

14 ZHULONG

*Hongshan culture, North-East China,  
3,500–3000 BC  
Size: 19,5 cm high  
Limestone*



*Zhulong* means ‘pig-dragon’. It is a mysterious emblem of the neolithic Hongshan culture, for which nobody so far has an explanation. They were carved in stone, and more rarely in jade, over a large area, from Inner Mongolia to Liaoning. Because stone does not talk, multiple theories have been put forward as to what they represent. They are the product of a shamanic society, but beyond that we have no idea. Nevertheless, the mystery of a potent form remains compelling. Every phase of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia has produced thrilling images, most obviously from the Animal Style of the Scythian peoples of the 1st millennium bc. But there are also many earlier layers of nomadic culture of which we only get rare glimpses. The Hongshan culture offers us one.