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Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

New Zealand GreenStone or Jade

By David Finlay

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Learn More about Jade / Greenstone

What Is Jade?

Well, to start with, there are two kinds of Jade: their geological names are Jadeite and Nephrite. The common names for Nephrite are Greenstone or in Maori – Pounamu.

Jadeite is found in an area around the northern Burmese border with China. Nephrite is found in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Russia, Wyoming and in other small deposits around the world.

Jadeite is a silicate of sodium and aluminium. Nephrite is a silicate of calcium and magnesium.

Do they look different?

Yes, Jadeite is a rare mineral and the lighter brighter colours have the greatest value. Nephrite is richer in colour with interesting inclusions, rivers and other variations of colour. It can be either dark or light – from almost black-green, through greens, rust to light, – nearly white in colour.

Is one kind of Jade more valuable than the other?

No, the preference is personal. Some people like dark stone and some prefer light coloured stone. The preferences generally depend on where you come from – your ethnicity. There are two schools of thought to be aware of: the Maori school and the Asian school of Jade appreciation. The Maori school prefers their stone to be rich in colour, either dark or light, with interesting inclusions, rivers and other variations. The Asian school has developed over the last 5,000 years and prefers lighter brighter colours with clarity and purity.

Why is Jade called Greenstone in New Zealand?

This name came from the first European explorers who came to New Zealand in the eighteenth century and saw the Maori people wearing Jade tiki and other ornaments. They didn't realise it was Jade and called it Greenstone and the name has stayed.

New Zealand GreenStone or Jade

What should I look out for when buying Jade?

Check for cracks. Hold the piece up to the light and study it carefully. If there are any cracks they will be a point of weakness and could cause your piece to break later on. Look for richness of colour. Some Jade can be muddy or dull in colour. Look for translucence. The beauty of Jade is seen in the way light reflects and moves through the stone.

Where does jade come from?

Many of you will be familiar with Chinese jade in the form of carvings and jewelry items such as bracelets and small carved pendants. You'll know that Chinese jade comes in varying shades – from almost white to bright green. Chinese jade is jadeite – a chemically distinct mineral from nephrite, the type of jade found in New Zealand. While jadeite is a silicate of sodium and aluminum, nephrite is a silicate of calcium and magnesium.

Jade from New Zealand

Commercial quantities of Nephrite jade are found in only a few countries in the world besides New Zealand – Australia, China, Russia and Canada. New Zealand has some of the finest nephrite jade in the world. In New Zealand, nephrite jade is named Pounamu, by Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and is also referred to as greenstone, a name given to it by the early explorers and settlers to New Zealand who first came in the eighteenth century. Nephrite jade is very rich in colour. It is often marked with inclusions or darker colours running through it. The most prized nephrite jade in New Zealand is flower jade, jade with pale green or ochre clouds of colour. This distinctive patterning and colouring comes from the outside rim or 'rind' of the jade boulders or stones where the surface has oxidized. Maori appreciation of jade centres on these features: patterns that seem to evoke images of forests, rivers and clouds.

Jade from around the world

Jade is found in many countries around the world but commercial quantities are found in only a few. On any field where jade is found, whether it is in New Zealand Canada or China, only 5% of all jade mined will be AAA grade or what we know as "jewelry grade jade" – stone that can be used for fine carving or jewelry. This grade of jade is translucent, has perfect clarity and no fractures.

Each region has its own highly prized stone. In Australia, we look for jade that is a deep black colour. In Canada, highly sought after stone has bright green flecks through it. The best quality Russian jade can be very white with a root beer colour rind, or a very pale almost teal colour.

New Zealand Carvings

Pounamu has special significance for the Maori. The Maori believe that Pounamu absorbs the 'mana' or spiritual power of its wearer. The Maori also believe that a piece of Pounamu will always yearn to return to its source in the rivers and mountains of New Zealand.

New Zealand jade carving is unique in its designs and forms. We owe this to the Maori who have refined techniques of working with the stone over a long period of time. We can trace their use of Pounamu back to the twelfth century. Because of its extreme hardness, Pounamu was used by the Maori for weapons and tools. It was also prized by the Maori for ornaments – pendants and earrings.

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Many of the designs you see today are contemporary interpretations of traditional designs, which have been carved for centuries such as the hei matua (fish hook), the tiki (representing man) and the manaia (serpent form).

It can be said that all jade carving has an organic dimension. New Zealand carving is dynamic and diverse – a fact evidenced by the increasing numbers of new and talented sculptors and carvers, each creating their own unique designs from their own particular sources of inspiration, whether that be Maori, Pacific, Asian or Celtic.

The Process of Jade Carving

Jade carving is a painstaking and exacting art form. A carver first needs to study the stone to see where its strengths and beauty lie, in terms of colour, clarity and patterning. Some carvers call this "the heart of the stone". The carver works to bring the heart of the stone to the fore. To do this, a rough shape is first cut out on a diamond bladed trim saw. Pre-forming, the grinding of edges of the rough shape follows. A high-speed grinder then shapes the piece into its final form. Still the surface needs to be polished – through a series of increasing finer grades of sand paper until the desired finish, from smooth and satin to a highly polished gloss, is achieved.

David Finlay is the co-founder of www.silverfernz.com an online shopping site delivering the best crafts and gifts from New Zealand.

Jade – Classic Quality Jewelry

By Wanda Cortez

If I had unlimited funds I would spend a large proportion of it on objects made from jade, both artefacts and modern pieces. The subtle shades of green and lilac are what appeal to me. Jade jewelry is understated, rather than the "in your face" obviousness of many other stones.

Jade is an incredibly tough material, stronger than steel, and in pre-historical times was used for axe-heads, knives and weapons. It is only more recently that Jade's beauty has led to its use in jewelry and fine ornaments.

There are two forms of jade, jadeite and nephrite. The two have very different structures, but exhibit similar properties. The structural differences do not affect the uses to which the jade is put, they are only significant to a collector of gems.

Jade comes in a range of colors, from the highly sought after emerald green of "Imperial Jade" to delicate pinks and lavenders. The emerald green color occurs because the stones contain a trace of chromium compounds. Other shades of green are due to the presence of iron compounds, while the pink and lavender hues are produced by manganese compounds.

Most people think of Chinese art when they think of jade, and rightly so; as early as 3000BC jade was called the Royal Gem in China. In China jade symbolizes wisdom, justice, compassion, modesty and

courage.

Jade is also found in New Zealand and in Central America. It was treasured by Mayas, Aztecs and Maoris hundreds of years ago. The ancient Egyptians admired jade too, attaching the values of harmony and balance to the gemstone.

Modern jewelry tends to favor the lavender jade, perhaps because it is set off so well by silver and platinum settings. Jade bracelets, earrings and necklaces are all attractive to the modern eye, signifying good taste and expense just as much as sapphires and diamonds.

Wanda Cortez has her own Internet business and makes her living by writing. She has two teenagers. Find more articles at

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