~Asia-China-Mirror-4 Leaf-16 Arc-4 Boss

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4 Leaf-16 Arc-4 Boss Mirror with 'caoye' design, 2nd century BCE (Karlgren 1941:111), Atlantica Collection.

Similar to Karlgren (1941, pl. 78, no. 13: "Knob and quatrefoil...; square central band [missing an inscription in our example], at corners of the central band ... brush-like petals; four bosses, under them dragons and above them simple petals." White metal, 16 continuous rim arcs, inner square and 4 leaves (*caoye*); 4 bosses at the cardinal directions, dragon (?) at the central knob. Four leaf, 16 arc and 4 boss configurations, which appeared at the end of the Warring States period, depict a cosmological scheme: the arcs suggest the sun's cycle, and the bosses indicate the cardinal points of the compass to point the way.

The four designs between the four cardinal bosses have been interpreted as "brush like petals (Karlgren 1941:112), "birds with spread wings" (Swallow (1977:44) and as "a 'caoye', or grass and leaf, pattern ... defined by the symmetrical motif resembling an ear of corn" (Menzies 2003:74). It has also been suggested that the leaf designs may be derived from the Shang *taotie* 饕餮 , all-devouring beast, suggesting that the viewer is being engaged in a mysterious communication with Shang Ti (heaven's order). The *taotie* motif is actually picked up by dragons that wind around the four cardinal bosses. The central square motif recalls a Ch'in brick according to Swallow (1977:44).

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