SOME MIRRORS OF SUPPOSED PRE-HAN DATE *

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In the April number of the *Bulletin of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts* for the year 1908 there appeared the first, but one, general article on Chinese bronze mirrors ever published in America and almost the first ever published in any European language.[1] It was written by OKAKURA Kakuzo 岡倉覺三, the distinguished Japanese writer, scholar, and artist who was at that time curator of Oriental art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The article was important (and indeed still remains so) from several points of view. At the time it aroused interest in the collection of Chinese bronze mirrors in the Boston Museum, perhaps the first comprehensive collection of the kind in America. It also called attention to a hitherto almost completely ignored and important field of Chinese art and archaeology. For centuries known and prized above almost all other antiquities in China and Japan, Chinese bronzes were at the time almost unknown in the West, and among these, bronze mirrors were the least known. The enthusiasm and interest accorded to the magnificent exhibition of Chinese bronzes from American collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Fall of 1938 makes it difficult to realize the truth of such a statement.

In this article, OKAKURA briefly indicated the evolution of the casting and decoration of bronze mirrors in China from the Han dynasty and before, illustrating his account with mirrors in the Boston collection. He set down some of the traditional ideas of

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[1] The first general monograph on Chinese mirrors in any European language seems to have been Professor Friedrich HIRTH's "Chinese Metallic Mirrors," published in the *Boas Anniversary Volume*, Stechert, New York, 1906. This work, which has never been superseded, was based almost entirely upon original Chinese literary sources and the collection of bronze mirrors in the Guimet Museum, Paris. It is an excellent summary of the whole field and contains a valuable bibliography of Chinese works.

Plate 1

Reproduced through the courtesy of
Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Plate 2

Reproduced through the courtesy of
Mr. Charles B. Hoyt, Boston.

the origin of Chinese mirrors and reproduced as a frontispiece and first page of the bulletin a mirror in the Boston collection which he designated as pre-Han. This was an original and daring suggestion, since up to that time no Chinese mirror had ever been accepted anywhere, either in China, Japan or the West, as being earlier than Han.

Indeed, up to that time the so-called Huai or Ch'in style of Chinese art had not yet been differentiated. That long series of articles and monographs treating early Chinese bronzes in general and the Huai style in particular had not yet been written. Special interest in this phase of Chinese art began about the year 1920, and the series of articles in question was one expression of this interest. Archaeology and the appreciation and collecting of ancient bronzes have been a Chinese forte since very early times. As early as the Sung period Chinese works which have become classic were written: catalogues and studies of the bronzes and their inscriptions. In all of these works some bronzes were assigned to the pre-Han period, to the Chou dynasty and even to the Shang. In no single Chinese work, however, has any specific mirror, so far as I know, ever been assigned to a period earlier than the Han, although Chinese tradition assigns the invention of Chinese mirrors to a very much earlier date.

In 1920, in Kyōto, there was published a Japanese work on Chinese mirrors, *Kokyō no kenkyū*, by Tomioka Kenzō 富岡謙藏, 古鏡の研究, a posthumous collection of fourteen essays most of which had appeared previously in various Japanese journals.[2] This volume illustrates four mirrors of so-called Huai or Ch'in type and four of transitional type from Huai style to Han. Although this volume was reviewed in extenso by Professor Paul Pelliot in *TP* 20.142-156, and was listed in the Supplement to *Bibliotheca Sinica* 3854 by Henri Cordier, Paris, 1922, it has hardly been noticed in the West.

Gotō Moriichi in his volume, *Kanshikikyō* (Mirrors of Han Type Excavated in Japan, Tōkyō, 1926) 後藤守一, 漢式鏡 also

[2] Eleven of these essays had appeared; three of the remaining were left incomplete. The whole volume was prepared for publication through the efforts of Umehara Sueji and a son of Tomioka Kenzō.

illustrates a number of pre-Han and transitional type mirrors, and discusses them. KOOP, in his pioneer volume, *Early Chinese Bronzes* (Ernest Benn, London, 1924), illustrates a mirror of Huai type in the Eumorfopoulos Collection, but calls it T'ang. The West, up to the year 1926, had definitely not become conscious of that bronze style which now goes under the various designations of Huai, Ch'in, Warring States, Eastern Chou, or something else, depending upon the country or the preference of the writer in question.[3]

In the January number of the *China Journal*, 1926, Mr. Orvar KARLBECK published a really pioneer and epoch-making article, " Notes on Some Early Chinese Bronze Mirrors." This article and Mr. KARLBECK's extensive travels, study, and collecting activities are largely responsible for calling attention to and arousing a more general interest in the West in Chinese Bronzes, and particularly for directing attention to this previously practically unnoticed Huai style. Since this time early Chinese bronzes have excited more interest and attracted more attention than any other field of Chinese art. One needs only to mention the exceptional exhibition of them in Stockholm in September, 1933, on the occasion of the 13th International Congress on the History of Art, the great London Exhibition of Chinese Art, from November, 1935, to March, 1936, the several Paris expositions in the Cernuschi Museum and at the Orangerie, and now, perhaps the most unprecedented exposition of Chinese bronzes of them all, the Metropolitan Museum Exposition, during October and November, 1938.

The Boston mirror was the first Chinese bronze mirror in America to be daringly labelled pre-Han, and this at a time when, so far as I know, no Chinese mirror anywhere in the world had been assigned to so early a date. Up to the present this Boston mirror has never, I believe, been challenged save by Professor UMEHARA Sueji.[4] All the other leading experts on Chinese mirrors have apparently accepted the original dating of it as given by

[3] Since there is as yet no conformity of usage in the matter, in my discussions in this article I shall use the term Huai.

[4] See note 6, below.

OKAKURA in 1908. It may be fairly said that this Boston mirror has become classic. It has been reproduced, discussed, and referred to in other studies of Chinese bronzes. UMEHARA illustrated it in his *Ōbei ni okeru Shina kokyō* 梅原末治, 歐米に於ける支那古鏡 (Chinese Mirrors in Europe and America, Tōkyō, 1933) pl. 13.[5] A mirror of similar type from the Stoclet Collection in Brussels is reproduced and discussed in his *Kanizen no kokyō* 漢以前の古鏡 (Study of Pre-Han Mirrors, Kyōto, 1935), plate 39, no. 3, and in his *Shina-kodō seikwa* 支那古銅精華 (Selected Relics of Ancient Chinese Bronzes from Collections in Europe and America, 7 vols., pt. 2, vol. 2, plate 160, Yamanaka and Co., Ōsaka, 1933).[6]

It is a sufficiently rare type. For thirty years the Boston specimen was the only one known in America. Recently a second specimen has been exhibited in the Fogg Museum at Harvard by Mr. Charles B. HOYT of Cambridge, Massachusetts. At least one specimen of this type is known in Japan, and was illustrated in GOTŌ Moriichi's book, page 759, ill. 603. Mr. R. W. SWALLOW's *Ancient Chinese Bronze Mirrors* (Henri Vetch, Peiping, 1937) illustrates a specimen (ill. 601) from the collection of Monsieur Henri LAMBERT of Shanghai. This specimen is labelled under the illustration as coming from Loyang and curiously enough it is called "probably T'ang." The mirror is not discussed in the text or even referred

[5] The title of this Japanese work has been variously rendered into English.

[6] So far as I have been able to discover, the splendid STOCLET mirror of the Boston mirror type was first published in the volume, *Jörg Trübner, Zum Gedächtnis. Ergebnisse seiner letzten chinesischen Reisen,* prepared and published in 1930 by Dr. Otto KÜMMEL (Berlin), plate 46, page 92. In the description of the plate the mirror decoration is spoken of as consisting of "six T'ao T'ieh masks" and the writer remarks, "Die Spiegelform ist meines Wissens bisher unbekannt." The mirror is dated 2-1 century B. C. In his *Selected Relics*° UMEHARA labelled it "probably T'ang Dynasty." Since the Japanese text to these two volumes is extremely short, consisting of only a few lines, I believe that the dating is not discussed. The chronology, however, is based upon the same author's *Chinese Mirrors in Europe and America,* where the Boston mirror appears among the types transitional from pre-Han to Han, but with no statement of date. In the text, half a page of discussion is devoted to it (pages 85-86) and it is called a T'ang imitation of ancient mirrors. Such is also his remark regarding the STOCLET mirror.

My article was entirely written before I became aware of Professor UMEHARA's opinion, for his works have not always been at my disposal. I am now most happy to have it in further support of my own.

to and there is no indication of any kind as to why it is called, "probably T'ang." [7] I know of no mirror of this type in any other European collection.

Several years ago, while studying the Boston mirror from illustrations, it came to me suddenly, almost as a conviction, that this long-accepted pre-Han mirror was not pre-Han at all but was T'ang. When I came to America in the summer of 1937 I visited Boston and expressly examined the mirror in question, although through the glass of the case, since it was unfortunately Saturday afternoon and it was impossible to get the keys so as to handle the mirror. However, even this incomplete examination was sufficient. I was convinced that the mirror was T'ang. I have now (June, 1939) examined and handled the Boston Museum mirror, as well as the much fresher and much more recently excavated HOYT mirror on loan at the Fogg Museum. I am convinced that they are both T'ang and I should like to present the following evidence, and call these mirrors again to the attention of scholars and experts in the field. If these mirrors are accepted as T'ang then this evidence of a knowledge of the Huai style and a copying of it in T'ang times is a discovery of some interest and importance.

I should like to discuss the various features of casting, the style of decoration, and patination in support of my thesis.

(1) *Casting*:—Chinese mirrors from the pre-Han period down through the Sung exhibit a considerable variety of casting techniques and features peculiar to the various types, dates, and localities of their manufacture. When one has become familiar with them, especially from the handling of hundreds and thousands of mirrors, one is not likely to mistake the technique of casting of a Han, and even less of a pre-Han mirror, for that of a later period, the T'ang for instance. A careful examination of the Boston mirror, or of any of the others which I have mentioned of this type will, I believe, suggest to any one who knows Chinese mirrors

[7] The description of this LAMBERT mirror reads, "Mirror with modified dragon scrolls, probably T'ang Dynasty." I suggest that this has simply been copied from the illustration of a similar mirror in UMEHARA's seven volume catalogue, just referred to, where the description is identical. This would explain the suggested T'ang dating of the LAMBERT mirror.

that it cannot be pre-Han even though it seems to be so in design. Decoration aside, the appearance, casting, and general effect of the mirror are almost typically T'ang. A special characteristic and outstanding feature of all the early mirrors, so far as I know them, is their unusual thinness, and for the most part, their great refinement of metal. (There are of course some exceptions to this last general rule.) This feature of thinness applies almost equally to the slightly later transitional Huai to Han types. Not only are the early pre-Han mirrors thin and light in weight proportionate to their size but they are thin and light in appearance. The later Han mirrors and the T'ang mirrors are just the opposite. They are characterized by heaviness of weight and often, particularly with the T'ang specimens, by heaviness of design as well. The reader is asked to examine any series of mirrors or mirror illustrations of these early and transitional types to test these statements by his own observations.

(2) *Flatness*:—A second feature of the Boston mirror type is its characteristic flatness. In this respect it is exactly akin to a whole series of T'ang mirrors of similar character. It is quite true that many of the Huai style mirrors are also flat but they are totally different from this mirror in casting features, and hardly suggest any kinship. The whole series of T'ang mirrors, round, square, foliate, square with foliate corners, and decorated freely with phoenixes, dragons, the toad in the moon, cocks, rosettes, flowers, mythical scenes and a variety of other designs, is essentially like this mirror in most respects except decoration.[7a]

(3) *Concentric raised bands and outer rim*:—A third and very important feature which is distinctly T'ang, is the narrow, semi-pointed and bevelled outer rim and the two very similar and matching inner concentric circles around the knob. These concentric raised rings (either single or double), dividing the mirror decoration into separated fields, are with certain differences a

[7a] Cf. the following illustrations,—plates 75, 72, 66 no. 1, 65 no. 2, 64, 63 no. 1, 61 in UMEHARA's *Chinese Mirrors in Europe and America; Catalog of an Exhibition of Chinese Bronzes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,* October and November, 1938, Nos. 245 and 255.

common feature of most of the well-known T'ang Sea-Horse-Grape mirrors. In most of these it usually occurs as a single ring but is also sometimes double. T'ang mirrors of exactly the same construction and casting features as the Sea-Horse-Grape type, but perfectly plain without decoration, frequently have these raised rings, either single or double. Such mirrors are common in China though they occur rather rarely in Western collections because they are plain. I have a dozen or a score in my collection. This Boston mirror type combines two features of two related types of T'ang mirrors, the large, thin, flat character and general casting features of the mirrors referred to in the above paragraph, and the concentric, raised-ring feature of the type just referred to.

This type of outer rim is exactly duplicated in the very unusual gold-covered T'ang mirror in the Charles B. Hoyt Collection, illustrated in UMEHARA's book (see note 7a), plate no. 61, and also exhibited in the Metropolitan exhibition as no. 369. Many of the T'ang mirrors, silver and gold-covered, and inlaid in lacquer, are like this mirror with respect to outer rim and general construction. A T'ang flat, foliate mirror with double concentric rings is illustrated in M. GOTŌ's book *Kokyō shūei* 古鏡聚英 (Pictorial Catalogue of Ancient Bronze Mirrors, Tōkyō, July, 1935), plate 8, no. 4. I have one almost identical with it in my own collection. The evolution of bronze mirror casting in Japan shows very clearly the influence of Chinese T'ang dynasty types and especially of the types I have referred to and described above. The Japanese mirrors with phoenix and floral design continue the feature of the inside raised rim as well as the flatness and general construction. This type and the succeeding or Sung mirrors often have an outer rim almost identical with that of the Boston mirror. This is also true of the most characteristic Sung mirrors in China (S. GOTŌ, *op. cit.*, plates 31 to 37).

I have not overlooked the fact that division of the decorated area into a series of concentric zones is a regular feature of many, perhaps most, Han mirrors. But the manner of the division is essentially different from that of the mirror under discussion which is not like that of either Han or pre-Han mirrors.[8] The Huai

[8] There is a partial exception to this statement in the case of the mirrors discussed

mirrors are usually decorated freely over a surface area undivided except for the central knob and a flat or low-relief ring or band immediately around it, the whole being enclosed by the outer rim. Exceptions to this general rule occur in the case of some of the Huai to Han transitional types where a low, bevelled, concave, band-like ring divides the areas to be decorated. These mirrors sometimes present a superficial resemblance to the Boston mirror type but a careful comparison of the two types reveals that they are essentially different.

(4) *Central knob or handle*:—The knob is one of the most distinctive features of the mirrors of pre-Han type. It is impossible in an article of this scope to describe in detail all the various types of knobs of the Han and pre-Han mirrors but I shall indicate for comparative purposes the main ones. (a) *Fluted or ridged.* The most common and distinctive type of knob on Huai Valley mirrors and those of Ch'in type from Loyang and elsewhere is that which consists of a simple metal strap, raised and ridged or fluted. The ridges or flutings are one or two in addition to the sides of the strap which are often also turned up, thus making in all either three or four ridges. Rarely, there are more ridges. (b) *Plain strap.* Sometimes the boss is a perfectly plain raised metal band or strap. (c) *String loop.* In a few exceptional specimens the boss is the simplest most rudimentary kind of metal string or loop, purely functional. (d) *Animal.* A last principal type of boss is what may properly be called an animal boss. Around the central knob is coiled, as part of the mirror decoration, a characteristic Huai dragon. The boss is frequently its raised back.

(e) *Transitional and Han knobs*:—The knobs on certain transitional or early Han mirrors consist of small frog or toad-like animals, of miniature mountains like the hill censers, or pointed bosses surrounded by nipple points, seven or eight in number. Typical

on page 91 of this article, and illustrated in UMEHARA's work there referred to. These Huai mirrors do have raised, milled or sectioned, concentric rings or bands, but the bands are low and thin and thus unlike those of the Boston mirror type. Moreover, these bands are chiefly for ornament, and frequently exclusively so, not dividing decorated areas (pl. 25, 1 and 23, 1) but being the decoration itself, save where, as in plate 23, 2, 3 (and other similar specimens) they separate the animal boss, or narrow areas decorated with Chinese characters and fish (UMEHARA, *Pre-Han Mirrors*).

Han bosses are high, rounded or pointed,—sometimes very broad and flat, as in the late Han and early Six Dynasties types. Except for the early Han, or transitional type knobs, the knob itself on Han mirrors is rarely if ever ornamented, or anything but a rounded, more or less pointed, or flat boss of metal.

There are, however, two things distinctive about the knob on most Han mirrors and this also applies for the most part to pre-Han mirrors as well. The knob rises from a base which has the effect of being superimposed upon the general ground or background of the mirror. This base is almost like a low platform with the knob rising from its center. A second thing is the fact that while the knob is certainly functional, it is not merely so but in almost all Han and pre-Han mirrors is very definitely a part of the whole mirror design and has been conceived of as such. In the very earliest of the pre-Han mirrors this is not always so. The knob has the appearance of being stuck on, as an afterthought, sometimes put there purely for use. The gradual evolution in construction and design in the early mirrors and the passing of the knob from something purely functional and necessary for use to its becoming an asset in the general decorative scheme, is important and interesting to trace. It often serves as a very important key to the study of casting technique, as well as to mirror chronology.

(f) *T'ang and later type knobs*:—After the end of the Han period the knob gradually declines in importance and becomes less and less an inseparable and integral part of the mirror decoration and design. Two types of T'ang knobs are distinctive and outstanding. The first is the knob usually found on the numerous so-called Sea-Horse-Grape type of mirror which is perhaps the most popular and distinctive of all the T'ang types. Much has been written about the origin of this type of mirror design but the fact is that it still remains unsatisfactorily explained. Although various elements of it can be traced to various sources it seems to have sprung pretty much full-blown into Chinese art during the T'ang period and to have achieved its fullest expression on the mirror. This mirror type usually, or very frequently at least, has as its knob a small animal variously resembling, a sea-horse, a

squirrel, a frog, a lion, a dog, a badger—as some critic has suggested—and various other animals. In the finest specimens the central animal is an integral part of the whole design, but there are many mirrors even of this type in which the animal, whatever it be, is more or less stuck on. Many others of the Sea-Horse-Grape type of mirror have a plain, undecorated, nondescript knob of rounded or semi-flat metal.

The second most distinctive and most common type of decorated T'ang knob represents a tortoise with his four feet and tail extended, and very commonly swimming in water, sometimes even resting on a lotus leaf. Other exceptional T'ang knobs represent a lotus leaf rising from a lotus pond, the cassia tree in the Hare-in-the-Moon type of mirror in which the knob is formed by the swelled and bulging tree trunk, a mountain island surrounded by water and lapped by waves—probably the Taoist Island of the Blest—a variety of floral design knobs, and finally the nondescript, often imperfectly formed, metal knob which has no part in the general design of the mirror.

This is the type of knob which occurs most frequently on the large, flat, sometimes square-shaped with foliate corners, often entirely foliate-shaped mirrors decorated with dragons, phoenixes, cocks, lions, flowers, rosettes, mythical scenes and a variety of other designs. It would seem likely that these mirrors were most popular after the middle of the T'ang period and on to the end, even extending down into the Sung. They have their continuation, beyond question, in Sung styles, some of which are almost literal copies while others are a natural outgrowth of T'ang styles.

The knob on this type of mirror, although of the nondescript type which I have mentioned above is nevertheless very distinctive. There is nothing else exactly like it in the whole range of Chinese mirrors from the earliest times down to the end of the T'ang period. The knob is usually an imperfectly cast and imperfectly rounded lump of metal, oftentimes rather flat on the top. This flatness is also almost a new feature in mirror knobs. The knob has ceased to have any part in the decoration of the mirror and is purely traditional and functional. It is there for use only. Moreover, it has another distinctive feature. It is often cast in

such a way that it seems almost to be partly scooped out of the metal base and body of the mirror from which it rises. The body of the mirror where the knob is attached often has a gouged-out appearance and is actually sometimes gouged out leaving shallow cavities around the base of the knob. It is quite true that some of the very early mirrors of the pre-Han types also have something of this gouged-out appearance and character but even in this respect they are perfectly distinguishable from the T'ang type in question. The pre-Han mirrors of this kind have thin strap-like, often fluted or ridged, loop bands for knobs while the T'ang knobs, in spite of their imperfect character, show their definite descent from the heavy, well-formed knobs of the Han period. The knobs on the Boston mirror and the others of this group are of the typical gouged-out variety and could hardly be mistaken for pre-Han.

After the T'ang period the mirror knobs become of even less importance and dwindle into almost complete insignificance becoming, except for a few which continue the floral tradition of the T'ang, mere loops of metal more or less heavy and more or less thick, almost it would seem, as they happened to come from the mold.

(5) *Patination*:—This is a subject most difficult to treat. Patination is capable of the greatest variations depending upon an almost infinite variety of conditions; viz.—the character of the original surfacing, the composition of the original metal, the condition of the mirror at the time of burial, and the conditions under which it has lain buried during the centuries, such as the nature of the soil, the amount of moisture, the position of the mirror in the tomb or coffin, and other conditions. In spite of all the possibilities offered by such a combination of variables it is nevertheless possible for one who has the opportunity of handling large numbers of mirrors on the field, more or less fresh from excavations, to become familiar with what may be called standard types of patination occurring with very considerable regularity, and peculiar to certain mirror types, localities, and periods. These patina types are fairly easy to recognize but almost impossible to

describe accurately enough for one to distinguish who is not familiar with them.

I have not had opportunity to examine all the five known mirrors (see above, p. 75) of the Boston type. The two in the United States I have studied carefully and I will speak of them. The Boston mirror would seem to have been out of the ground and in circulation for a long time, or it has been extensively cleaned; perhaps both. The reflecting surface is entirely devoid of patination and almost of original surfacing, thus exposing the metal to a degree. Both the metal and what remains of the mercury coating reveal it as a perfectly typical T'ang mirror of the type I have already indicated and discussed. The metal, and coating of mercury are both typically T'ang.[9]

[9] Some readers will perhaps object to my use of the words "typically T'ang" and will ask the following questions. How do we know what mirrors are "typically T'ang"? What is the evidence for such classification and such dating? Are there any dated T'ang mirrors? It is obviously outside the scope of this article to go into the complicated question of establishing the dating of so-called "typical" T'ang mirrors. I have not questioned the datings of what we might call the "established types" of T'ang mirrors. I have accepted these as pretty generally agreed upon, over a period of perhaps twenty years, by archaeologists and specialists on Chinese bronzes. The dating of some of these now accepted T'ang types will doubtless, as time goes on, be called into question, but we are by no means completely at sea in the matter, as some readers may be inclined to imagine.

I should like briefly to review the following facts. (a) We know Han mirrors both from actual dated specimens and from other important archaeological evidence. (b) Similarly we know the mirrors of the Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties periods from actual dated specimens and from other archaeological data. (c) We know the mirrors of the Sung and Ming periods from similar dated specimens and associated archaeological material. (d) Thus by the process of comparison and exclusion we can fit in the mirrors of T'ang type. (e) But this is not all. We have the very important and very reliable historical evidence of the Shōsō-in mirrors in Nara, Japan. (f) We have the art styles of the T'ang period as evidenced by the sculptures, jades, silverware and other materials, to serve as an indication of what the T'ang bronze mirror styles would likely be. (g) In *TP* 20.153-154 Professor Paul PELLIOT gives a list of dated Chinese mirrors known up to that time. The list is largely taken from the writings of 羅振玉 Lo Chen-yü and TOMIOKA Kenzō, the father of "mirror science." The mirrors range in date from 10 A.D. down to 1389 A.D. No mirror of actual T'ang date is listed. (h) GOTŌ Moriichi, the first Japanese mirror specialist to formulate a comprehensive work on Han mirrors, in his great work, *Han Mirrors Excavated in Japan*, lists 889 actually excavated mirrors along with the other archaeological material associated with the mirrors in question. This forms a document of outstanding importance. (i) Professor Perceval YETTS, in his *Catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos Col-*

The decorated back of the mirror is like the face. There is hardly a trace of patination on it. It has been worn smooth and shiny, doubtless from constant handling, shining and wiping, as I have seen so many mirrors worn in China. The condition of the knob is also full evidence of this wearing process. The cord attached to the knob has worn almost half way through the metal knob itself, wearing almost equally from both sides.

The HOYT mirror in the Fogg Museum has apparently been recently excavated. It might very well have come from the ground any time within the past five years. I do not know how long it has been in the possession of Mr. HOYT or the dealer from whom he secured it. In any case its condition is perfectly typical of that of thousands of mirrors that I have seen in China fresh from the soil after the outside dirt and accretions had been cleaned away from them. The mirror, both face and back, is covered in parts with a green rough-surface patination exactly characteristic of the same kind of patination so frequently seen on T'ang mirrors and especially those of the Sea-Horse-Grape and the other large flat varieties discussed in this article. The original mercury-covered surface which shows through the green patina in many places is also characteristically T'ang. I have already mentioned the difficulty of describing the differences of surfacing and patination between mirrors of pre-Han date and T'ang but anyone who will examine a series of each and compare the two will readily perceive

lection of Chinese Bronzes (1929-1930), refers to a list of 62 dated Chinese mirrors from 6 A. D. to 650 A. D. (vol. 2, p. 31). (j) Finally, Professor UMEHARA Sueji has, for a number of years, published a series of articles on *Dated Mirrors from the Time of the Han Dynasties, the Three Kingdoms, and the Six Dynasties* 漢三國六朝紀年鏡集錄. Part five of this series appeared in February, 1939.

Without going into the subject more exhaustively, I think that it will appear that we have ample evidence for formulating our ideas as to what "typical T'ang mirrors" are likely to be. The fact that thus far there have appeared few if any dated mirrors which fall exactly within the accepted chronological limits of the T'ang dynasty is, I believe, easily explained. The styles of mirror decoration which developed and flourished during the T'ang were for the most part based upon nature, were floral, naturalistic or imaginatively naturalistic. Such designs had no place for characters and inscriptions which were so common on mirrors of the Han and Six Dynasties periods. Thus, dated mirrors of exactly T'ang date seem hardly to exist. Even the limited and rather rare types which use inscriptions as part of their decoration seem rarely if ever to be dated.

the difference and will equally realize that the mercury surfacing and patination of this mirror are T'ang and not pre-Han. The Hoyt mirror is an exceptionally fine specimen and its green patination with the mercury, silver-colored surface showing in many places makes it a most valuable document, and with the Boston Museum mirror an almost conclusive argument for a T'ang dating.

Before discussing in some detail the style of this group of mirrors, perhaps the most difficult feature of all and the hardest to understand, it may be well to give a brief census of the known specimens of this rare type.[9a] During the course of fifteen years' residence in China, and the handling of perhaps fifteen or twenty thousand mirrors there and in the West I have met only these five specimens. I give a brief indication of the dimensions, condition and differences of each.

(1) Boston Museum specimen.

Knob—Imperfectly rounded, slightly flat on top, very considerably worn from both sides by the cord.

Raised rings—The two raised rings around the central knob are smooth, not milled or sectioned.

Patination—Almost lacking and smooth on the face of the mirror, either from cleaning or long handling and rubbing. Back, frequent traces of green patina worn smooth.

Decoration—As compared with the other mirrors of this type, indistinct in its finer details. Minute scroll and spiral decoration very considerably worn or perhaps original casting not clear.

Size—Dia. 5.5 inches. This is one of the smallest of the five mirrors known of this type.

Remarks—In my opinion this specimen is the most T'ang-like of the five.[10]

[9a] Two other types are also rare. UMEHARA (*Study of Ancient Mirrors from before the Han Dynasty,* Kyōto, 1935) illustrates no less than five mirrors of the double T'ao-t'ieh type, and there are others not illustrated in his work. I have one specimen myself. I know of seven specimens of the type, Confucius and Jung Ch'i-ch'i, and there are doubtless others.

[10] I re-examined the Boston Museum mirror and the Hoyt mirror in April, 1939 and would add the following observations:

Boston Museum (of Fine Arts) mirror. (a) *Face,* smooth surface, suggestion of old mercury surface worn off. (b) *Back,* traces of red and green patination, worn smooth

(2) The Hoyt mirror.

In the Fogg Museum.

Knob—Imperfectly rounded. Fresh and unworn; unlike the Boston Museum specimen in this respect. No signs of wear from a cord. Slightly gouged-out effect.

Patination—Face and back covered in parts (about half of the total surface) with typical green T'ang-type patination. Patina like that of countless T'ang mirrors which I have seen fresh from excavations.

Raised rings—Minutely sectioned or milled at a slight angle to the perpendicular, apparently imitating cord effect. Only two of the five specimens under discussion have this feature, this one and the STOCLET mirror illustrated in UMEHARA's book.

Decoration—In spite of the patination which covers part of it, this seems to be the finest of all the mirrors except the STOCLET; very clear and detailed, with all the minute scrolls and spirals clearly showing where the original mercury surfacing of the mirror is evident.

Size—Dia. 16.25 cm.

Remarks—This specimen is distinguished by its freshness. It also seems to be heavier in proportion to its size than most of the other specimens.[10]

(3) Lambert mirror.

Knob—Like that of the Boston specimen but more perfectly rounded and cast, and less worn.

Raised rings—Smooth, as on the Boston and GOTŌ specimens; non-sectioned; unmilled.

by cleaning and rubbing. (c) *Crack,* mold crack (?) extending across the entire mirror a little to the left of the center, heaviest at the lower edge, slight ridge. (d) *Design* of mirror back also heavily worn.

Hoyt mirror at the Fogg Museum. (a) *Surface,* face and back, silver-like mercury coating,—typically T'ang—showing through the overlying patination in many places. (b) *Green patina,* rather warty in places, on both surfaces of the mirror, front and back. (c) *Size,* smaller than the Boston mirror, apparently lighter in build, and perhaps a little thinner. (d) *Crack* running from both sides towards the central knob, but a little to the side of the center. It does not apparently go through the mirror. It cannot be seen on the face of the mirror, perhaps because of the heaviness of the patination. It may also be a mold crack. It is difficult to tell.

Patination—Apparently slight, if any. A rather clean specimen.
Decoration—Fine details; scrolls and spirals stand out clearly but apparently are not so sharp as on the HOYT and the STOCLET specimens.
Size—17 cm. This is the largest of all the five.
Remarks—This mirror is from Loyang and is the only one of the five of which we know the source (except possibly the mirror in the Japanese collection).

(4) Gotō mirror.

Size—Dia. 6.375 inches.
Remarks—Since I am obliged to describe this mirror from the small and poorly reproduced illustration, which in turn is reproduced from a rubbing, I cannot be fully certain of its detailed characteristics. It seems to be a good specimen with details of decoration fairly clear. It is free from patination.
Raised rings—The raised rings are apparently smooth and unmilled.

(5) Stoclet mirror.

Knob—The knob of this mirror is unique among the specimens of this type. It is well rounded and high, and larger than the knobs on the other mirrors. Moreover, it is covered with a kind of scroll and spiral decoration. The ground from which it rises is also decorated in a related style.
Raised rings—The two inside raised rings are sectioned or milled like those of the HOYT mirror.
Patination—The mirror has apparently been carefully cleaned or smoothed down but in such a way as not to injure it in any degree. There is abundant evidence of patination in many places.
Decoration—The decoration stands out very clearly in all its most minute details of spirals and scrolls. It is in the best condition and therefore the easiest to study of all of the five mirrors under survey.
Size—Dia. 6 inches.
Remarks—This mirror would seem to be the finest specimen of this type known. It is identical with the other specimens except for its superior casting and condition.

The explanation of the origin of the style and design of the Boston mirror type is one of the most difficult problems with regard to it. If it is indeed T'ang and not pre-Han, how can we explain its most unusual decoration, unique among all the mirrors of T'ang style and date and apparently quite unrelated to any of them? Nor does it seem to bear any relation to any of the styles of decoration of that little-known intermediary period between the Han and the T'ang, namely the Six Dynasties. Even now we know perhaps less about the styles of this long period than about those of almost any other. A few mirrors which do not seem to fit exactly into the traditional styles of the Han or the T'ang are assigned hesitatingly or casually to this Six Dynasties period. "When in doubt, say 'Six Dynasties,'" seems to be the motto of some. Even so, the mirrors in question are assigned to the third century period just after the Han or the sixth century period just before the T'ang. The brothers FÊNG 馮 in their famous book 金石索 *Chin shih so* (Researches on Inscriptions on Metal and Stone), published in 1822, assign a number of mirrors to the Six Dynasties and it is largely following their lead that later writers, Western and Eastern, have done so. Of course a limited number of dated mirrors actually belongs to this period and on this authority mirrors of similar types have been assigned to it. (Cf. the studies of UMEHARA referred to in note 9.)

Let us return to the Boston mirror. It is divided into three concentric design areas, separated from each other by raised ridges: a twisted rope design around the knob; outside of this an area of equal width decorated with pairs of conventionalized scrolls; and finally a much wider area decorated with six identical pairs of intertwined animals. The inner design area consists of eleven equal sections of rope, the surface area of each decorated with conventional volutes, triangles, etc., very much the Huai type of design. The next area consists of twelve identical conventionalized scrolls, in the form of an acute angle with the end rolled up, something like the letter L partially bent together. These twelve figures are arranged in inverted pairs, the bases resting, alternately, the one on the inner ridge towards the knob and the other on the next ridge away from the knob. The raised surface area of these scrolls

is decorated, alternately, the one with a rope pattern and the other with a kind of scale or key pattern. The outer, wider, and main design area is decorated with twelve identical pairs of animal heads with long intertwined necks, each of which spreads out as a kind of base support along the separating ridges. A profile view of the animal heads is presented and shows for each animal an identical pair of long prominent ears, a perfectly round eye surrounded by six minute scrolls giving a kind of floral effect. On one side of the eye there is a prominent bulge for the nose and, on the other side, one for the neck. Below the eye there is a long extended lower jaw or chin ending in a scroll. The face is very mild and domesticated, not at all like all or most of the Huai dragons and birds. The profile heads are in pairs exactly facing each other, with the faces all but touching from the tips of the forward ears to the tips of the chins. One pair of heads has the chins resting on the inside ridge nearest the central knob while the alternate pair is upside down and has the chins resting on the outer rim of the mirror. From behind the ears of each head extends the long thin neck which is entwined with the neck of one of the heads of the adjacent pair pointed in the opposite direction. This neck separates at the rim where it comes to rest, and spreads out in opposite directions, one arm terminating in a kind of turned-up scroll under the chin of the same head from which it originated and the other forming half of a conventionalized scroll just above the ears of the alternate pair of animals. The surface of the raised bands composing all this design is decorated with minute whirls, volutes, triangles, key patterns, etc., in Huai style, and is totally unlike anything that I know of pertaining to the T'ang except perhaps the decoration on some T'ang silver.

It may be difficult for the reader to follow this analysis on the Boston Museum and the Hoyt mirrors but with it he should be able to make out most of the design. If he is fortunate enough to have available a copy of UMEHARA's book he will be able to make out the design without analysis.

The various elements which have entered into the make-up of the design of the Boston mirror type can be traced all the way

from the middle Chou or earlier down to the end of the Huai style. Any student or specialist of Chinese bronzes can readily find them for himself by glancing through any comprehensive volume of illustrations of Chinese bronzes. I choose for reference *BMFEA* 6, "The Exhibition of Early Chinese Bronzes." A selection from plates 19 to 35 will serve our purpose. I give a brief summary indication of the plates and numbers where the different elements will be found and leave the reader to search them out.

(1) *The animal's head.* Pl. 19, and 24, no. 5. But the dragons on these plates are not the mild, gentle animal found on the mirrors.

(2) *The central knob.* On the STOCLET mirror only this may have been suggested by the bosses on the early bells, particularly on such a bell as that illustrated on plate 27. On the other hand this boss may very well have been a variation of the bosses on such mirrors of T'ang date as those in the Sumitomo Collection in Kyōto, as illustrated in the new catalogue of that collection, prepared by Professor UMEHARA and Dr. Kosaku HAMADA with an introduction by Dr. Torajirō NAITŌ and an epilogue by Baron Kichizaemon SUMITOMO, and published in Kyōto in 1934, viz., *Senoku seishô* 濱田耕作，內藤虎次郎，住友吉左衞門，泉屋清賞, plates 61 and 62.

(3) *Interlaced dragons* decorated with volutes, scrolls, triangles and key pattern. The general style and spirit of the Boston type mirror is strongly suggested by the animal style strap-band decoration on the objects on the following plates; plate 27, rim of bell; 30, no. 2; 31, no. 2; 35, nos. 5 and 6. But note that the decoration on these objects is not that of the mirrors. These dragons are wild and ferocious, clawed and perhaps horned, and not at all the mild, gentle animal of the mirrors, and the same is true of most of the Huai and pre-Han dragons, birds and other animals on vessels as well as on mirrors.

(4) *Twisted rope decoration.* Plate 27, bands of twisted rope setting off design areas. Plate 28, bands of rope around decorated reserves. Plate 32, no. 2, decoration around base. Plate 33, around base and center of body of vessel. Plate 35, no. 6, braided rope

band. This decorative motive is one of the most common and characteristic of the Huai style and the one in which the Boston mirror type approximates it most.

(5) *Milled, raised rings or ridges.* Plate 28, base; rather difficult to see. Numerous other bronzes having these milled ridges could be cited. There are several reproductions of such specimens in the Sumitomo Catalogue cited above. In UMEHARA's work, *Study of the Bronzes of the Warring States* 戰國式銅器の研究 (Memoires of the Oriental Institute, vol. 7, Kyōto, 1936) the following are cases in point: plate 35, *ting*, milled ridge around the middle of the body dividing the decorated areas; plate 96, 2, *chung* or bell, milled ridges, almost identical with those on the Boston mirror type (STOCLET and HOYT specimens), separating the various decorated areas; plate 104, *chung*, milled ridges separating design areas, as in the above.

On mirrors this feature is seen repeatedly in its Huai version on such types as those illustrated by UMEHARA, *Study of Pre-Han Mirrors*, plate 25, 1, 2, and 23, 1, 2, 3, and on many other mirrors in the splendid series illustrated in this book. (See also note 8 of this article.) But it is hardly necessary to go to the Huai style for this feature of decoration. It occurs frequently on bronze mirrors of the Sea-Horse-Grape type.

In pointing out above the similarity between the decoration of typical Huai style bronzes and that of the mirrors under discussion I have not intended to suggest an absolute identity. The resemblance is sufficiently close for the Boston Museum mirror to have passed as Huai or pre-Han in style for more than thirty years. The raised milled ridges, the twisted rope pattern, and the overdecoration of minute scrolls, volutes, triangles and key pattern are certainly so near to the Huai, in their constituent elements, at least, as to be almost identical. Not so the animal heads and entwined necks in the outer field of decoration. I have searched again and again the entire range of mirrors from before the Han to the Sung and I have found nothing like these heads. I have examined more than a thousand mirrors of the pre-Han and

transitional types and again have found nothing like these heads. The extensive series of entwined dragons and birds and strap ornament of Huai type presents ample material but the decoration of the Boston mirror type is not among them. Above in my references to origins of style, I have referred to the general effect of the strap-dragon decoration on these vessels as suggesting that on the Boston mirror type. The heads on the latter, however, are not Huai even in inspiration. Only their treatment is Huai.

I should like to suggest that the animal represented on the Boston mirror is not only T'ang in origin and inspiration but that it is not a dragon at all but a *hare*. Such a mirror as the very fine one in the Bidwell Collection (reproduced in UMEHARA's *Chinese Mirrors in Europe and America*, Tōkyō, 1933, plate 72, no. 1) of the lunar hare compounding the elixir of immortality may very well have suggested the model for the animal heads on the Boston mirror. A careful examination will, I believe, show how very similar they are. The hare on the BIDWELL mirror is very typical of the numerous T'ang hares and, it seems to me, is very close indeed to the animal heads under discussion. In the first place, these animal heads are distinguished by their prominent ears. These are not as long as hare's ears are usually represented but they are nevertheless very prominent and are flattened out in order to fit into the design of the mirror and the narrow decorated circular band imposed by the rim and the raised ridge. A second characteristic feature of the hare, very much in evidence in these animal heads, is the full, rounded, fleshy face and blunt nose. This feature extends to the under side of the jaw as well. This jaw and nose depart somewhat from the hare tradition and approximate the pre-Han dragon type in the scroll effect under the lower jaw which is probably introduced for the sake of harmony with the general conventionalized scroll effect of the entire mirror. Even so, it does not destroy the impression of the rabbit head. Finally, the eye just opposite the fleshy full part of the nose adds to the hare effect.

The group of animals and birds so frequently associated on the Sea-Horse-Grape mirrors forms, perhaps, a more popular class of T'ang mirror than any other. A second and almost equally

popular class is that related group with phoenixes, flying horses, lions, or kilins freely scattered over the undivided open surface of the mirrors, or arranged in single or double pairs. To these may be added other types: Hunting Scenes, Landscapes, Birds and Animals, and the Twelve Zodiacal Animals. In all these seven well-defined classes of T'ang mirrors the hare not infrequently occurs and in the first class named above he is supreme. We may thus conclude that the hare was a popular art motive in T'ang times.

I would suggest then that this animal of the mirrors under discussion may be a conventionalized representation of the hare, rendered by a T'ang artist in his interpretation of the spirit and style of the Huai dragons—so-called. I have already pointed out the possible origin of some of the elements which have gone into the make-up of the design of the Boston mirror. But significantly enough the nearest pre-Han parallel to the style of the Boston mirror dragons is to be found, not on pre-Han mirrors but on pre-Han ceremonial vessels. An important series of these vessels showing this parallelism has been illustrated in two articles on Chinese bronzes in *RAA* 8, published on the occasion of the Exposition of Chinese Bronzes held in Paris at the Orangerie. These articles are "L'Exposition de bronzes chinoises, Notes inédites de Charles VIGNIER" (pp. 129-145) and "Les bronzes de Li-yu" by George SALLES (pp. 146-158). I indicate very briefly the resemblance in question.

Plate 42, b. Cover of ting, Sirén Collection. Five concentric bands of dragons in design areas (annuli) separated by flat ribbon-like bands. The center is a circular reserve. These dragons are roughly of the same shape as those on the Boston type mirror, but each dragon is separate, not intertwined with the one adjacent to it, and forms a sector in its annulus.

Plate 43, a, c. Two covered ting in the Wannieck Collection, Paris. The dragons are similar to the ones just described, but intertwined, with repeats of the same. Cf. also plates 44a, 45a, b.[11]

[11] It is not that the dragons themselves on these bronze ceremonial vessels are so much like those on the Boston mirror type, but rather that the manner of their treatment is very similar to that of the former.

The animals on this series of bronze vessels, and their treatment, are by no means identical with the animals on the Boston mirror type but they are sufficiently like them to have been their prototype and to have served as their model and inspiration. In this most unusual mirror type we have a harmonious combination and fusion of T'ang ideas (if we accept the " hare " suggestion) with a style taken from pre-Han ceremonial vessels, and the whole carried out as a T'ang artist would render it, and the mirror cast after a T'ang technique.