

Shang Artefacts

twinkl

Examining Artefacts



Look at the pictures of a range of artefacts from the time of the Shang dynasty.



1. What is this object and what do you think it was used for?
2. Who do you think would have made the object and how?
3. Who do you think would have used the object?
4. What is the object made of?

Looking in Detail



Dagger

- This is a Shang dagger blade made from bronze. The bronze turns a greenish colour when it reacts with the oxygen in the air.
- It has a dragon head pattern inscribed on it in the place where it would have been attached to a handle.
- The dagger could have been used by a Shang warrior in battle, or in ritual ceremonies.



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Looking in Detail



Jue

- This item is called a jue and it is made from bronze.
- It was used for serving or heating up wine.
- Jues were used during special ceremonies by important Shang people.
- This jue has a handle for pouring and two sticking up parts which could have been used for lifting the vessel off the heat.



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Looking in Detail



Vase

- This is a vase or storage vessel made from white pottery.
- White pottery was used only by the royal family and not a lot of it has survived to this day.
- The vessel would have been used for decoration and maybe in ritual ceremonies too.
- It has geometric patterns carved into it.



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Looking in Detail



Mask

- This is a mask believed to represent a legendary king of the Shu state called Cancong.
- It is made out of bronze.
- The mask features protruding eyes and ears which were originally painted black. The lips were originally painted red.
- The mask would probably have been used for decorative or ritual purposes. It would have been too heavy to actually wear.



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Looking in Detail



Turtle

- This is a statue of a turtle with four arrows in its back.
- It is made from bronze.
- Records describe how a Shang emperor shot a large turtle and then gave it to the official Shang historian, Zuoceban, to be cast into bronze.



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Looking in Detail



Statue

- This is a statue pendant made out of jade.
- The figure is shown kneeling or squatting.
- Jewellery and decorative ornaments were made out of jade and sometimes weapons were too.
- This jade figure was one of 450 items found in the tomb of Fu Hao in Anyang.

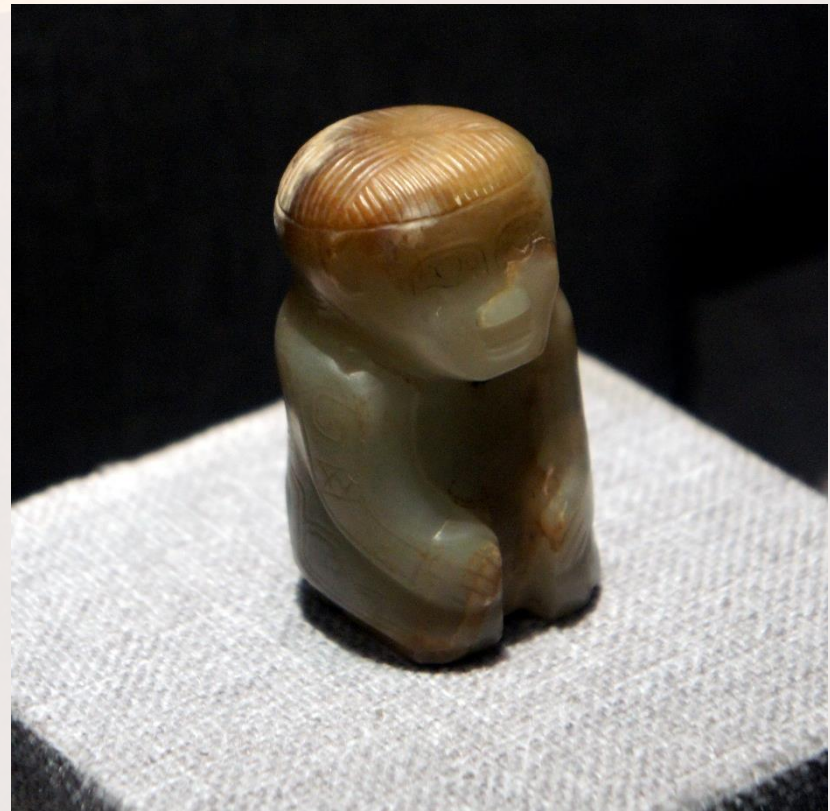


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Looking in Detail



Zun

- This artefact is called a zun and it is made out of bronze.
- A zun was a ritual wine vessel used in religious ceremonies.
- This zun is square shaped with four goat heads around it.
- It is intricately decorated and includes dragons, birds and several patterns in its design.



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Looking in Detail



Ding

- This is a ding and it is made out of bronze.
- Dings varied in size and were used for cooking and storing food or in ritual ceremonies for sacrificing animals or people.
- Dings were usually round or square in shape with three or four legs. Some dings were in the shape of animals.
- Dings were associated with wealth and rich people were often buried with all their dings.



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Shang Craftsmen



Shang craftsmen used a variety of materials to make different items.

We know items were made from bronze, jade, bone and clay because evidence of these have survived a long time in the ground. Other materials such as wood and fabric, which were also used, rot away more quickly so there is less evidence for us to see. We have to rely on other sources of evidence, such as pictures or written documents to help us too.



Shang craftsmen at work

Jade

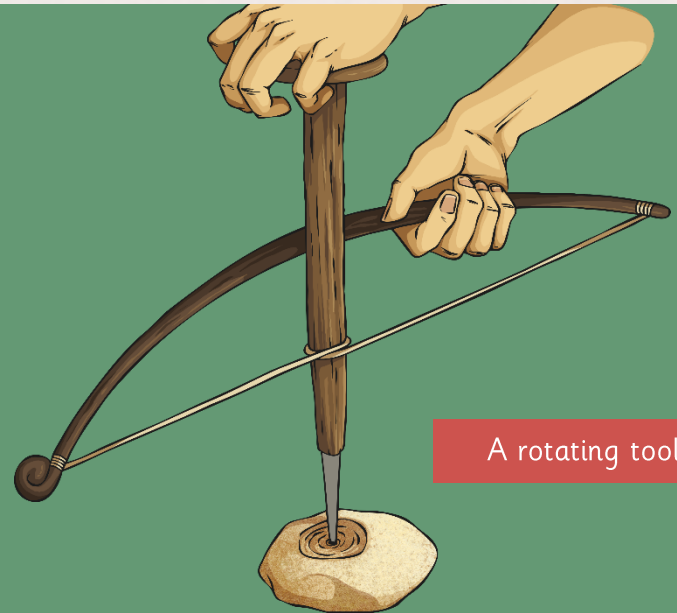


How Shang craftsmen worked with jade:

Firstly, chunks of jade were sliced into smaller pieces. Then, coarse sand was made into a paste and rubbed over the jade to smooth and shape it. If patterns or other detail was required, a rotating tool was used to carve this onto the object. Finally, a finer sand was used to polish up the jade object to make it shine.



Jade carvers



A rotating tool

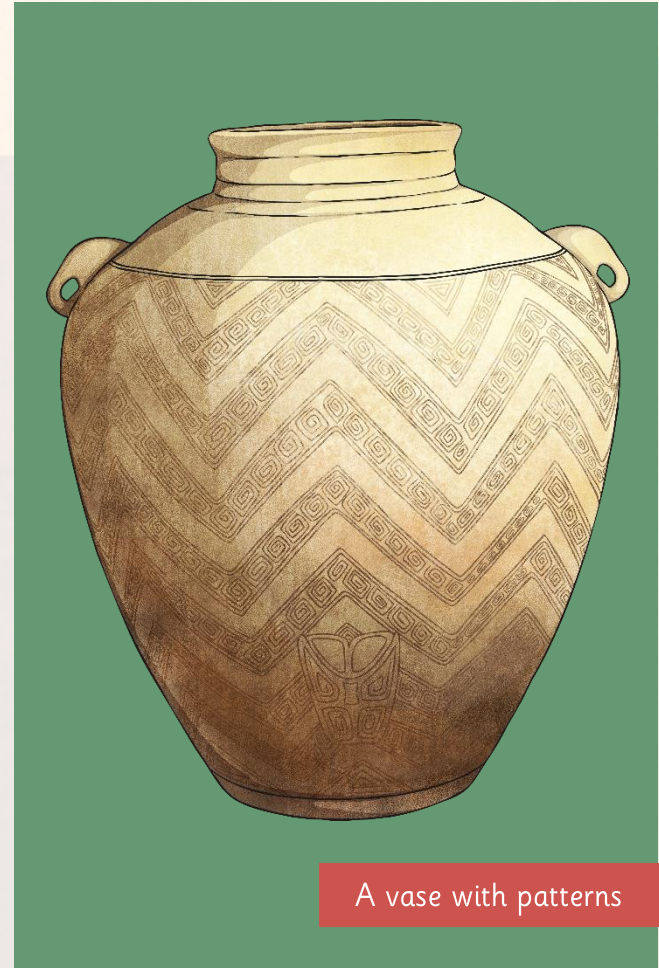
Pottery

How Shang craftsmen worked with clay:

Clay was rolled out in sausage shapes and then coiled round and round from the bottom up to make the shape of the object required. Alternatively, wet clay was placed onto a rotating disc and the potter would quickly work the clay up with his fingers into the shape required. The movement of the spinning disc helped keep the object smooth and regular in shape.

Patterns could be inscribed onto the object if required, or extra shapes made out of clay could be stuck on to create a raised design.

After the clay object was made, it was fired in a kiln (an extremely hot furnace) to dry it and make it go hard. The object could then be glazed or painted once dry.



A vase with patterns

Bronze

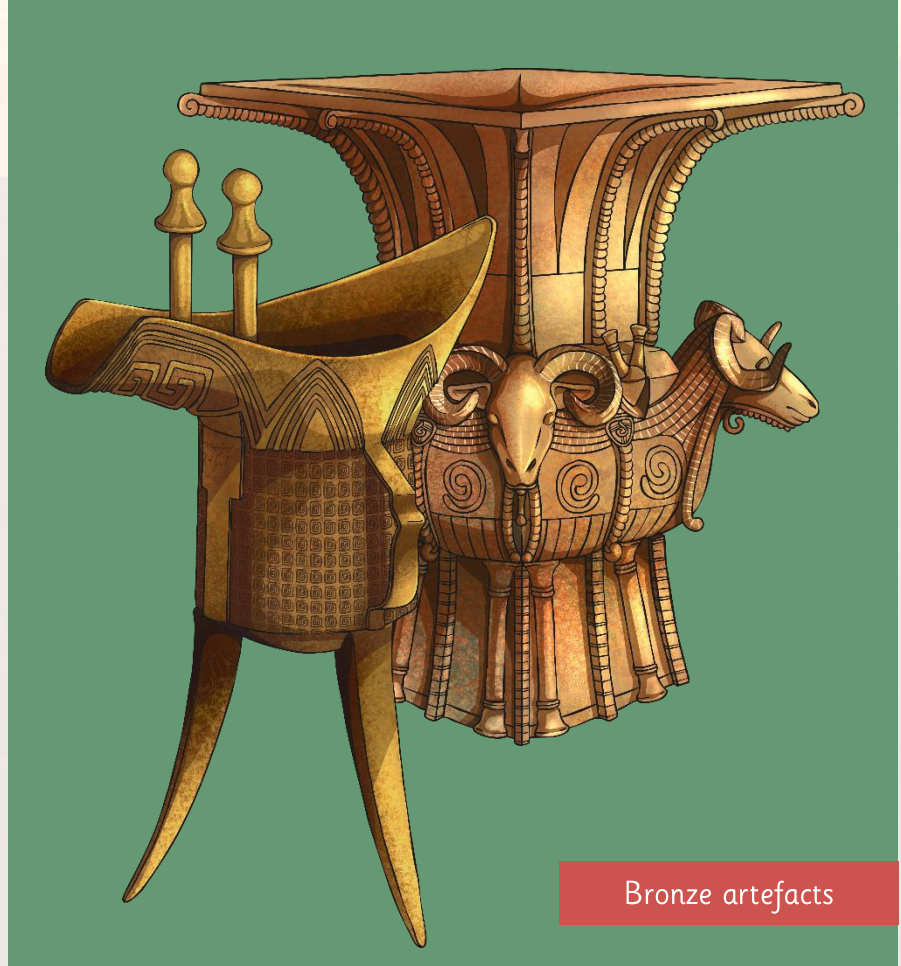
How Shang craftsmen worked with bronze:

Firstly, a model of the item was made out of clay. Patterns were inscribed onto the object if required, or extra shapes made out of clay could be stuck on to create a raised design.

Next, wet clay was pressed all around the model to make a mould, then it was cut into sections and removed.

The pieces of clay mould were then fired in a kiln and put back together.

Molten bronze was then poured into the mould. When it was set, the mould was broken away to reveal the bronze item inside.



Bronze artefacts

