comprehensive survey of the scholarly research conducted in the past decade. This review utilizes a transparent, explicit, and systematic approach to data selection, collection, and analysis to minimize bias. Moreover, the studies' salient similarities and differences are noted, as well as the unique characteristics that distinguish each one, offering a comprehensive understanding of the state of the field.

Eligibility Criteria

Due to the aim of this report to elucidate the unique indigenous cultural significance of Chinese jade as a cultural symbol, the literature primarily originated from the authoritative Chinese academic database CNKI. Additionally, comprehensive literature searches were conducted using two recognized English academic databases, namely Web of Science and SCOPUS. This approach ensured a thorough review of relevant literature from both Chinese and English academic sources. The selection of articles was based on various criteria, including: 1) publication between 2013-2022; 2) inclusion of the keyword “Chinese jade”; 3) an emphasis on the symbolic cultural attributes of jade; 4) written in either English or Chinese; 5) predominantly published in Chinese or English as journal articles, review articles, or conference papers within in CNKI, Web of Science, or SCOPUS.

The search was conducted on the 2nd of OCTOBER 2022, a literature search was conducted using the keyword "Chinese jade" in three databases, yielding 357 articles. In the initial investigation, close synonyms, and corresponding substitutions for the term "Chinese jade" were set to maximize the scope of the search. A title search with predefined combinations of keywords was performed in each database (Table 1). An investigation was conducted in the Chinese database CNKI using near synonyms or substitutes for the terms "Chinese jade" and "culture," Year [2013 TO 2022] yielded 64 articles discussing jade culture from 2013 to 2022. In the Web of Science, 35 pieces were found with the term “Chinese jade” and English (Language) and 2013 or 2014 or 2015 or 2016 or 2017 or 2018 or 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 (Publication Years) and Article or Proceeding Paper (Document Types). In addition, the search string uses "Chinese jade" and its close synonyms and replacements AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "cp"))).

Table 1. Search terms from CNKI, WoS, and the Scopus

CNKI	(“Chinese jade” OR “ancient jade” OR “early Chinese jade” OR “archaic jade” OR “jade design” OR “jade carving” OR “jade jewelry” OR “jade object” OR “jade artefact*” OR “Ornamental jade” OR “Ritual jade” OR “Burial jade” OR “jade motif” OR “jade pattern*”) AND (“jade culture” OR “cultural significance” OR “connotation and culture” OR “Ancient Chinese civilization” OR “cultural symbolism” OR	64
------	---	----

“aesthetic meaning and value manifestation”) AND YE
BETWEEN (2013, 2022)

Web of Science ((((((((((TI=(Chinese jade)) OR TI=(ancient jade)) OR TI=(early Chinese jade)) OR TI=(archaic jade)) OR TI=(jade design)) OR TI=(jade carving)) OR TI=(jade jewelry)) OR TI=(jade object)) OR TI=(jade artefact)) OR TI=(jade motif)) OR TI=(jade pattern)) and 2013 or 2014 or 2015 or 2016 or 2017 or 2018 or 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 (Publication Years) and Article or Proceeding Paper (Document Types) 35

Scopus ("Chinese jade") OR ("ancient Chinese jade*") OR ("early Chinese jade") OR ("archaic jade ") OR ("jade design") OR ("jade carving") OR ("jade jewelry") OR ("jade object") OR ("jade artefact") OR ("jade motif") OR ("jade pattern") AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "cp")) 258

In addition, we conducted a manual search for potentially relevant studies by exploring secondary documents in the reference lists of included studies and previous related reviews. This involved manually searching all titles for possible inclusion. Furthermore, we retrieved authors' names, review articles, and reference lists of papers manually to identify any additional relevant citations.

It is noteworthy that the eligibility criteria utilized in this review were established through continuous consultation between the two authors. The first author initially conducted a literature screening exercise, focusing on keywords and relevant phrases related to Chinese jade cultural symbols. Subsequently, the second author meticulously reviewed the gathered articles and selected the final set of papers to be included in the review, adhering to our predetermined eligibility criteria.

Study Selection

In order to select the papers, we scanned the titles and abstracts of all identified articles and carefully evaluated to identify relevant studies. Three hundred and thirty-eight publications irrelevant to the topic of Chinese jade were excluded. Three incomplete papers and three duplicates were also identified and removed, resulting in a final selection of 20 articles for evaluation (Figure 1). These selected studies were further scrutinized to verify whether they met the objectives of the survey and established a connection with the cultural symbols of Chinese jade. After that, the last 20 articles were loaded into ATLAS.ti 9 as primary files and classified for additional examination according to the following criteria: 1) author; 2) journal; 3) publisher; 4) issue number; 5) volume number; and 6) year of publication (see Figure 1).

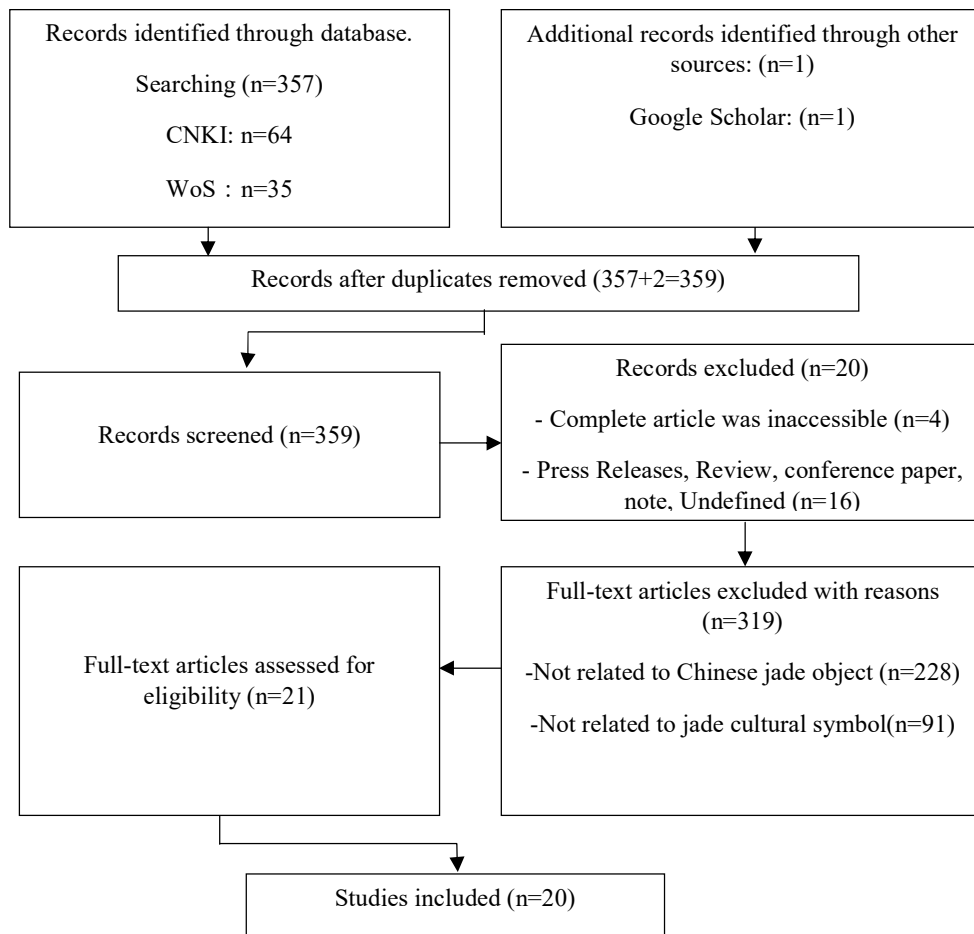


Figure 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for identifying articles for thematic review.

The selected articles were analyzed using Atlas's software, and the data were examined through both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. In the qualitative component, thematic reviews were utilized to transfer data obtained from specifics to more general levels of knowledge and theory. This entailed the process of coding, categorizing, and identifying patterns to reflect the primary and secondary article coding, with the aim of understanding the cultural symbolism of Chinese jade more comprehensively. The quantitative component primarily relied on Atlas.ti's statistical tools to display the collected data numerically. For instance, a vocabulary cloud or list was generated to compare and identify the most used words in each article. Conversely, the qualitative portion identified relevant themes and cultural symbols of Chinese jade objects within the selected articles.

3. Findings and discussion

Based on a comprehensive review (quantitative and qualitative insights) of 20 articles, this section offers an overview of the key findings derived from a thematic review focusing on the cultural symbolism of Chinese jade objects. The quantitative component commences with a word cloud generated through the analysis of 20 primary documents, which is then followed by an investigation of publication trends over time and the corresponding number of articles published each year.

In the subsequent qualitative analysis of the 20 reviewed articles, the cultural symbolism of jade produced ten initial characteristics in the first round of coding, namely the concept of Chinese

The

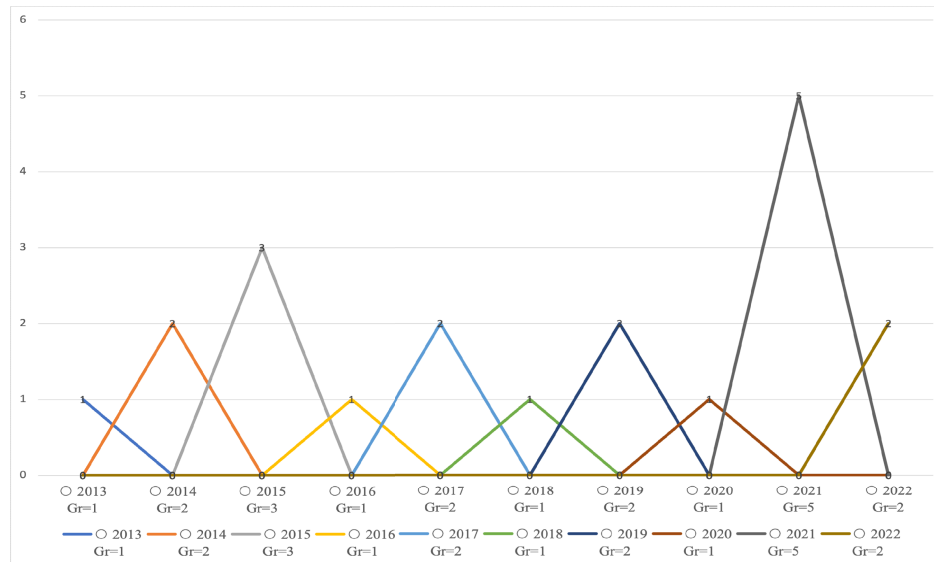


Figure 3 Articles per year of publication.

Geographical Distribution Analysis shows that the study of jade culture is prevalent in China. Specifically, out of the 20 articles examined in the literature, 17 are credited to Chinese scholars. In particular, these studies delve into the explicit connections between traditional Chinese culture and jade artifacts (Figure 4).

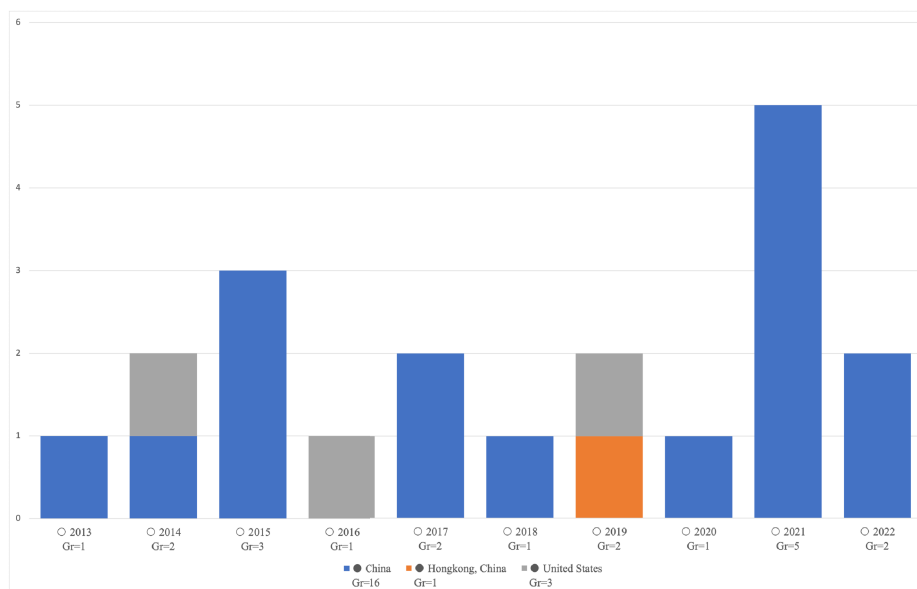


Figure 4 Articles according to the publication's nation and region.

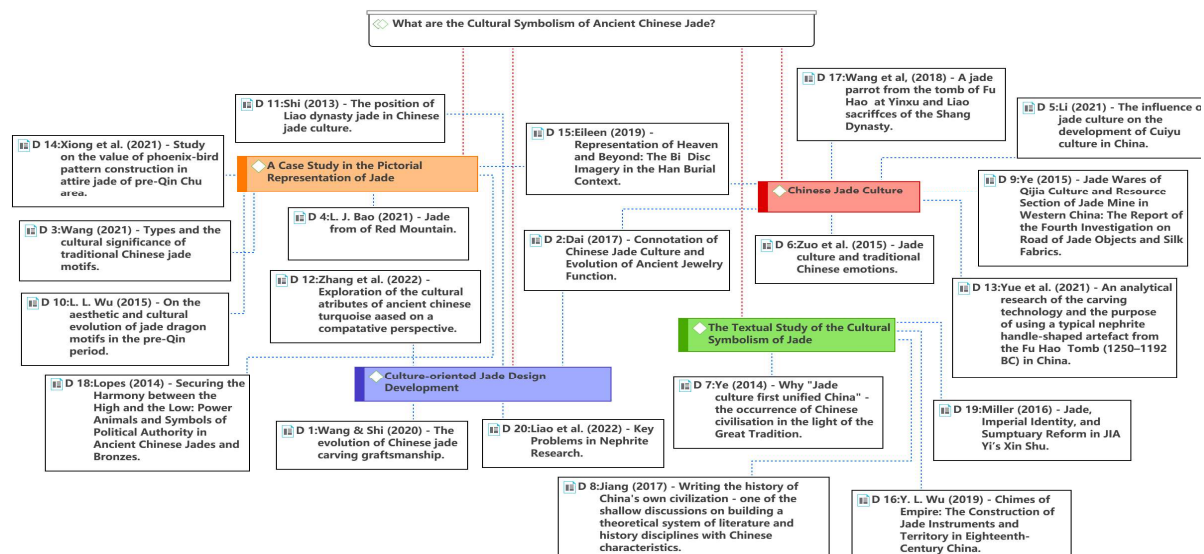
In the subsequent qualitative analysis, jade's cultural symbols produced ten themes in the first round of codes after reviewing 20 articles. After successive recoding and code merging in ATLAS.ti 9, four important keywords were eventually identified (Table 2). The four keywords are Chinese jade culture, the textual study of the cultural symbolism of jade, culture-oriented jade design development, and a case study in the pictorial representation of jade.

Table 2: Review of Jade publications by theme from 2013 to 2022

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	Gr=1	Gr=2	Gr=3	Gr=1	Gr=2	Gr=1	Gr=2	Gr=1	Gr=5	Gr=2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese Jade Culture 	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	2	0
Gr=7										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Textual Study of the cultural symbolism of jade 	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Gr=4										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture-oriented Jade Design 	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Gr=5										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Case Study in the Pictorial Representation of Jade 	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Gr=6										

3.2. Qualitative results

In the forthcoming qualitative analysis, we will systematically examine the four key themes mentioned earlier. It should be noted, however, that these key themes often overlap in the reviewed articles, rather than standing independently from one another. As such, many of the reviewed journal articles address multiple key themes at once. In this section, we present systematic descriptions of each theme in isolation, providing in-depth responses to the research questions. Furthermore, Figure 5a and b provide an overview of the interconnections among all

**Figure 5a Overall network for cultural symbolism of Chinese jade.**

the paper themes.

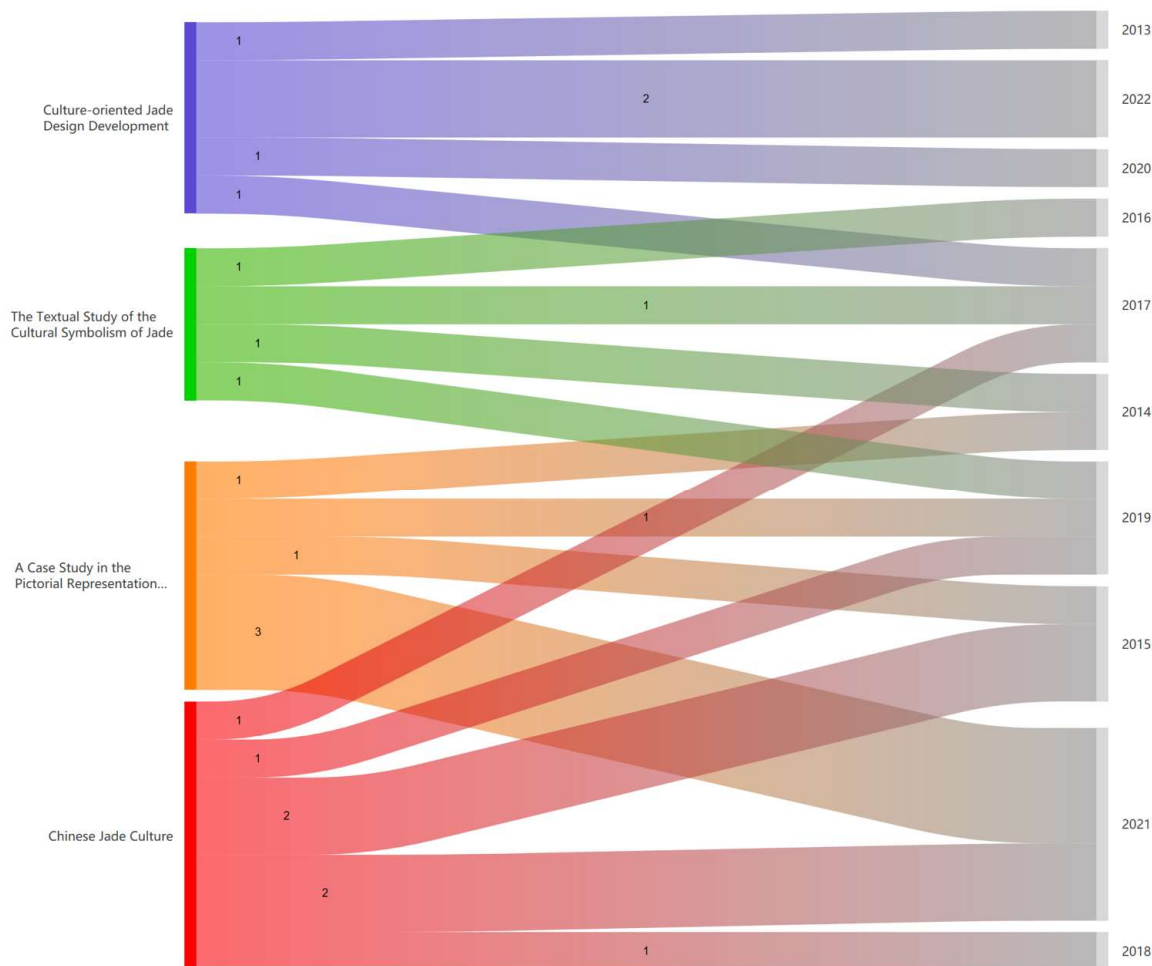


Figure 5b Study of themes according to year of publication.

3.3 Academic studies on the symbols of Chinese jade culture can be divided into two categories.

(1) Emphasis on i) Chinese Jade Culture, ii) the textual study of the cultural symbolism of jade, and iii) cultural-oriented jade design development (Figure 6、7、8).

Jade objects have been recognized for their distinctive material and mystical properties. Wang et al. (2018) employed a non-destructive analysis method to examine a jade parrot discovered in the tomb of Fu Hao at Yinxu. This investigation light on the usage of jade vessels in Liao sacrifice rituals during the Shang dynasty. On the other hand, Yue et al. (2021) conducted a micro-Raman spectroscopy analysis of a typical nephrite handle-shaped object from the Fu Hao Tomb. Their pioneering study confirms the employment of jade in Liao sacrifice rituals during the esteemed Shang Dynasty, with a primary emphasis on the role played by jade's intrinsic material qualities. These two studies provide significant evidence indicating the crucial role of analytical techniques in gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of jade artifacts in ancient Chinese society.

The significance of jade objects extends beyond their value as mere art pieces; they are considered cultural treasures (Zuo et al. 2015). Ye's (2015) empirical examination of jade ritual objects from the

Qijia culture highlights that jade serves as a fundamental vehicle for conveying spiritual messages within Chinese culture. Liao et al. (2022) focus on jade's sacredness and social functionalization. They believe that different forms of jade symbolize different meanings in heaven and earth and the human world. Jade bi and jade cong were used as magical vessels for shamans to communicate with the gods of heaven and earth, and jade battle-axes, jade spatulas and jade guisymbolized kingly power (Ye 2014; Jiang 2017). These scholars' studies point to jade ritual objects as the pre-written symbols that best reflect Chinese spirituality.

Dai (2017) presents the definition, main connotations, and core values of Chinese jade culture. The development of Chinese jade culture has always been closely linked to a human society, not only at the religious level, but also at the political and moral levels (Zhang et al. 2022; Zuo et al. 2015). Wu (2019) presents an analysis of a set of individual chimes made of nephrite from Xinjiang during the reign of the Qianlong emperor in the Qing dynasty. Demonstrates how jade was, on the one hand, associated with Confucian ritual culture and, on the other hand, represented the political significance of the Qianlong emperor's expansion of his empire into new frontiers. Miller (2016) reviews the descriptions of jade in Jia Yi's Xin Shu. He argues that Jia Yi's concept of jade builds on earlier ideas but places more emphasis on the visual qualities of jade. (1) Jia Yi believed that only jade could embody benevolence (de德) and its six principles. (2) Jia Yi promoted that jade became a tool in the service of the ruling class and a symbol of feudal hierarchy. Overall, these works illustrate how jade culture was an integral part of different aspects of traditional Chinese society.

Wang and Shi (2020) summarizes the five peaks of jade carving across its history in China, in terms of the evolution of carving tools. They assert that the development of traditional Chinese jade carving is deeply ingrained in the country's customs, laws, and social culture. The process of carving and grinding jade into jade objects is a channel through which people can communicate with nature and society. Zhang et al.'s (2022) research centers on the forms and meanings of traditional Chinese jade culture, emphasizing that Chinese jade embodies a unique aesthetic sense of human history, moral culture formation, establishment, continuity, and growth. Shi (2013) utilizes Khitan jade as a case study to delve into the distinctive jade objects originating from the grassland nomads and Buddhist cultural themes. This research aims to uncover the profound regional and cultural intricacies that significantly impacted the styling design of Liao Dynasty jades. Their findings highlight that jade has been given social attributes "not comparable to the modern mineralogical classification system".

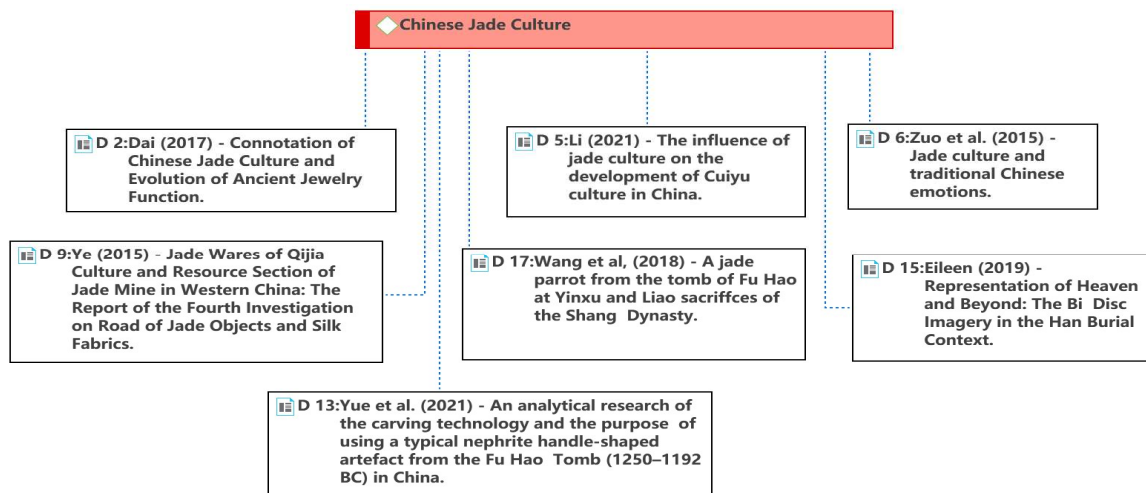


Figure 6 Network of Chinese jade culture.

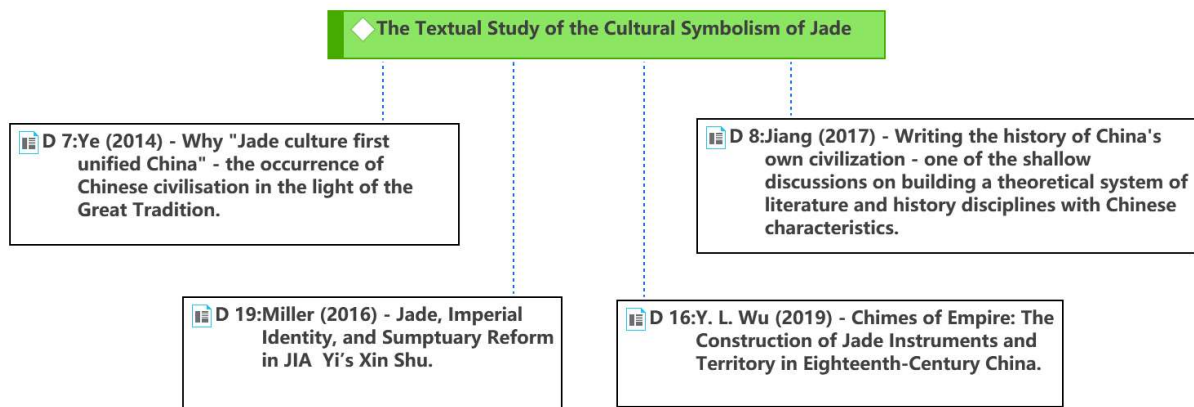


Figure 7 Network of the textual study of the cultural symbolism of jade.

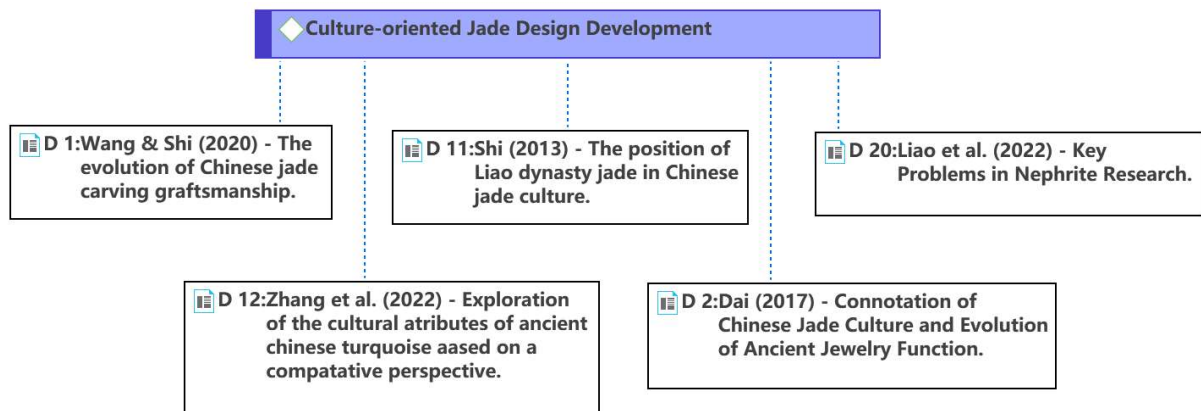


Figure8: Network of culture-oriented jade design development

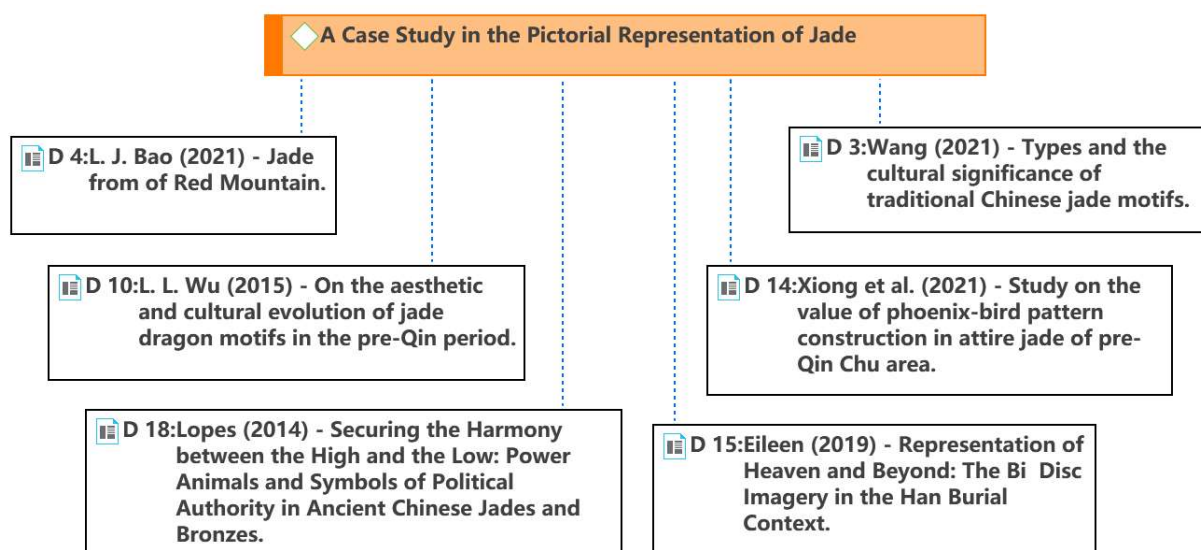


Figure 9 Network of a case study in the pictorial representation of jade.

(2) By adopting typological and iconographical approaches, emphasis on case studies involving various pictorial representations of Chinese jade and untangling the rich signification embedded in its motifs (Figure 9).

The Chinese civilization has ingeniously employed a vast array of jade motifs to convey their aspirations for various ideals such as peace, happiness, good fortune, and overall well-being. Lopes (2014) meticulously analyzed the iconographic significance of Chinese Neolithic jade animal objects, revealing their adeptness in establishing a profound connection between the heavens, the earthly realm, and the human realm through their intrinsic natural features. Furthermore, Lam (2019) embarked on an insightful investigation focused on the pictorial representations and profound meanings associated with the bi disc in the context of Han burial practices. By employing both typological and iconographical approaches, Lam aims to unravel the evolutionary trajectory of the bi disc motif while decoding the intricate symbolism encapsulated within its unique shape. Meanwhile, Xionget al. (2022) employed a meticulous combination of typological analysis, comparative analysis, and two-dimensional corroboration of historical documents and archaeological objects. Their scholarly investigation serves to delve deeply into the profound significance and influential role embodied by the phoenix-bird motif in the intricate construction of jade adornments specific to the Pre-Qin Chu region. It's important to note that jade objects are not mere mediums for carrying decorative motifs but rather represent the very substance from which the carved images emerge.

The decorative patterns found on ornamental jade artifacts, ritual jade objects, and various other forms of jade adornments not only exist as objective material forms but also serve as crucial conduits for conveying spiritual information (Bao 2021). Bao (2021) undertook a meticulous case study focusing on jade artifacts from the Hongshan culture. This study explores the social functions and spiritual connotations of Hongshan jade artefacts by analyzing the stylistic designs and usage scenarios of animal-type jade artefacts and ritual jade artefacts. On the other hand, Wang (2021) employed the disciplines of iconography and stylistics to offer formal descriptions and identifications of prominent traditional motifs found in Chinese jade sculptures. Then, an interpretation of the cultural symbols and expressions depicted in each image was conducted within the cultural context. Wu's (2015) inquiry directs attention toward the captivating evolution of dragon decoration, adeptly tracking its progressive metamorphosis from primitive clans to the intricate realms of feudal societies. Through comprehensive examination and analysis of the ancient symbolism elegantly embraced by jade motifs, Wu's study makes significant contributions to unraveling the profound evolution of dragon decoration. Collectively, all the three researchers contend that an in-depth comprehension of the cultural significance that reverberates within these motifs plays an indispensable role in fostering the advancement of jade as a revered art form and in cultivating the essence of Chinese national culture.

Symbolizes the Sacred Nature of the Raw Material (Material Agents)

The first level of Jade's symbolic value involves the raw material itself, and this forms a fundamental aspect of its cultural significance. In the realm of Chinese civilization, jade assumes immense symbolic importance, derived from its inherent qualities of transparency, vibrant hues, and captivating luster. Within Chinese philosophical and spiritual frameworks, jade serves as a tangible manifestation of the crystallized essence uniting heaven and earth, embodying the embodiment of a "vital essence" or "essential breath" symbolizing energy (Zuo et al. 2015). Only materials containing a significant amount of this essential energy could be crafted into ritual objects for communication with the spirits (Jiang 2017). Based on the above, Chinese culture regarded jade as sacred, serving as a bridge between the celestial and human realms and containing a unique life force (Wang 2021).

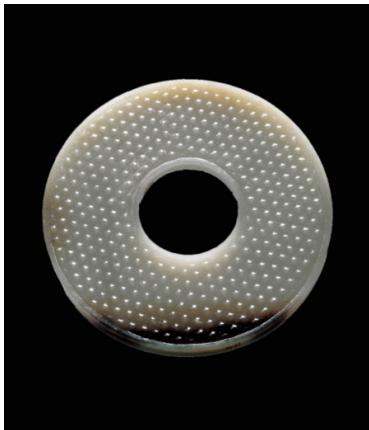
Jade, the quintessential gemstone revered in China, is ingrained with profound beliefs in its ability to bestow well-being, auspiciousness, and serve as a ward against malevolent influences. Deep-rooted in Chinese antiquity, the notion that wearing or utilizing this cherished stone contributes to a prolonged existence held sway (Jones 2004). Additionally, jade possesses enigmatic (or talismanic) qualities that function as a protective barrier against malevolent spirits, providing solace and safeguarding both the realm of the living and the departed (Gdańsk and Łakomska 2020). The reverence bestowed upon jade is intrinsically linked to its inherent properties, such as its resolute hardness, inherent scarcity, and symbolic embodiment of enduring permanence and historical documentation (Ye 2015). Holistically, jade stands as a prized organic substance held in high regard within Chinese culture, cherished both for its aesthetically pleasing allure and its intrinsic attributes, revered as a visual chronicle of antiquated lifestyles and the embodiment of cultural spirit, carrying the weight of cultural legacy (Bao 2021).

Symbolizes Gifts to Gods and Ancestors

Jade harbors intricate ties with rituals and acts of sacrifice, highlighting a prominent connection between jade culture and the realm of ceremonial practices (Li 2021). It assumes an indispensable role in the solemn proceedings of funerary rites and the sacred invocation of deities and ancestral spirits (Bao et al. 2020). Within the framework of reciprocity, the offering of jade elicits an expectation of commensurate divine reciprocation. The Rites of the Zhou (zhouli 周禮), a well-known early Chinese text compiled during the Warring States period (ca. 403–221 BCE), lays claim to providing the earliest textual testament substantiating this profound belief. It specifies that jade should be employed in the creation of the six ritual tools, which serve as symbolic tributes honoring the four cardinal directions of the celestial and terrestrial realms (以玉作六器, 以禮天地四方) (Table 3). In China, ritualistic objects acquire the designation 'Liqi' [禮器], and embody visual cues represented by li [禮], signifying the appropriate and deferential approach when engaging with the divine and transcendent (Ye 2015).

Table 3 The Six Ritual Tools

Disc (Bi 璧)



Two-tier tube (cong 琮)



Forked blade (zhang 璋)



Straight chisel (gui 圭)



Arc-shaped pendant (huang, 璜)



Jade amber (hu, 琥)



Jade burial goods can be construed as gifts that preserve the blessings and favor of the departed family member or revered ancestor(Bao 2021). The pragmatic utilization of jadeadornment as indispensable funerary paraphernalia establishes an intimate nexus between these artifacts and the status of the tomb owner's lineage, thereby amplifying the value and non-transferability of jade(Lam 2019).In essence, burying a jade object as a ceremonial gift further magnifies its efficacy as a discernible insignia of communal identity. Although these jade treasures are reverently interred, they are not consigned to oblivion, for they endure as repositories of power and continue to accord identity to select members of society(Miller 2016). When memory and materiality diverge, memory itself assumes the mantle of cultural capital—an influential force that shapes social identity.

Symbolizes of Collective Identities

According toDai (2017)argues that ancient jade objects expresses social identity and affiliation. In the field of Chinese archaeology, certain jade artifacts seem to have been exclusively possessed and exchanged by kings or royal families(Zhang et al. 2022).This limited circulation not only

heightened the value of jade per se but also engendered an indissoluble proprietary association with jade artifacts. Simultaneously, this practice facilitated the delineation of collective social identity and effectively fortified positions of power(Yue et al. 2021).

In the latter period of the Shang Dynasty, as Lopes (2014) elucidates, a paradigm shift took place from sacred ritual practices centered around the reverence for Heavenly sovereignty to a more structured institutionalization of ceremonies aimed at exalting political power. Within this context, a strict hierarchical system governed the allocation of imperial jade, decorative jade, burial jade, and ritual jade, exclusively assigned to the emperor and the nobility(Zhang et al. 2022). Diverse jade vessels of various sizes and shapes served as emblems to demarcate the ranks of rulers and officials, emerging as indispensable symbols of social status and dominion(Lopes 2014). It is within the intricately tailored framework of jade utilization that the bonds among the ruling classes were fortified, nurturing a distinct and unassailable identity – a memory intimately enmeshed with their shared experience(Wu 2019).

Symbolize the Character of a Gentleman (Anthropomorphic symbol)

Ethnographic research conducted within the borders of China has shed light on the meticulous craftsmanship involved in the creation of ornate jade artifacts, underscoring the belief that each jade object comes to life through the painstaking carving process(Wang and Shi 2020). Consequently, the ancient sages drew an analogy between the arduous art of jade carving and the cultivation of a noble, virtuous gentleman(Dai 2017). It is noteworthy that Confucianism assigns a multitude of virtues to jade, thus endowing it with moral significance(Zhang et al. 2022). The formulation of Confucian concepts regarding the utilization of jade marks the formal consolidation of its moralization and personification(Lan 2014). Confucius succinctly delineated the eleven virtues associated with jade, encompassing benevolence, knowledge, righteousness, ritual, music, loyalty, honesty, heaven, earth, integrity, and morality, thereby intimately linking the virtues of jade with the conduct befitting a cultivated gentleman(Wu 2019). Thus, without a doubt, "jade" has become the quintessence and embodiment of the refined and noble gentleman.

The moral philosophy surrounding jade cast an indelible influence on the spiritual realm of ancient China. Embodying anthropomorphic symbolism, jade commanded exceptional veneration and adorned the regalia of both emperors and commoners with equal reverence(Dai 2017). Acting as a spiritual lodestar within Chinese society, the principles of jade theory instilled a profound sense of respect, admiration, and esteem for this revered gemstone. Undoubtedly, this unwavering ethical compass contributed to an elevated moral core within Chinese civilization, ultimately cementing jade as an indispensable facet of daily life for its people(Zhang et al. 2022).

Symbol of Aesthetic and Auspicious Omen

Jade culture reveres beauty as one of its core values. The aesthetic qualities of jade aim to pay tribute to nature's symbols, which include the earth, sky, sun, moon, rainbow, and the Chinese concept of the universe(Wang 2021). Additionally, the beauty inherent in craftsmanship, art, harmony, and symbolism is also greatly sought after in Chinese jade culture(Dai 2017). The natural and expertly crafted beauty of jade objects, including ornamentation, form, and stylistic rules, serve to not only heighten jade's value and enhance its overall image, but to also elevate the human image

and living environment, reflect a love and appreciation of beauty, and an unwavering pursuit of its embodiment.

Wearing and appreciating jade were among the most basic uses of this ubiquitous material in ancient times (Zuo et al. 2015). The ancient Chinese often presented jade as a token of their affection towards loved ones, confident that it would usher in prosperity, contentment, and ward off perils. Jade, as a decoration, a symbol, and a gift, has practical purposes and is closely intertwined with human beings (Bao et al. 2020). Jade is used to express romantic sentiments and convey feelings of friendship and love. This enduring belief transformed jade into a potent talisman, safeguarding its wearers from impending disasters and mishaps. The aesthetic beauty of jade is derived from this close association with humanity and is ultimately embodied through this relationship (Dai 2017).

Since ancient times, the Chinese have been aware of the fundamental principles that govern all things, not only man, but also animals and the cosmos (heavens) (Gdańsk and Łakomska 2020). One striking manifestation of this awareness is in the creative activity of carving jade motifs (Zuo et al. 2015). The motifs they created utilized literary and artistic devices such as assonance, simile, metaphor, and symbolism to depict botanical, animal, human, and textual themes (Wang 2021). Particularly noteworthy are the decorative motifs of jade that reflect a desire for good fortune and protection from harm, embodying a profound spiritual significance that transcends their purely material forms (Bao 2021).

4. Discussion

Researchers have ample reasons to investigate jade artefacts, primarily owing to their remarkable historical value as the richest remnants of past human activity. Indeed, among the countless remains of human and archaic human behavior that existed hundreds, thousands of years ago, jade is perhaps the only material that has survived the onslaught of time. As such, jade has embodied and enriched the Chinese civilization's material culture as a significant indicator of its social, economic, and aesthetic values. Moreover, its transcendent qualities have earned it an abiding fascination from the Chinese people, thereby cementing its position as a quintessential embodiment of Chinese culture.

Another reason for studying jade objects is that the value and meaning of jade objects change both over time and according to the political and religious situation. Throughout China's rich and complex history, jade objects have played a pivotal role in shaping its cultural landscape, recording the past, and communicating identity across generations (Bao 2021; Miller 2016). Drawing upon existing literature, the function and social connotations of ancient jade constitute a fundamental area of inquiry in the study of Chinese jade culture and prehistory. Ancient jade objects bore profound personal, social, and moral significance, encapsulating traditional Chinese values and the spiritual consensus of the Chinese nation. As one of the most distinguishable relics of ancient Chinese civilization, ancient jade objects embody significant cultural symbols of China. This is evidenced by the following three key points.

First, jade held a preeminent place in Chinese culture, and its significance transcended the material realm to encompass spiritual and symbolic dimensions. Jade served various purposes, such as offerings to the gods, displays of power, productive tools, and ornaments of daily life. Despite their

objective materiality, decorative patterns on jade objects, including ritual objects and jade vessels, conveyed essential spiritual information(Bao et al. 2020). As such, jade carried profound cultural and symbolic meaning that shaped and reflected the values and beliefs of ancient Chinese society.

Secondly, the significance of jade objects went beyond their aesthetic and functional aspects and incorporated a range of cultural factors that ascribed various connotations and symbols to them. For example, Confucianism regarded jade as a representation of knowledge and morality, embodying the virtues of noble individuals. In contrast, Taoism conceptualized jade as an immortal substance that symbolized spiritual purity and truth, believed to possess alchemical properties that could promote longevity(Wang 2021). Such associations with ancestral beings, totemic relationships, and potent materials helped shape the symbolism and meaning of jade, which, in turn, influenced later thought and jade culture.

Thirdly, jade possessed symbolic significance not only as a representation of individual virtues or spiritual qualities, but also as an embodiment of cosmic order and societal stability. This idea originated from the ancient practice of using jade for concluding contracts, a tradition that endured for thousands of years. Subsequently, jade acquired symbolic associations with the principles of fairness, justice, and honesty, which served to reinforce social order and cohesion(Zuo et al. 2015; Dai 2017). Additionally, jade served as an object of sustenance and pleasure, but also as a channeling object for connecting with higher realms imply decorative objects(Jiang 2017).Scholars have argued that Chinese jade and jade culture are inextricably linked to faith, national spirit, and the collective consciousness of the people. The historical and cultural essence, embodied in the invaluable jade carving works, serve as a testament to the exemplary humanistic ideals of the Chinese people that should be comprehended and inherited by future generations.

5. Conclusion

This article provides a comprehensive review of 20 academic papers on the research of the cultural significance of Chinese jade from 2013 to 2022. The research aims to thoroughly examine the cultural significance of jade artifacts in traditional Chinese society and uncover the underlying philosophical and artistic principles. The research findings indicate that although scholars have paid considerable attention to the cultural significance of Chinese jade design, existing literature lacks sufficient theoretical foundations and specific discussions on effectively integrating cultural factors into jade design. In Chinese society, jade has been regarded as a physical manifestation of cultural forms. Scholars generally agree that culture, as the primary source of inspiration for Chinese jade design, can provide a solid foundation for the innovation and sustainable development of jade artifacts. The results presented in this paper provide an interface between the intertwined experiences of jade design and culture for stakeholders in the design process.

References

- Bao Lijuan. 2021. «Jade from the Red Mountain» . Rongbaozhai, (3): 80–91. <https://doi.org/10.14131/j.cnki.rbzqk.2021.0077>.
- Dai Zhuming. 2017. «Connotation of Chinese jade culture and evolution of ancient jewelry functions» . Journal of Gemology and Gemology 19 (S1): 57–61. <https://doi.org/10.15964/j.cnki.027jgg.2017.S1.013>.

Jiang Changlin. 2017. 《Writing the history of China's own civilization - one of the shallow discussions on building a theoretical system of literature and history disciplines with Chinese characteristics》. *Journal of Jinan University (Social Science Edition)* 27 (2): 16-21+157.

Lan Juan. 2014. 《A Study of the Ideology of Weapon Making in Pre-Qin》. Doctor of Philosophy, Nankai University. Tianjin.

https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=AGKdHLbOuHcyShdJalzWehYS8Sjr28LeT-8F-FSJqVM5pGC4Z0anfpoDyasKFFK_ihdtRF6P9C6zouwPaWBdTaUKGRrvk
t-uhQc3BbuW4jjsdTLDVfEBFbg-71W- ywPMSdypMTUAVFQaJodYrdG5zw==&u
niplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS.

Li Xiang. 2021. 《The influence of Xiuyan jade culture on the development of Chinese jade culture》. *Marketing World* (28): 7–8.

Liao Zongting, Jing Cui, Li Ping, Shen Junyi and Jin Xueping. 2022. 《Key problem in nephrite jade》. *Journal of Tongji University (Natural Science)* 50 (8): 1073-1080+1070.

Lu Keqi and Pan Rong. 2016. 《Product redesign based on the spirit of China》. *Packaging Engineering* 37 (18): 121–24.

<https://doi.org/10.19554/j.cnki.1001-3563.2016.18.028>.

Shi Linmei. 2013. 《The position of Liao dynasty jade in Chinese jade culture》. *Cang Sang* (1): 42-44+49. <https://doi.org/10.13514/j.cnki.cn14-1186/k.2013.01.060>.

Wang Xianhua. 2021. 《Types of traditional patterns in Chinese jade and their cultural significance》. *Journal of Huangshan University* 23 (6): 92–94.

Wu Lili. 2015. 《On the Aesthetic and Cultural Evolution of the Dragon Motif in Pre-Qin Period Jade》. *Red Son* (13): 63.

Xiong Zhaoifei, Liu Ruonan and Li Bin. 2022. 《Study on the value of phoenix-bird pattern construction in attire jade of pre-Qin Chu area》. *Silk Road* 59 (2): 137–44.

Yang Boda. 2005. 《A discussion of prehistoric jade culture plates in China》. *Journal of the Palace Museum* (4): 6-24+156. <https://doi.org/10.16319/j.cnki.0452-7402.2005.04.001>.

Ye Shuxian. 2014. 《Why Is Jade Culture Unity Realized before Territory Unity in China? — On the Forming of Chinese Civilization from the Perspective of “Great Tradition”》. *Journal of Baise Colleg* 27 (1): 1–6.

<https://doi.org/10.16726/j.cnki.bsxb.2015.03.019>.

Zhang Ronghong, Huang Lin and Wang Xinyu. 2022. 《An exploration of the cultural attributes of ancient Chinese turquoise based on a comparative perspective》. *Journal of Gems & Gemmology (English and Chinese)* 24 (5): 205–12. <https://doi.org/10.15964/j.cnki.027jgg.2022.05.019>.

Zhu Yifang. 2009. 《The research on tradition of Chinese jades' culture》. Doctor of Philosophy, Tsinghua University, China.

https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=3uoqIhG8C447WN1SO36whNHQvLEhcOy4v9J5uF5OhrkGID6XhvjmsG_8ruDxh4_L8Uek6vrdG_SuDjz1AurshPTsgumnvMba&uniplatform=NZKPT.

Zuo Qiuyan, Cheng Jingbo and Li Jingyuan. 2015. «Cultural treasures - jade culture and Chinese love affair». *Masterpiece Appreciation* (9): 159–60.

Gdańsk, Bogna Łakomska. 2020. «The meaning of animal motifs in Neolithic China based on examples of jade figurines and shell mosaics». *Art of the Orient* 9 (1): 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.15804/aoto202001>.

Gdańsk, and Bogna Łakomska. 2020. «The meaning of animal motifs in Neolithic China based on examples of jade figurines and shell mosaics». *Art of the Orient* 9 (1): 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.15804/aoto202001>.

Tian, Bingrui. 2020. «An Investigation of the Referential Significance of Tradition in Contemporary Jewelry -- the Case of Han Dynasty Jade». Doctoral dissertation, Curtin University. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11937/81028>

Bao, Yi, Xuemei Yun, Chaohong Zhao, Fang Wang and Yuesheng Li. 2020. «Nondestructive Analysis of Alterations of Chinese Jade Artifacts from Jinsha, Sichuan Province, China». *Scientific Reports* 10 (1): 18476.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-73290-y>.

Barnes, Gina L. 2018. «Understanding Chinese Jade in a World Context». *Journal of the British Academy* 6 (March): 1–63. <https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/006.001>.

Han, Chi. 2014. «A Study on Application of Chinese Auspicious Pattern in Modern Design». *Asian Social Science* 10 (12): p53. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n12p53>.

Huang, Dejing. 2016. «The Aesthetic Meanings and Value Manifestation of Jade Carving Works Integrated with Overseas Chinese Hometown Culture». 收入 *Proceedings of the 2016 4th International Conference on Management Science, Education Technology, Arts, Social Science and Economics (Msetasse-16)*. Jinan, China: Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/msetasse-16.2016.354>.

Jones, Maria. 2004. «An Exploration of Jade». *Senior Honors Theses and Projects*. 85. <https://commons.emich.edu/honors/85>.

Lam, Hau-ling Eileen. 2019. «Representation of Heaven and Beyond: The Bi Disc Imagery in the Han Burial Context». *Asian Studies* 7 (2): 115–51.

<https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2019.7.2.115-151>.

Lopes, Rui Oliveira. 2014. «Securing the Harmony between the High and the Low: Power Animals and Symbols of Political Authority in Ancient Chinese Jades and Bronzes». *Asian Perspectives* 53 (2): 195–225. <https://doi.org/10.1353/asi.2014.0019>.

Lucas, Andrew, Merilee Chapin, Moqing Lin and Xiordan Jia. 2015. «The Chinese Soul in Contemporary Jewelry Design». *Gems & Gemology* 51 (1): 18–30.

<https://doi.org/10.5741/GEMS.51.1.18>.

- Miller, Allison R. 2016. «Jade, Imperial Identity, and Sumptuary Reform in Jia Yi's Xin Shu» . *Dao* 15 (1): 103–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-015-9476-4>.
- Rawson, J., and C. Michaelson. 2002. *Chinese Jade: From the Neolithic to the Qing*. Art Media Resources. <https://books.google.com.tw/books?id=BHXrAAAAMAAJ>.
- Tucker, Evelyn. 1982. «Jade Forms from Ancient China» . *Gems & Gemology* 18 (1): 20–31. <https://doi.org/10.5741/GEMS.18.1.20>.
- Wang, Mingying, and Guanghi Shi. 2020. «The Evolution of Chinese Jade Carving Craftmanship» . *Gems & Gemology* 56 (1): 30–53. <https://doi.org/10.5741/GEMS.56.1.30>.
- Wang, Rong. 2011. «PROGRESS REVIEW OF THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CHINESE ANCIENT JADE: Scientific Study of Chinese Ancient Jade» . *Archaeometry* 53 (4): 674–92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4754.2010.00564.x>.
- Wang, Rong, Chang-sui Wang and Ji-gen Tang. 2018. «A Jade Parrot from the Tomb of Fu Hao at Yinxu and Liao Sacrifices of the Shang Dynasty» . *Antiquity* 92 (362): 368–82. <https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2017.220>.
- Wu, Yulian. 2019. «Chimes of Empire: The Construction of Jade Instruments and Territory in Eighteenth-Century China» . *Late Imperial China* 40 (1): 43–85. <https://doi.org/10.1353/late.2019.0002>.
- Yue, Chaolong, Jian Zhu, Guoding Song and Jigen Tang. 2021. «An Analytical Research of the Carving Technology and the Purpose of Using a Typical Nephrite Handle-Shaped Artefact from the Fu Hao Tomb (1250–1192 BC) in China» . *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 13 (3): 56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-021-01301-8>.
- Zhang, B. S., X. T. Wu, Y. F. Sun, M. Ritchey, A. C. Fan, Y. Y. Zhang, G. Yu and Y. B. Song. 2021. «Complex Raw Materials and the Supply System: Mineralogical and Geochemical Study of the Jade Artefacts of the Longshan Culture (2400–2000 BCE) from Sujiacun Site in Coastal Shandong, China» . *Archaeometry* 63 (1): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/arc.12634>.