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DIETRICH SECKEL · HELMUT BRINKER

## THE CLOISONNÉ MIRROR IN THE SHOSÖIN: DATE AND PROVENANCE

### I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial objects among the Shōsōin treasures is the cloisonné-backed silver mirror (fig. 1, 2) kept in the South Section (Nansō)<sup>1</sup>. The suggestions made as to its dating and provenance extend from the seventh to the seventeenth century and from Byzantium to Japan. This divergence of opinion, as well as the fact that the dating of the piece is of more general concern for the problem of whether or not the art of enamelling had an early and possibly independent origin in the Far East, may justify a fresh discussion.

With only one exception the present contents of the Nansō consist of objects from the two repositories of the Kensakuin, the official treasure-houses of the Tōdaiji, called the Kōfūzō, as opposed to the Imperial treasure-house, the Chokufūzō<sup>2</sup>. Since the Kensakuin fell victim to a storm in June of 950 A.D., it was necessary to transfer, in July of the same year, the entire material from the destroyed Tōdaiji treasury to the Shōsōin; for this purpose everything stored until then in its South Section was removed either to the North Section (Hokusō) or to the newly constructed Middle Section (Chūsō). Supposing that the Shōsōin material was not completely rearranged and mixed up—which seems very unlikely to most authors—the cloisonné mirror can only have been incorporated into the Shōsōin collection in July, 950. This, of course, presupposes an early dating of the mirror.

In this case we should expect it to be listed in one of the early inventories. But the Jin-ai-komonjo, an accurate inventory of the South Section prepared by order of Ex-emperor Shirakawa in 1117, states that the catalogue of objects transferred from the Kensakuin to the Shōsōin had been lost<sup>3</sup>. Therefore we cannot trace the mirror further back than to the year 950, provided that it originally was owned by the Tōdaiji and transferred with the other temple treasures to the South Section. Among Western scholars there has been considerable suspicion that the mirror might possibly have crept in at some later date, perhaps as a replacement for a theft<sup>4</sup>. This, however, is mere guesswork, since nothing in the available documents points to any such manipulation. Only repair work on some of the mirrors in the Shōsōin is reported for 1230 and the period between 1892 and 1904.

In this critical appraisal of several widely divergent theories concerning the date and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Excellent colour reproductions in *Shōsōin hōmotsu* (*Treasures of the Sh.*), *Nansō* (*South Section*), Tōkyō, 1961, pl. 1; *Nihon bijutsu taikei*, vol. 9: *Kinkō* [Metal Work], Tōkyō, 1961, colour plate 7. — Discussion of the mirror in: Soame Jenyns and William Watson: *Chinesische Kunst—Gold, Silber, Bronze, Email, Lack, Holz*, Fribourg, 1963, p. 164ff.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Percival David: "The Shōsōin", *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society* (London), vol. 28, 1932, 44–95.

<sup>3</sup> David, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Jenyns, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 165.

venience of the cloisonné mirror we are trying to put things on a little surer ground than has been done in previous discussions; some of them either neglected important material available for a comparative study—part of which, it is true, was not discovered or published until recently—or ignored certain minimum requirements for a sound method of investigation.

## 2. TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The back of the mirror<sup>5</sup> (diameter 18.5 cm, thickness 1.4 cm) consists of no less than thirty-one parts, each of which, except the knob, was manufactured singly and assembled only in the last phase of production. They are: the ornamental cover of the central knob, eighteen cell-like compartments in leaf form, and twelve little pieces of gold-sheet along the rim, decorated with tiny nipples in repoussé relief. Evidently the massive body of the knob was made from the same piece of silver as the base (thickness 0.8 cm) carrying the décor. This was necessary for the handling of the mirror because all other parts are rather loosely pasted onto the base with a substance containing lacquer, as is evidenced by traces of the reddish-brown glue showing on the surface between some of the compartments. No solder was used—an important difference from the technique of Western cloisonné enamels as well as later (i.e., post-Yüan) Chinese pieces. As a matter of fact, those leaf-shaped cells have not been formed by metal wires at all: they are shallow little containers resembling pans. Wires of the regular kind were used only for the interior lines within the leaf-like units. The pans were most likely cut from silver-sheet of about 0.05 cm thickness, with their edges bent up so that, after filling these containers with enamel, nothing but their gilt edges remained visible. According to Dorothy Blair's hypothesis the enamels were filled into the cells by letting them drop from heated glass-sticks<sup>6</sup>. All this, of course, had to be done before the pan-like cells were pasted onto the base because otherwise the glue of organic material would have been burned during the melting of the enamels in such ready-made cells. Concave depressions, due to shrinkage during the cooling process of the glassy substance, caused the upturned gilt borders of the cells to stand out a little above the enamel surfaces so that they are easily mistaken for cloisonné wires. Evidently the artisans did not care to give the entire piece a flush surface by smoothing the raised walls of the cells and the irregularly shrunken enamel fillings. This lack of technical perfection together with the simple pasting method gives a certain primitive, experimental character to this artistically outstanding piece.

So much for those technical aspects of the mirror that are relevant to its dating and provenance. Everything else the reader may find in Dorothy Blair's competent description based on close investigation of the original<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Blair: "The Cloisonné-backed Mirror in the Shōsōin", *Journal of Glass Studies* (The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, N. Y.), vol. 2, 1960, 83–93.

<sup>6</sup> It seems that this is how certain ceramic pieces of the Chan-kuo period with "glazed" medallions were decorated; of the covered jar in the Nelson Gallery, Kansas City, it is said that it was, on a white slip, "mit mehrfarbigem Glasfluß betropft" (Jan Fontein and Rose Hempel: *China, Korea, Japan*, Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte 17, Berlin, 1968, pl. III and p. 152).

<sup>7</sup> The present authors were not lucky enough to be granted permission to inspect the mirror during the Shōsōin's annual exhibition period in November, 1968.

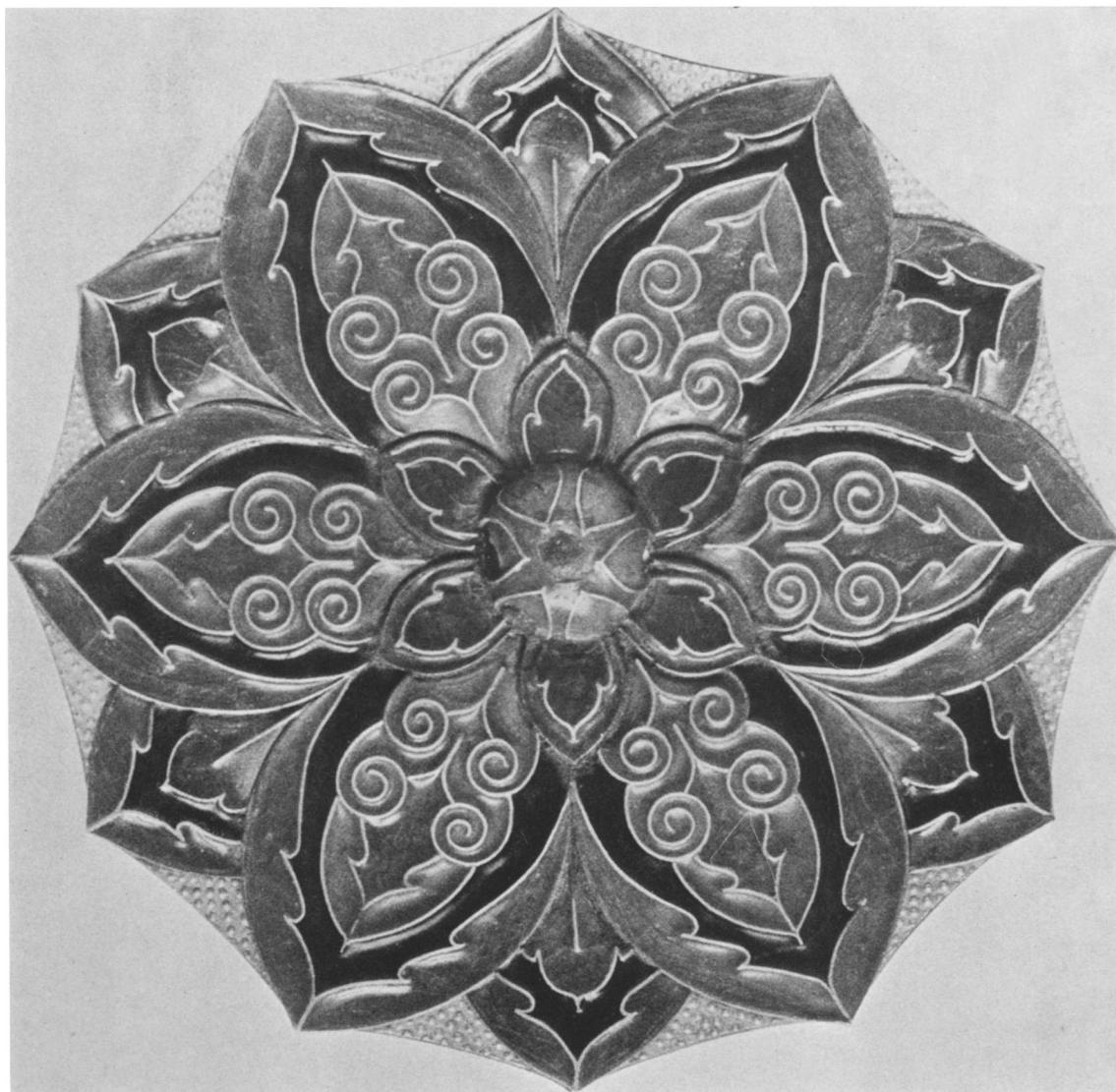


Fig. 1 Cloisonné-backed Mirror, Shōsōin, Nara (*Shōsōin hōmotsu*, *Nansō*, pl. 1)

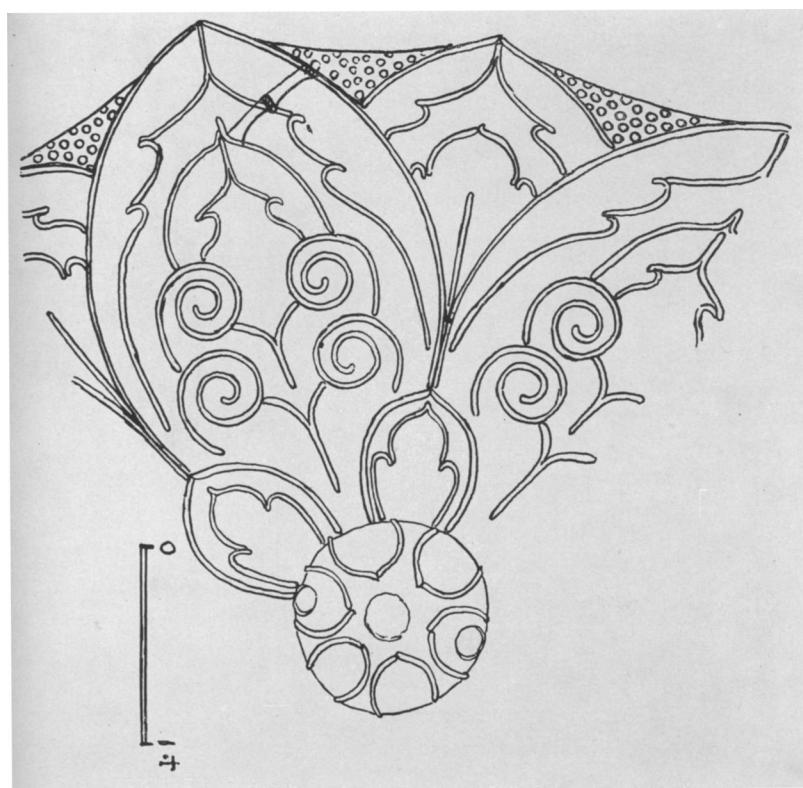


Fig. 2 Cloisonné-backed Mirror, Shōsōin, Nara: Drawing of Décor, Detail (*Shoryōbu kiyō*, No. 7, June 1956)



Fig. 3 Blue-and-White Flask, Ming, Percival David Foundation, London (*Sekai tōji zenshū*, vol. 11, pl. 69)

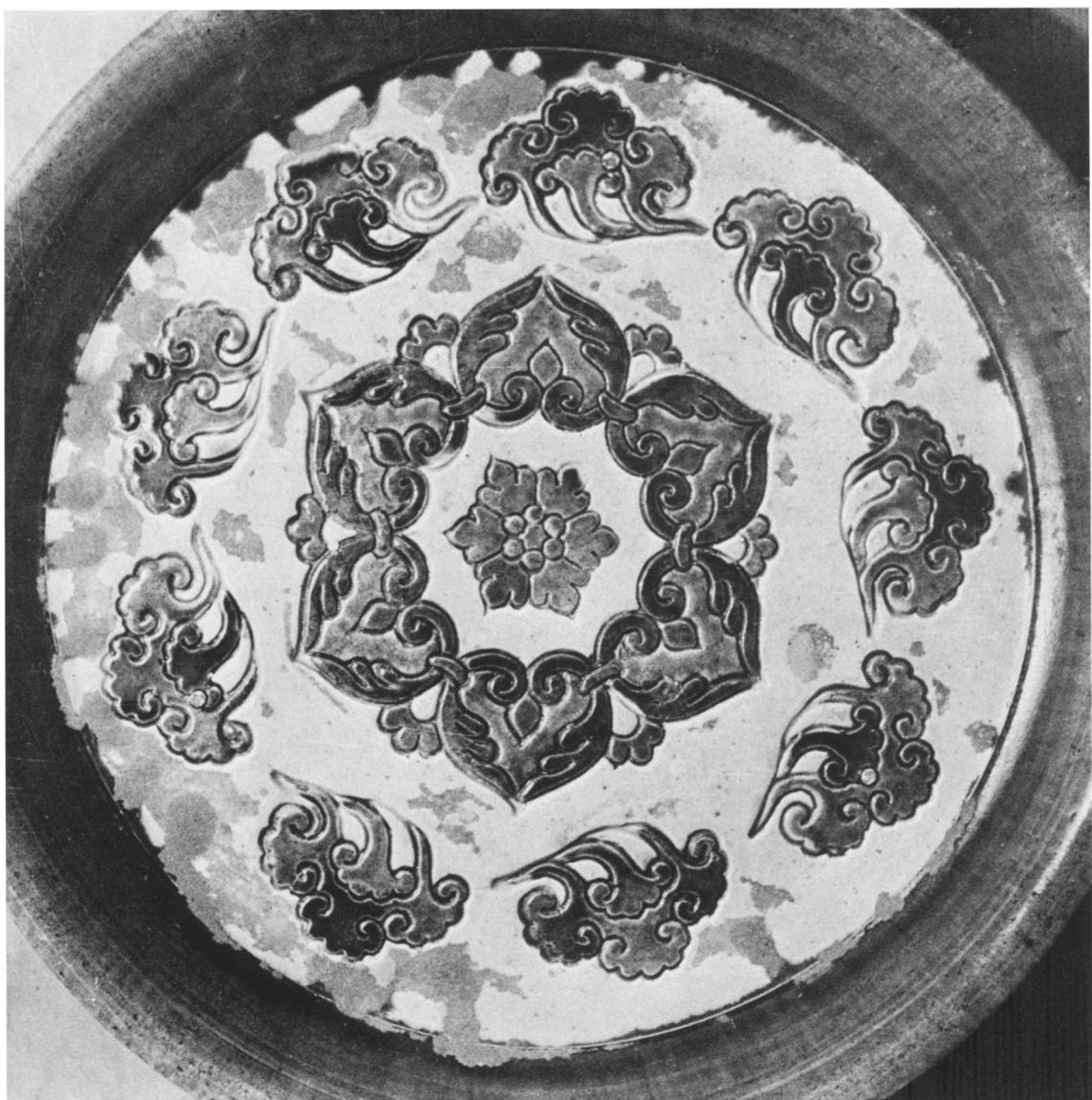


Fig. 4 *San-ts'ai* Dish, T'ang, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University (Phot. Helmut Brinker)

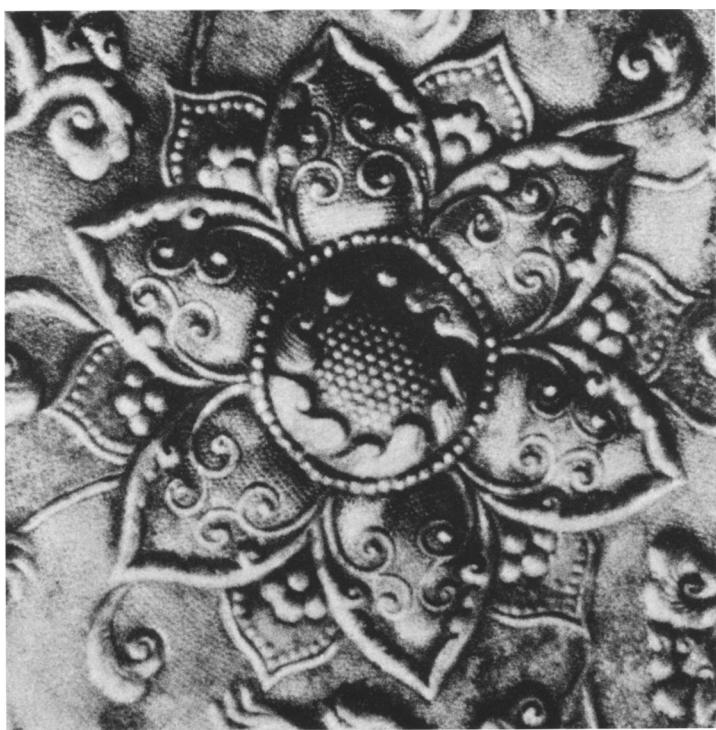


Fig. 5 Silver-plated Copper Bowl (detail), T'ang,  
Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm  
(Gyllensvärd, *T'ang Gold and Silver*, Stockholm, 1957, pl. 14)



Fig. 6 Painted Ivory Footrule (detail), Shōsōin  
(*Shōsōin bōmotsu*, Chūsō, pl. 23)



Fig. 7 Buddhist Stela (detail), 704 A.D., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Sirén, *Sculpture Chinoise*, vol. 3, pl. 484)

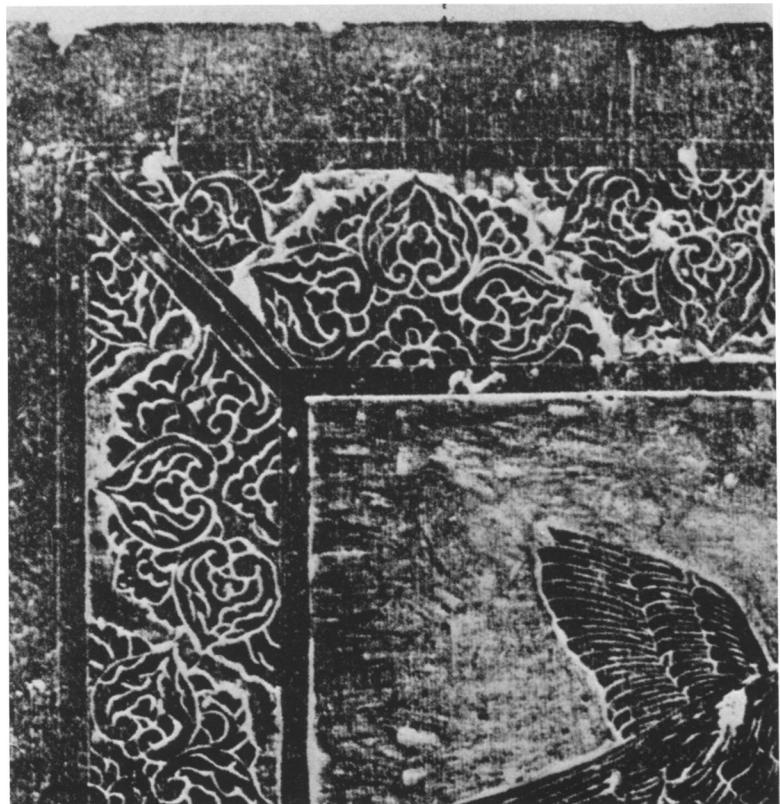


Fig. 8 Engraved Stone Slab from Yung-T'ai Kung-Chu Tomb (detail), 706 A.D. (*Hsi-an pei-lin*, pl. 212)

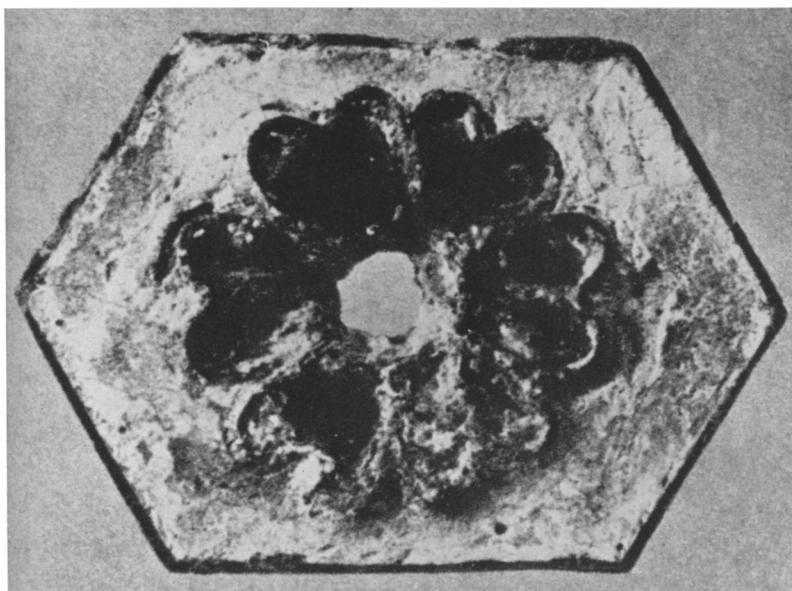


Fig. 9 Enamel-decorated Fitting from the Kengoshi Tomb, Nara Prefecture, 7th-early 8th century, Yamato Rekishi-kan, Kashiwara (*Tempyō no chihō*, pl. 85)

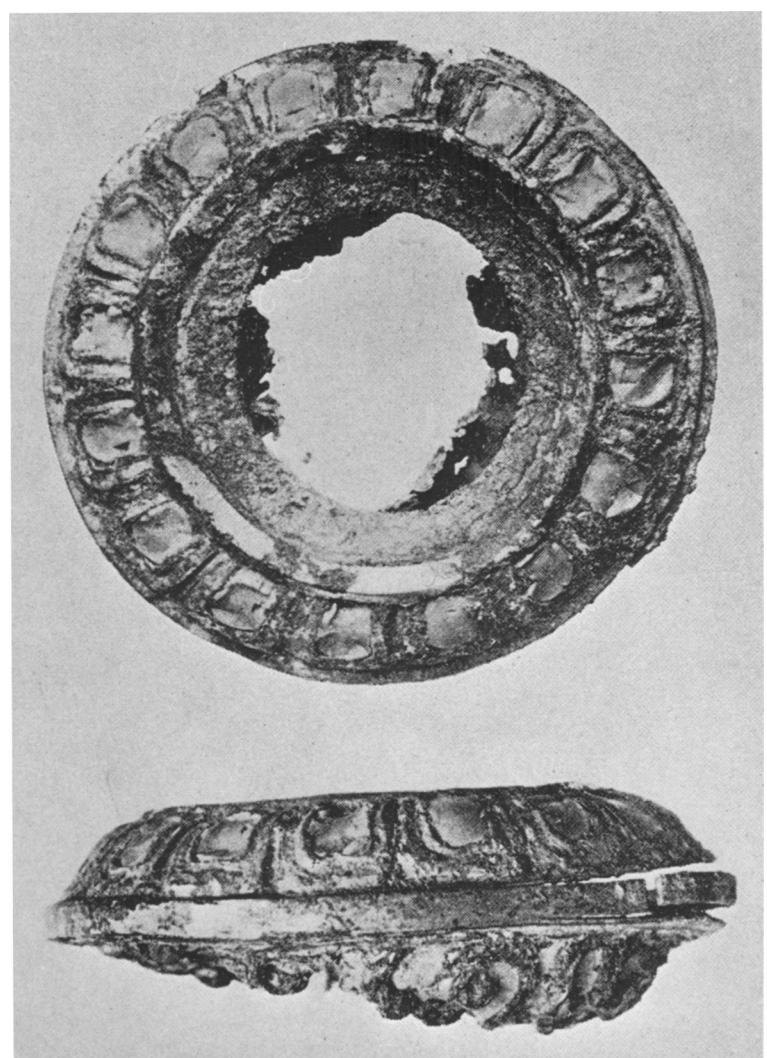


Fig. 10 Champlevé-decorated Base for Buddhist Image, T'ang, Archaeological Collection, Kyōto University (*Shoryōbu kiyō*, No. 7, June 1956, Fig. 7)

#### Postscript

It should not go unmentioned that some golden T'ang fragments of a hair ornament or crown, owned by the Kurokawa Kobunka Kenkyūjo (Ashiya, near Kōbe) and evidently made in the first half of the eighth century, are decorated, at least in part, with light green fillings of a glassy substance, possibly poured into prefabricated cloisons: *Sekai Bijutsu Zenshū*, Heibonsha Edition, vol. 8 = *Chūgoku II*, Tōkyō 1950, colour plate 11; Umehara Sueji, in his explanation of the plate (p. 263) speaks of "a kind of enamel work" (*shippō*).



Fig. 11 Petal of Lotus Pedestal, Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon,  
Hokkedō, Tōdaiji, Nara, ca. 741 A.D.  
(*Nara rokudaiji taikan*, vol. 10: *Tōdaiji II*, pl. 4)

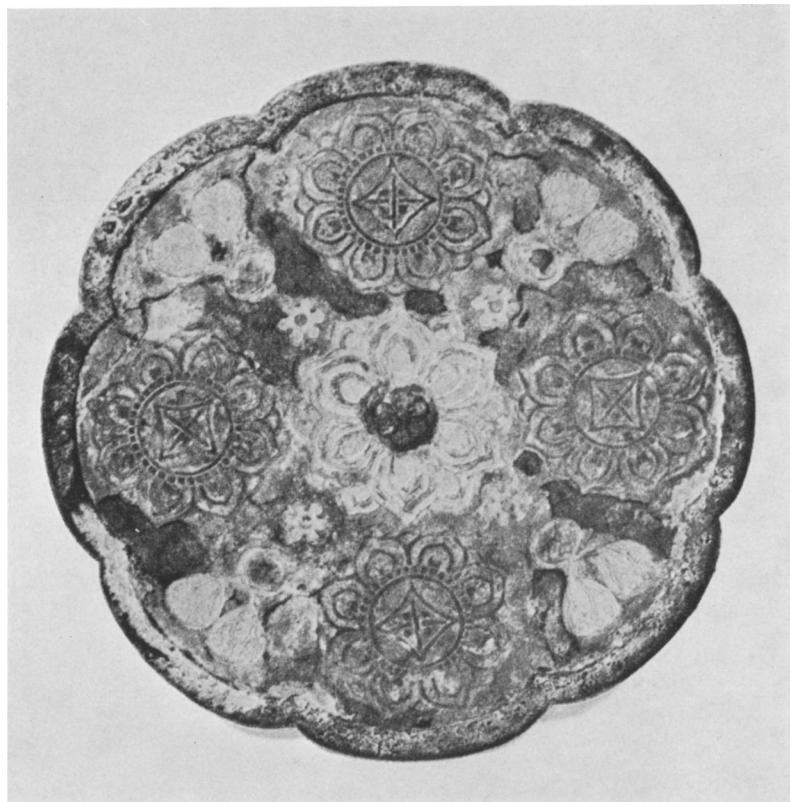


Fig. 12 Bronze Mirror with Gold and Silver Inlay  
on Lacquer-filled Ground, T'ang, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
(Tseng and Dart, *The Ch. B. Hoyt Collection ...*, vol. 1, pl. 131)

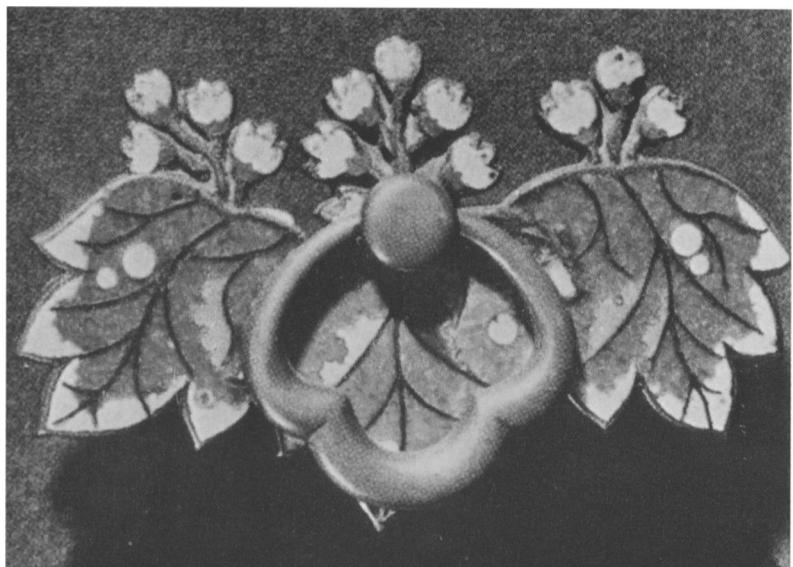


Fig. 13 Drawer Handle with Cloisonné Décor,  
Momoyama Period, Hosomi Collection, Ōsaka  
(*Nihon bijutsu taikei*, vol. 9: *Kinkō*, pl. 24)



Fig. 14 Gilt-bronze Water Bowl for Buddhist Ritual,  
Kamakura Period, Hōbodai-in, Tōji, Kyōto  
(*Tōji*, Tōkyō, 1958, pl. 182)

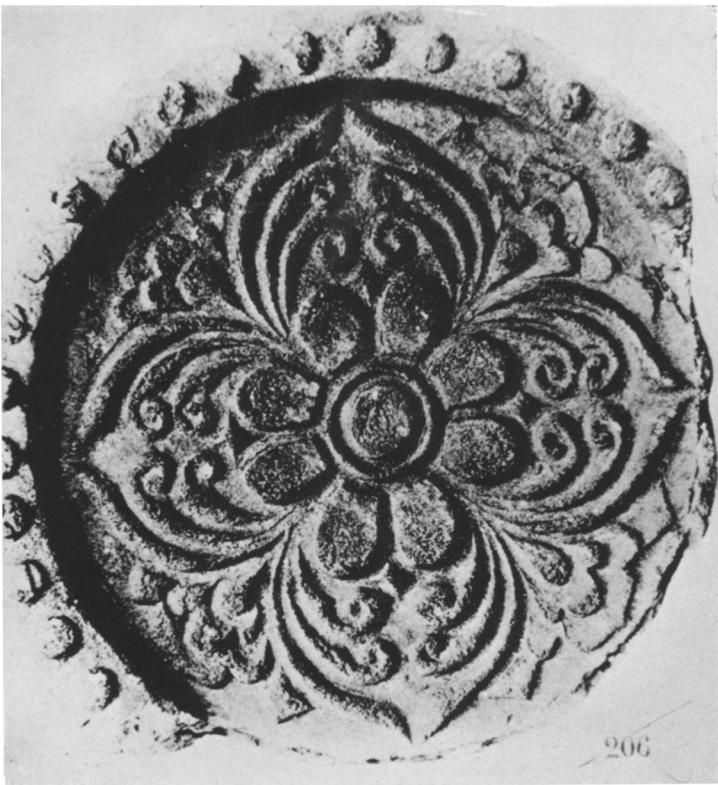


Fig. 15 Roof-tile from the Sa-chöng-wang-sa Site,  
Kyōngju, Korea, Unified Silla Period  
(Hamada and Umehara: *Shiragi koga no kenkyū*, pl. XIII, No. 206)

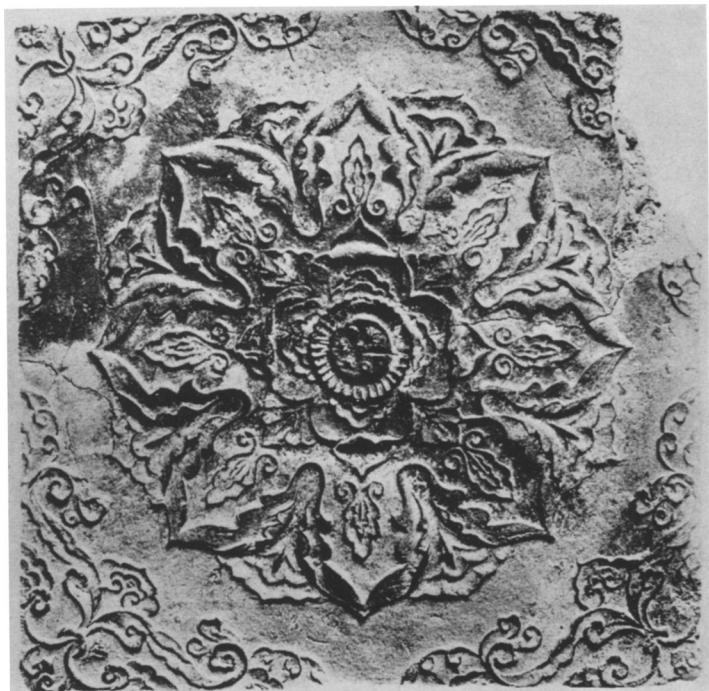


Fig. 16 Floor-tile, Unified Silla Period,  
Ono Collection  
(*Chōsen koseki zufu*, vol. 5, pl. 640)

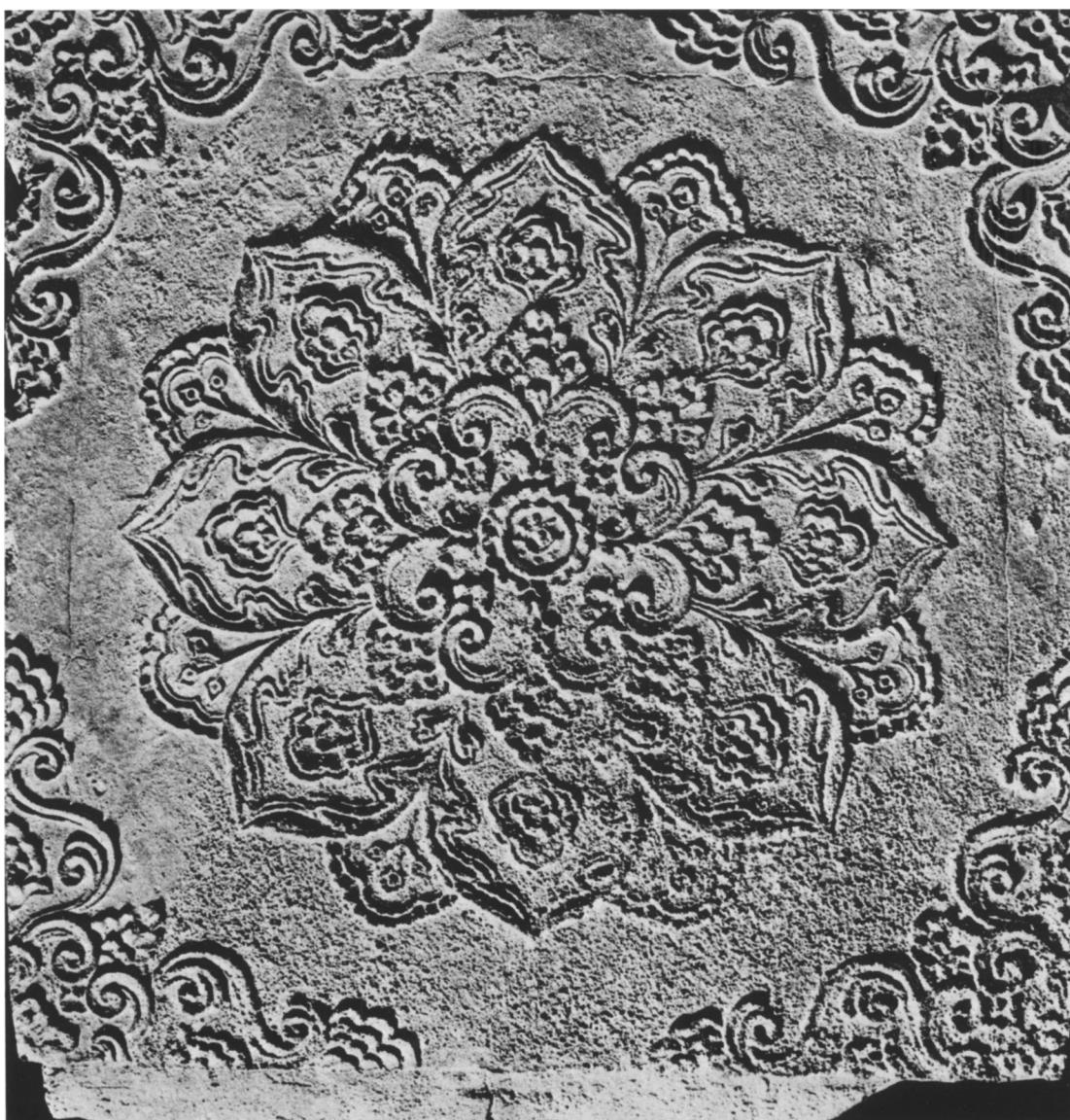


Fig. 17 Floor-tile from the Im-hae-jön Site, Kyōngju Palace,  
Unified Silla Period  
(Ch. Kim and W. Y. Kim: *The Arts of Korea*, pl. 24)

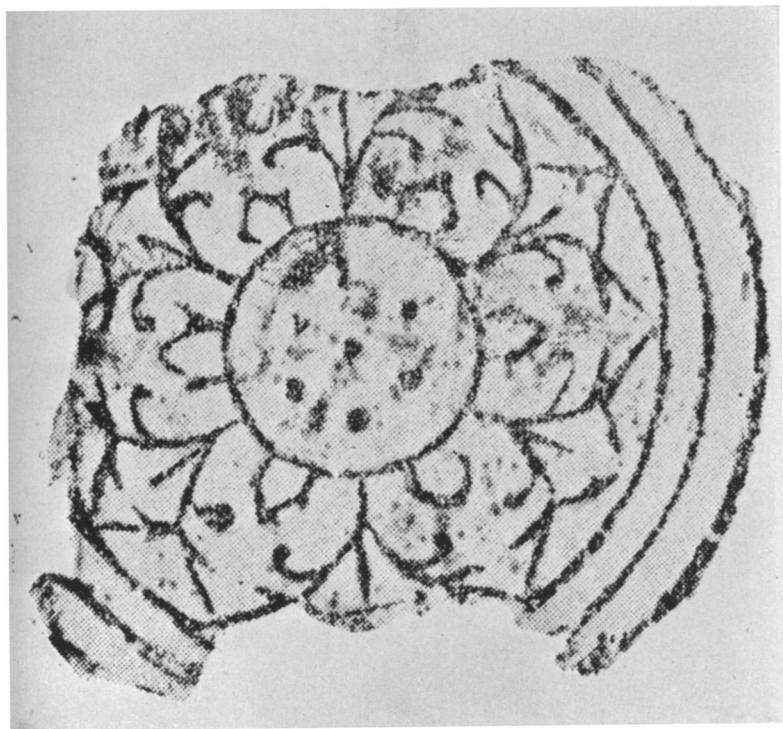


Fig. 18 Roof-tile from the Shimotsuke Kokubunji Site,  
Tochigi Prefecture, Nara Period  
(Sekino: *Nihon no kenchiku to geijutsu*, vol. 1, fig. 349, no. 477)

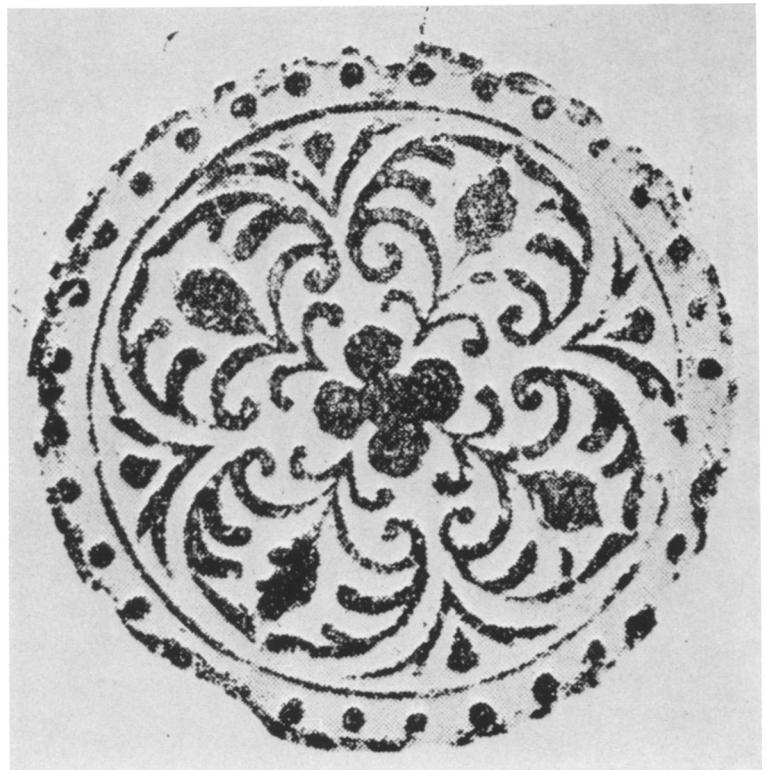


Fig. 19 Roof-tile from the Kibi-dera,  
Okayama Prefecture, Nara Period  
(Sekino, *op. cit.*, fig. 349, no. 478)

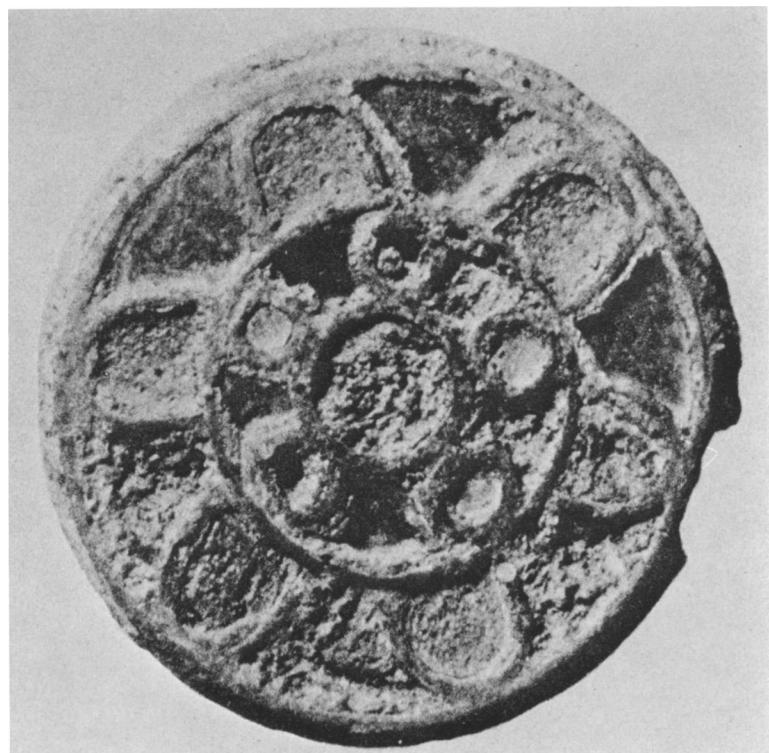


Fig. 20 Enamel-decorated Plaque from a Temple Site at  
Ch'ong-am-ni near P'yōng-yang, Koguryō Period  
(Umehara and Fujita: *Chōsen kobunka sōkan*, vol. 4, pl. 41, no. 115)

### 3. THEORIES CONCERNING DATE AND PROVENANCE

#### a. Chinese Provenance: T'ang, Yuan, or Ming?

Since the days when scholars like Kümmel (1911) and Hobson (1912)<sup>8</sup> declared the mirror to be a Chinese work of the T'ang dynasty this has been, until recently, a generally accepted opinion among most Western and Japanese specialists, Umehara<sup>9</sup> being the most prominent among the latter group. Okada Jō, however, advocated an origin "in a Western country"<sup>10</sup>, notwithstanding the fact that neither in Near Eastern, Byzantine, nor European art do there exist any technically or stylistically comparable pieces; while on the other hand—as will be shown below—the décor of the mirror can easily be linked with what may be called the T'ang system of ornamentation.

Hobson's T'ang dating was directed against the then current opinion of a Yüan origin which was repeated by A. J. Koop in 1915<sup>11</sup>. Hobson, however, was incorrect, as anybody else was at that time and for the next twenty years, in supposing that each and every object kept in the Shōsōin necessarily must antedate 756, the year of its establishment. Today we know, mainly through Sir Percival David's detailed study (1932) of the Shōsōin's history, that not only in 950, when the Tōdaiji treasures were transferred to the South Section, but even much later—between 818 and 1413—a small number of additions were made. Thus, other arguments have to be looked for if a T'ang date is to be maintained.

Soame Jenyns, in an article of 1950<sup>12</sup>, suggested that the mirror might be the work of an Islamic artisan or one of his Chinese pupils in Canton, or else that a foreign artisan or his Chinese assistants made it at Karakorum. These suggestions, however, apart from their being ill-founded in themselves, were made ten years before D. Blair's authoritative technical description was published. The technical process, employing those lacquer-pasted "pans" as containers for the enamels, is so exceptional and aypical that it seems useless to look for its origin in early or later Western (i.e., Byzantine or Islamic) cloisonné art with its basically different technique. It is just this primitive and experimental approach to the technical problems, so completely diverging from later Chinese enamel work produced under Western impact since the fourteenth century, that suggests an independent origin at the hands of Far Eastern artists with their liking and genius for all sorts of experimentation. In view of the technical data and the likelihood of the mirror's being incorporated in the Shōsōin not later than 950, Jenyns seems to be willing, in a more recent publication<sup>13</sup>, to accept a T'ang date although avoiding a clear-cut decision. He even adds the possibility of a Korean origin as an alternative suggestion. This last point we shall have to take up again.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Kümmel: *Das Kunstgewerbe in Japan*, Berlin, 1911 and later editions.—Robert L. Hobson: "On Chinese Cloisonné Enamel", *Burlington Magazine*, April 1912, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Umehara Sueji: "Shōsōin no gyomotsu-kyō ni tsuite (Concerning Mirrors in the Sh. Repository)", *Shoryōbu kiyō (Bulletin, Archives and Mausolea Division, Imperial Household Agency [Tōkyō])*, No. 7, June, 1956 (Special Number on the Shōsōin), p. 19–29.

<sup>10</sup> Okada Jō in: *Zusetsu Nihon bunka-shi taikei*, vol. 3: *Nara-jidai*, Tōkyō, 1958, p. 390f., colour plate 6.

<sup>11</sup> Albert J. Koop: *Catalogue of a Collection of Objects of Chinese Art*, Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, 1915, p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Soame Jenyns: "The Problem of Chinese Cloisonné Enamels", *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* (London), vol. 25, 1949/50. Quoted in Jenyns/Watson, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>13</sup> Jenyns/Watson, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 164ff., 192. The text is for the greater part identical with Jenyns' review of Sir Harry Garner's book mentioned in our note 35, in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 25, 1962, no. 2/3, p. 207ff.

Ralph Chait, writing in 1950<sup>14</sup>, pushed the date even further down into the Ming dynasty. Had he been able to know D. Blair's description he might have hesitated to do so. Are we expected to believe that the fifteenth or sixteenth century Chinese continued to use such a "primitive" technique, at a time when they had come to master the advanced methods of cloisonné enamelling introduced from the West? Chait's argumentation is mainly based on similarities of style. What he calls the *ling-hua* ("water-chestnut blossom") motif was popular both in T'ang times and in later periods (Sung, Ming, and Ch'ing); but the T'ang specimens, he says, are distinguished by a characteristic swelling roundness, fluent contours, and a lively movement of lines, as exemplified by a blue-glazed dish in the Hosokawa collection (Tōkyō)<sup>15</sup> and another dish in the Calmann collection (Boisrond)<sup>16</sup>. The Shōsōin mirror, on the other hand, betrays its later date, according to Chait, by a stiffness of its pattern that places it in the context of the equally stiff formalism of the Ming varieties of the *ling-hua*, exemplified by a Ming blue-and-white flask (fig. 3) in the Percival David Foundation<sup>17</sup>, a disc in the same collection, and a round cloisonné enamel box of the Hsüan-te era (1426–1435) in the Uldry collection (Zurich)<sup>18</sup>. Chait overlooked the fact that in T'ang ceramic ornamentation do occur stiff-lined, more strictly schematized varieties of the usual patterns, mainly on *san-ts'ai* dishes and similar objects. These separate the cloison-like compartments of their two- or three-coloured designs by engraved or raised contour lines in order to prevent the glazes from running together. As typical examples we mention a dish in the Fogg Museum, Harvard University (fig. 4), a flat bowl in the Museum Rietberg (Zurich), a plate in the Millikin collection (Cleveland), a similar piece in the Calmann collection (Boisrond), and some other three-colour glazed plates published in Vol. 9 of *Sekai tōji zenshū* and in Vol. 25 on *T'ang san-ts'ai* (jap. *Tō san-sai*) of the smaller series *Tōki zenshū*<sup>19</sup>. A direct continuation of this T'ang technique is to be seen in Liao three-coloured ceramics<sup>20</sup> and later in Ming *san-ts'ai* wares<sup>21</sup>, having the contours of their design raised in slight relief in order to keep the glazes from fusing. This ceramic device, basically invented in the T'ang dynasty, has a close affinity to the cloisonné technique of enamelling on metal. The Chinese were well aware of this affinity, as is testified by their discussing, in old treatises and reports, enamel work together with ceramic glazing under the common heading of *yao* (kiln; type of fire-produced ware decorated with glassy substances); even in modern Japanese books like Ishida's and Wada's *Shōsōin* (1954)<sup>22</sup> the cloisonné mirror is discussed, together with pottery, porcelain and glass, in the chapter on ceramics. This close technical relationship between certain ceramic wares of the T'ang period and the Shōsōin mirror accounts also for some characteristics of its style, especially the stiffness of lines criticized by Chait but easily explained by taking the

<sup>14</sup> Ralph M. Chait: "Some Comments on the Dating of Early Chinese Enamels", *Oriental Art*, vol. 3, 1950, no. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. William Willetts: *Chinese Art* (Pelican Books A 359), Harmondsworth etc., 1958, vol. 2, fig. 84b; *Foundations of Chinese Art*, London 1965, fig. 64b.

<sup>16</sup> Chait, *op. cit.*, p. 71f.

<sup>17</sup> Chait, *op. cit.*, fig. 3, 4. The latter piece is better reproduced in *Sekai tōji zenshū*, vol. 11, Tōkyō, 1961, pl. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Chait, *op. cit.*, fig. 5; better reproduced in Garner (see note 35), pl. 10A, 11A/B.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Sullivan: *An Introduction to Chinese Art*, London, 1961, pl. 83. – Basil Gray: *Early Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*, London, 1953, pl. 32. – *Sekai tōji zenshū*, vol. 9 (*Chūgoku, Zui-tō-hen*), Tōkyō, 1961, pl. 90; also in *Tōki zenshū*, vol. 25 (*Tō-sansai*), Tōkyō, 1961, pl. 46 ("680–750"). – *Sekai tōji zenshū*, vol. 9, col. pl. 13, pls. 74, 78, 79, 80 ("680–750"); *Tōki zenshū*, vol. 25, pl. 27. – For the Rietberg bowl cf. note 47.

<sup>20</sup> For example the bottle in the Calmann Coll., Boisrond: Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt and Jean Claude Moreau-Gobard: *Chinesische Kunst: Bronze, Jade, Skulptur, Keramik*, Fribourg, 1960, pl. 136.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the *mei-p'ing* in the collection of Mrs. Alfred Clark: Lion-Goldschmidt/Moreau-Gobard, *op. cit.*, pl. 146.

technical process into consideration. At the same time, the specific Near Eastern (i. e., Sasanian) flavour of certain T'ang designs may be in part responsible for this "stiffness" which distinguishes one stylistic type of T'ang ornamentation from another, "softer", more naturalistic and less strictly stylized type<sup>23</sup>.

Apart from the technical aspect, the mirror does not contradict the T'ang grammar and style of ornamentation either. The examples of ceramic wares cited above for their cloisonlike compartmenting of colour areas show the closest possible similarity to the mirror design, not only in the choice of colours and a liking for a six- or twelve-fold radiation of the flower motif but also in the general construction of the rosette with its superimposed layers of petals radiating from the central circle. There is a close resemblance even in the design of the individual petals with their characteristic hooked and lobed contour which is to be explained as the "profile" contour of a pair of confronted half-palmettes. As additional examples we mention a flat T'ang dish in the collection of Mrs. Alfred Clark (Fulmer, Bucks.)<sup>24</sup>, a similar dish in a Japanese private collection, published by Koyama<sup>25</sup>, or a dish reproduced in *Sekai tōji zenshū*<sup>26</sup>. All these parallels make it possible to link the mirror motifs and their technical as well as stylistic formulation with well-established and widely applied principles of T'ang ceramic ornamentation.

Equally convincing parallels can be shown to exist in other fields of T'ang art. A few examples may suffice for the present discussion: in metal work, a silver-plated copper bowl (fig. 5) in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm<sup>27</sup>, and a silver box with cover in the Erickson collection, New York<sup>28</sup>; in textiles, a silk cover for a *biwa* (lute) in the Shōsōin, and some other similar pieces<sup>29</sup>; ivory foot-rules with painted rosettes (fig. 6) in the Shōsōin<sup>30</sup>; painted haloes of a Buddha and his two attendant Bodhisattvas in Cave 328, Tun-huang<sup>31</sup>; ornamental borders on a Buddhist stela (fig. 7), dated 704, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<sup>32</sup>, and on engraved slabs (fig. 8) with standing figures from the Yung-t'ai kung-chu tomb near Ch'ang-an, dated 706, and from the Wei-t'ung tomb, dated 708<sup>33</sup>. The last-mentioned ornamental friezes are especially valuable because of their exact dates, falling into the first decade of the eighth century and providing pretty safe chronological moorings for the mirror. In many of these examples we see a design basically constructed of two or more sets of petals overlapping each other and radiating from a circular center showing a flower motif of its own. There recur again and again the characteristic confronted half-palmettes forming the framework of the

<sup>22</sup> *The Shōsōin—An Eight Century Treasure-House*, compiled by Mosaku Ishida and Gun'ichi Wada, Tōkyō-Ōsaka-Moji, 1954, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> For example, the bronze tray engraved with a building and trees in a radial arcade, Museum of Islamic Art, Staatliche Museen Berlin (A.U.Pope/Ph.Ackerman edd.: *Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 5, London, 1938, pl. 237); silver ewer, repoussé and engraved with winged camel, Hermitage Museum, Leningrad (*ibid.*, pl. 223 B).

<sup>24</sup> Lion-Goldschmidt/Moreau-Gobard, *op.cit.*, pl. 171.

<sup>25</sup> Fujio Koyama: *Keramik des Orients*, Würzburg-Wien, 1959, pl. 21.

<sup>26</sup> *Sekai tōji zenshū*, *op.cit.*, vol. 9, pl. 76.

<sup>27</sup> Bo Gyllensvård: *T'ang Gold and Silver*, Stockholm, 1957, pl. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Gyllensvård, *op.cit.*, fig. 8oq.

<sup>29</sup> Ishida/Wada, *op.cit.*, pl. 145; *Shōsōin no hōmotsu: Senshoku (Textiles in the Sh.)*, vol. 1, Tōkyō, 1963, pl. 6, 7.

<sup>30</sup> See note 48.

<sup>31</sup> *Sekai bijutsu taikei* 9 (*Chūgoku bijutsu II*), Tōkyō, Kōdansha, 1964, p. 54, pl. 15; p. 55 pl. 16; p. 92 pl. 59; ca. 730–740.

<sup>32</sup> Osvald Sirén: *La Sculpture Chinoise*, vol. 3, Paris-Bruxelles, 1925/26, pl. 484; cf. Gyllensvård, *op.cit.*, fig. 77ab, ac.

<sup>33</sup> *Hsi-an pei-lin*, Tōkyō, 1966, pls. 201 ff.; see text p. 28; *Sekai bijutsu taikei: Chūgoku bijutsu I*, Tōkyō, 1963, pl. 46, p. 127; see text p. 204. Similar motifs are found in *Hsi-an pei-lin* on pl. 235 (dated 727) and in *Sekai bijutsu zenshū* (Heibonsha edition), vol. 8 (*Chūgoku II*), Tōkyō 1950, pl. 36: stela for the priest Lung-ch'an, dated 743.

petals; in some cases the equally characteristic spirals, curling either inwards or outwards, rise like tendrils within or in the neighbourhood of the dominating petals. Some of these components, such as the spirals or the half-palmettes, are often found independently within other contexts of T'ang design.

On the other hand, the alleged similarity between the mirror and the Ming pieces (cf. fig. 3) adduced by Chait is far from convincing. Neither the cloisonné disc and box nor the blue-and-white flask shows, if carefully analyzed, the same or even a similar organization of the rosette motif nor is their stylistic character in any way comparable to the mirror or its ceramic and other counterparts from the T'ang period. The blue-and-white piece, although ultimately deriving its general vocabulary of motifs from T'ang ornament, translates it into an entirely different stylistic idiom; the arrangement of the conventionalized leaves and petals results in a closely knit, lattice-like web of crossing and interwoven lines vastly different from any T'ang specimens with their emphasis on the combination of rather few but amply spaced flat areas. In the Ming piece, all components are narrow and elongated and have a starry, spiky character quite alien to the *Formgefühl* of T'ang art. Among hundreds of Ming pieces it proved impossible to find a single specimen really comparable in design to the Shōsōin mirror.

Furthermore, it may be appropriate to call attention to the colour scheme of the mirror: its dark and light greens, its amber-like brown are colours very popular in T'ang glazed pottery, while the general appearance of Ming enamel work is basically different from and even absolutely incompatible with that of the Shōsōin mirror in its colour scheme, its surface texture and the stylistic idiom of its ornamentation.

Even if a date as late as Ming could be supported by more convincing arguments than have been proposed so far, there would still remain the almost insurmountable chronological obstacle raised by the fact that evidently no objects were added to the Shōsōin treasure after 1413, except an octagonal mirror found in 1902 under the Sugimoto-Jinja, a small tutelary Shintō shrine in the Shōsōin premises<sup>34</sup>. Besides, an explanation would be required demonstrating the ways and means and the historical circumstances that would have brought a piece like the cloisonné mirror to fifteenth to seventeenth century Japan and into the trésor of the Shōsōin.

#### *b. Japanese Provenance: Nara or Tokugawa?*

The traditional opinion of practically all Japanese specialists that the cloisonné mirror is a work of the T'ang period, possibly but not necessarily manufactured in Japan, found strong support by D. Blair's exact description based on personal inspection. Some of her arguments in favour of an eighth century date may be summarized and supplemented as follows.

1. The Museum Yamato Rekishi-kan (Kashiwara, Nara Prefecture) owns a small metal fitting (fig. 9) evidently from a coffin in the Kengoshi (or Kegoshi or Kengyūshi) tomb<sup>35</sup>. It was dated by Umehara, on archaeological evidence, in the Asuka period and is generally accepted as a seventh century piece; Koizumi, in Ishida's *Tempyō no chibō* (Ōsaka etc., 1961), seems to

<sup>34</sup> David, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Sir Harry Garner: *Chinese and Japanese Cloisonné Enamels*, London, 1962, pl. 85 a, b; Blair, *op.cit.*, fig. 8; *Tempyō no chibō*, ed. Mosaku Ishida, Ōsaka etc., 1961, pl. 85, see text p. 41. – For the Kengoshi tomb see Fujita Ryōsaku ed.: *Nihon kōkogaku jiten*, Tōkyō 1962, p. 168.

advocate a Tempyō, i.e., eighth century date. The little hexagonal plaque has a central flower motif with six petals filled, between bronze wires originally gold-plated wherever they show on the surface, with brownish-yellow material and set on a white background. Due to heavy corrosion it is difficult to find out the way it was made in every detail. The gilding of the wires as well as the particular method of filling in the enamels by dropping them from heated glass-sticks, D. Blair believed to be basically identical with that of the Shōsōin mirror. A careful inspection of the original piece revealed an important technical feature not mentioned by D. Blair: the petals are formed by wire-like contour lines completely enclosing each little compartment so that the wires are *doubled* between adjoining petals, running side by side. Evidently some sort of individual cloisons were used although it seems impossible to say whether they were formed by soldering or pasting wires onto the base or else by making little "pans" like those of the Shōsōin mirror. The flower motif is embedded in a slightly oblong hexagonal area filled with a smoothly polished, opaque enamel of whitish colour. The upturned edge of the plaque is made of the same piece of metal as the flat bottom, either by casting or by bending it into its vertical position; which of the two techniques was employed is difficult to decide even with the original piece before one's eyes. The brownish glass-like substance in the petals which D. Blair took to be enamel, has in the meantime been ascertained to be an inlay of real amber<sup>36</sup> so that the glass-dropping theory has to be discarded, at least for this particular object. Still, the discovery of this plaque is definite proof that Japan—or, if it was imported from the continent, China or Korea—knew the art of enamelling combined with some sort of cloison technique by the seventh or early eighth century. (See also postscript under Fig. 9.)

Two other pieces of evidence, mentioned by D. Blair, are a fragmentary gilt-bronze lotus base for a Buddhist image (fig. 10) in the Archaeological Collection of Kyōto University<sup>37</sup>, decorated with grey- and cobalt-blue champlevé enamel, probably a T'ang work; and an enamelled needle-case discovered in the relic deposit of the pagoda of the Old Silla temple Pun-hwang-sa (jap. Fun-kō-ji) near Kyōngju (Korea), founded in 634 by the queen Sōn-tōk<sup>38</sup>. An inspection of the original piece, a small narrow tube made of silver, now in the National Museum at Kyōngju, showed it to be almost entirely covered with a smooth, even coating of grass-green enamel without any ornamental design—a very simple affair which is relevant for our discussion for three reasons. First, it is another piece of evidence for enamel work in the seventh century; second, its light-green colour comes very close to that of the Shōsōin mirror and certain glass objects of the same period; and third, it teaches us a lesson in terminology: what the Japanese authors call *shippō* (-*yaki*, -*kazari*) covers a greater range of meaning than our term enamel work or, for that matter, cloisonné enamel. Sometimes the term denotes nothing but a simple coating of a metal surface with a molten glassy substance that may even be of monochrome colour and without any design; another example is furnished by the ring-holders for the doors of the Hōōdō at Uji mentioned below<sup>39</sup>. The particular green colour of the needle-tube was one of the favourite hues chosen for glass objects of the period; examples

<sup>36</sup> *Tempyō no chibō*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Garner, op. cit., pl. 5 B/C; Umehara, op. cit. (note 9), fig. 7; *Kyōto Daigaku bungaku-bu bakubutsu-kan kōkogaku shiryō mokuroku*, vol. 3 (*Chūgoku*), Kyōto, 1963, p. 231 f., no. 432 (with three small reproductions).

<sup>38</sup> *Chōsen koseki zufu*, ed. Sekino Tadashi, vol. 3, pl. 328. Cf. Ishida/Wada, op. cit. (note 22), p. 136; *Nihon kōkogaku jiten* (see note 35), p. 233.

<sup>39</sup> See note 51.

are: the cup used as relic container, found in the Song-yim-sa pagoda near Taegu, Korea (eighth century)<sup>40</sup>; the glass flacons found in the relic deposits of the Hōryūji and Sūfukuji pagodas in Japan (seventh century)<sup>41</sup>. Raw glass material of this colour is still kept in the Shōsōin<sup>42</sup>. It was *not* popular, however, with the makers of Ming and Ch'ing enamel work with its fundamentally different colour scheme.

2. The Taihō Codex (*Taihō Ritsu-ryō*) of 701 mentions an official "Casting Bureau" (*imono-no-tsukasa* or *ten-chū-shi*) placed under the jurisdiction of the Japanese Government<sup>43</sup>. This agency was mainly in charge of gold, silver, bronze, and iron work as well as of the manufacture of lacquer articles, glass and beads. Among these materials we rediscover several that were used for making the cloisonné mirror. Tōdaiji documents of the mid-eighth century, long since incorporated in the Shōsōin, tell in great detail of the production of glass articles, beads etc. D. Blair inspected some specimens of unworked raw glass in the Shōsōin which evidently came from the "Casting Bureau" and found them to be practically identical in structure, colour and other features with the enamels used for the mirror.

3. D. Blair correctly pointed out<sup>44</sup> the striking similarity linking the mirror décor with the ornamental designs (fig. 11) on the lotus pedestal of the dry-lacquer (*kanshitsu*) statue of Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon, the main image, made around 748, of the Hokkedō, the famous chapel within the Tōdaiji precinct. The alternating arrangement of the lotus petals as well as the details within their contours, especially the confronted half-palmettes with their characteristic lobes and indentations, the spiral motif and the highly symptomatic, almost straight lines starting at a "right angle" from the curls and joining in a V-shape—all these show a nearly identical vocabulary of forms, entirely in keeping with the constituent features, mentioned above, of many other T'ang designs. It seems probable that the Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon was made in that very same Casting Bureau which evidently was a major arts and crafts production center in Nara. Let it be mentioned, finally, that both works, the statue and the mirror, have been close neighbours for many centuries, the Hokkedō being located at a short distance from the Shōsōin and an even shorter one from the presumably original home of the mirror, the Tōdaiji store-house within a precinct conspicuously called Kensaku-in.

It seems fairly safe, then, to assume that the mirror was made in the official workshop at Nara during the early eighth century—unless it was imported from abroad—, whether at the hands of Chinese, Korean, or Japanese artisans we have no means of telling, not any more than in the case of most Shōsōin objects.

The most sceptical criticism and the most provocative dating was pronounced by Sir Harry Garner in his recent and in many respects authoritative book on *Chinese and Japanese Cloisonné*

<sup>40</sup> Chewon Kim: "Treasures from the Song-yim-sa Temple in Southern Korea", *Artibus Asiae* 22, 1959, 95–112. – Idem, *National Museum of Korea* [Guidebook], 2nd rev.ed., Seoul, 1968, pl. 118.

<sup>41</sup> *Hōryūji gojū-no-tō hibō no chōsa*, ed. Hōryūji, Kyōto, 1954, pl. 23; text p. 23. – *Zusetsu Nihon bunka-shi taikei*, vol. 2 (4th ed.), Tōkyō, 1957, fig. 23. – Sūfukuji: *Nihon bijutsu taikei*, vol. 9: *Kinkō*, Tōkyō, 1961, pl. 5; *Kokubō*, vol. 1, Tōkyō etc. 1963, pl. 144. The Sūfukuji was founded in 668.

<sup>42</sup> Blair, *op.cit.*, p. 92. – Green fish pendants and beads: *Shōsōin no garasu* [i.e., glass], Tōkyō, 1965, pl. 8, 10; *Garasu (Nihon no kōgei)*, vol. 6), Kyōto, 1966, pl. 1, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Blair, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>44</sup> Blair, *op.cit.*, p. 88, fig. 5. Excellent reproductions in: *Nara roku-daji taikan*, vol. 10: *Tōdaiji II*, Tōkyō, 1968, pl. 4, 61; Langdon Warner: *Japanese Sculpture of the Tempyō Period*, ed. James M. Plumer, Cambridge, Mass., 1959, pl. 111b; cf. p. 111f.

*Enamels* (London, 1962). In his opinion, the Shōsōin mirror was produced not earlier than in the late seventeenth century by Japanese artisans, perhaps in the Hirata family's workshop specializing in swore furnishings. Starting with the obviously wrong statement that today no serious student of early Chinese art is any longer willing to accept a T'ang date for the mirror, Garner tries to corroborate his startling thesis, among others, by the following arguments<sup>45</sup>.

1. There exist no other T'ang mirrors with a six- or twelve-fold (instead fo the more usual eight-fold) organization of their flower motif. Even if this statement were true for the mirrors—which it is not, as testified to by a mirror (fig. 12) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston<sup>46</sup>—it is badly invalidated by the existence, in great numbers, of exactly this kind of flower rosette among T'ang metal work and ceramics, including T'ang style roof-tiles (cf. fig. 18) from Korea and Japan<sup>47</sup>, showing close affinities to the Shōsōin mirror décor. Even in the Shōsōin we find pertinent reference material: e.g. among thirty-six rosettes on the foot-rules (cf. fig. 6) made of painti d ivory no less than thirty-one have a six-fold arrangement<sup>48</sup>. Two of them come extremely close to the mirror in that they arrange, around a tiny central circle, a group of six small radiating petals as the basis for a group of six large petals showing an interior design resembling that of the mirror. Furthermore, the group of large petals overlaps another group showing their pointed tips between the dominating petals. The result is, as in the cloisonné mirror, an alternating rehythm of main and secondary petal motifs. That the only existing piece of contemporary enamel work in Japan, the Kengoshi tomb plaque, shows a six-fold flower motif is an especially nice coincidence.

2. Judging from reproductions and disregarding D. Blair's technical description in several points (although frequently quoting it), Garner asserts that the “wires” forming the cells of the mirror are of a perfect evenness achievable only by mechanical production, that is, “by drawing the material through a die”, a technique not known to have been used in the T'ang period. As we know, there were no “wires” used in making the cells or “pans”, and their edges as well as the metal lines showing between the enamel fillings are by no means as even as some photographic reproductions may suggest. If Garner speaks, in this connection, of a “mass production” by means of a relatively modern manufacturing process he should be able to explain why not a single specimen except the Shōsōin mirror has survived from as recent a time as the Tokugawa period, and why at the same time a rather primitive method of fastening the cells onto their base was still being practised.

3. The method of pasting the “wires” on the base by some sort of vegetable glue instead of solder, Garner states, was not used in China before the late seventeenth century. But this method,

<sup>45</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 96–102.

<sup>46</sup> Hsien-ch'i Tseng and Robert P. Dart: *The Charles B. Hoyt Collection in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, vol. 1, Boston, 1964, pl. 131; Gyllensvård, *op.cit.* (note 27), fig. 87c.

<sup>47</sup> Examples: silver box with cover, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington (Gyllensvård, *op.cit.*, fig. 87d); silver-plated copper bowl, Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm (*ibid.*, pl. 14; see also fig. 80a, c, d, e, m, p, r; 87c; pl. 6d); *san-ts'ai* plate, Museum Rietberg, Zurich (*Sammlung J. H. F. Menten: Chinesische Grabfunde und Bronzen*, Zürich, 1948, pl. 91); *san-ts'ai* dishes reproduced in *Sekai tōji zenshū*, vol. 9, pl. 72, 78, 80; in *Tōki zenshū*, vol. 25, pl. 27; Tunhuang mural, cave no. 130, dated 713–741: halo of Buddha (*Sekai bijutsu taikei*, Kōdansha ed., vol. 9: *Chūgoku bijutsu II*, pl. 58); for Korean roof-tiles, see note 61.

<sup>48</sup> *Shōsōin bōmotsu*, *Chūsō* (*Treasures of the Shōsōin*, Middle Section), Tōkyō, 1960, pl. 23/24; *ibid.*, *Hokusō* (North Section), pl. 35/36, 37/38, 39/40; cf. the *sugoroku* board of *shitan* wood with intarsia rosettes (Ishida Mosaku: *Shōsōin to Tōdaiji*, Tōkyō, 1964, pl. 78; *Shōsōin bōmotsu*, *Hokusō*, Tōkyō, 1962, pl. 53/54). – Shōsōin textiles with six-fold motifs: *Shōsōin bōmotsu: Senshoku* (*Textiles in the Shōsōin*), vol. 1, Tōkyō, 1963, pl. 3, 19, 32/33, 39/40.

and possibly even the material used, seems to differ a good deal from the one employed in the Shōsōin mirror: in later Chinese pieces the wires, after the adhesive had been burnt during the manufacturing process, were held in place by the enamels themselves while in the Shōsōin mirror not the enamel fillings but the complete “pans” had to be safely attached to their base. That they were heated separately, prior to their being pasted onto the mirror base, is strongly suggested by the very method of using a lacquer-like substance which would have been burnt up when heated together with the metal and the enamel filling. An alternative, though less practicable, method may have been the one suggested by D. Blair: the dropping of molten glass into the “pans” previously glued in their places. All this seems to fit much better in the technological framework of an early era than of an advanced one like Ming, Ch'ing, or Tokugawa. As is well known, there were many different techniques employed among the Shōsōin mirrors—including the use of lacquer as a base for metal inlays—so that experiments with unusual, later discarded technical mediums are in no way a matter of surprise or a reason for scepticism<sup>49</sup>.

4. Sir Harry is probably the only author who has been able to see a resemblance between the Shōsōin mirror and the enamel-decorated sword fittings, mainly *tsuba*, coming from the workshop of the Hirata family in the seventeenth century<sup>50</sup>. Evidently the cloisonné or champlevé techniques were not used in Japan between 800 and ca. 1575. The metal knobs with rings for fastening the doors of the Hōōdō (Byōdōin at Uji, 1053), contrary to the impression given by reproductions and notwithstanding their being described, in Japanese literature, as decorated with *shippō*, actually have only some compartments of their flower motifs covered with a simple, flat coating of green enamel (without cloisons), as may be seen on a close inspection of the original pieces *in situ*<sup>51</sup>. Since the Momoyama period the “Western” methods of enamel decoration were practised in Japan, obviously under the strong influence of Ming models. The Japanese works resemble them in their colour scheme and the opaqueness of their enamel fillings; they differ in their preference of such decoration for small objects only, most pieces being, beside sword fittings, handles for drawers or sliding doors (*bikite*, fig. 13) and ornaments for “hiding nail heads” in residential buildings (*kugi-kakushi*)<sup>52</sup>. Neither in material and technique nor in décor motifs, style and colour scheme does even a single piece of this late Japanese enamel work show the slightest affinity to the Shōsōin mirror. It is hardly imaginable how Garner could write that “the use of translucent enamels ... on a silver background with silver wires ... is exactly the same technique as that adopted in the mirror”<sup>53</sup>. (Robinson has pointed

<sup>49</sup> Attention may be called to some such experimental T'ang pieces of presumably metropolitan (Loyang) workmanship, now kept in the Hakutsuru Museum, Kōbe: an iron (!) mirror decorated with silver inlay in a sort of champlevé depressions in the body of the mirror so that the design appears flush with its iron contour lines just as enamels do with their wires; and two bronze mirrors with mother-of-pearl and amber inlays glued to the base within a filling of lacquer or some similar substance. (*Chūgoku Kinseki Tōji Zukan [Old Chinese Art]*, ed. Asano Umekichi and Misugi Takatoshi, Ōsaka/Kyōto, 1961, nos 56 and 60/61, with excellent colour plates and detail photographs.)

<sup>50</sup> Garner, *op.cit.*, p. 100–102; colour plate F, pl. 86B, 87A, B, 88A, B; *Nihon bijutsu taikei: Kinkō* (see note 41), pl. 19, 24; Chisaburō F. Yamada: *Decorative Arts of Japan*, Tōkyō, 1964, pl. 56 (2); Martin Feddersen: *Japanisches Kunstgewerbe*, Braunschweig, 1960, pl. 86.

<sup>51</sup> *Garasu* [i.e., glass] (*Nihon no kōgei*, vol. 6), Kyōto, 1966, pl. 19; text p. 215. Some of these pieces, attached to the thresholds of the Hōōdō, are original and thought to be contemporary with the building (1053) while some others are later replacements. “Cloisons” (correctly: champlevé grooves) occur only where the copper inlay of the flower motif has disappeared. In *Nihon chōkokku-shi kiso-shiryō shūsei, Heian-jidai: Zōzō meiki-hen*, vol. 6 (Byōdōin), Tōkyō, 1968, p. 78, no mention is made of enamel nor is the problem discussed.

<sup>52</sup> *Nihon bijutsu taikei: Kinkō*, pl. 24; *Garasu*, pl. 6, 7.

<sup>53</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 102.

out that translucent enamel appears first about 1770 in sword decoration<sup>54</sup>.) Reproductions of such allegedly identical pieces are missing in Garner's book. Furthermore, there is another grave improbability in this line of argumentation. If in China since the fourteenth century and, under Chinese influence, in Japan since the late sixteenth century a greatly advanced and stylistically more or less homogenous art of enamel decoration was in vogue: why should the Japanese artisans of the seventeenth or eighteenth century have taken the trouble to create a piece of obsolete, primitive technique and of a style outdated for almost a millennium? How did they come to know that technique and style? Whom have we to imagine as a possible patron giving an order for such a mirror? Fashionable Tokugawa mirrors are of an entirely different type as to technique, design, style, and taste<sup>55</sup>. A fake is out of the question at that time, and so is a copy made to order for the Shōsōin because in Tokugawa days nobody may have cared much for the old treasure-house, with the exception of occasional repair work of the building and some of the treasures<sup>56</sup>. Interest in archaic work in the T'ang style, on the other hand, has yet to be reported from the Tokugawa period. Such work could not have been produced unless artists had at their disposal original objects or reproductions of T'ang or Nara pieces and unless they had an intimate knowledge of T'ang motifs, techniques, and styles—an absurd idea in the cultural setting of Tokugawa Japan. Seen in this context, Garner's thesis is a sheer historical anachronism. The latest offshoot we could find of the T'ang tradition represented by the Shōsōin mirror is the décor of some Kamakura gilt-bronze water-bowls<sup>57</sup> used in Buddhist ritual (fig. 14) showing a motif of overlapping lotus petals and a treatment of ornamental detail that is clearly derived from the T'ang type but at the same time gives it a specific Kamakura flavour alien to that of its remote prototypes. Later this stylistic tradition completely disappeared from the Japanese decorative arts just as the mirror motif had disappeared from the repertoire of Chinese ornamentation after T'ang. The fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find any really comparable specimens of this motif, so ubiquitous in many fields of T'ang art, after the end of the dynasty is a strong additional argument against all later dates proposed for the mirror.

Therefore, authors of recent Japanese publications<sup>58</sup> are entirely justified in rejecting the Tokugawa date even if they have failed to adduce sufficient evidence from the rich stock of seventh and eighth century material preserved or recently discovered in China, Japan, and Korea.

#### c. Korean Provenance: Unified Silla?

A Korean origin of the mirror, already hinted at by Jenyns but not supported by any convincing evidence, is by no means impossible, in view of the great number of Korean artists and craftsmen active in Japan since the fifth and sixth centuries<sup>59</sup> and of the constant stream of Korean

<sup>54</sup> B. W. Robinson: *The Arts of the Japanese Sword*, London, 1961, p. 80.

<sup>55</sup> Example: *Japanese Art in the Seattle Museum*, ed. Richard E. Fuller, Seattle, 1960, pl. 136.

<sup>56</sup> David, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>57</sup> Especially the bowl owned by the Hōbōdai-in of the Tōji, Kyōto; *Tōji*, ed. Asahi Shimbunsha, Tōkyō, 1958, pl. 182/183; cf. Ishida Mosaku and Okazaki Jōji: *Mikkyō bōgu*, Tōkyō, 1965, pl. 525, 526, 527.

<sup>58</sup> Chisaburō F. Yamada, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1963 edition, vol. 8, p. 357; *Shōsōin no garasu* (see note 42), p. IV and 24–26; *Garasu* (see note 42), p. 207.

<sup>59</sup> Bruno Lewin: *Aya und Hata. Bevölkerungsgruppen Altjapans kontinentaler Herkunft*, Wiesbaden, 1962.

imports and influences flowing into Japan, mainly in the Asuka and early Nara periods. Later, however, the Korean impact gave room to a more dominant and direct influence from T'ang China although, of course, this did not preclude Korean objects from entering Japan as gifts, by trade, or in exchange at a later date. Seen in the historical perspective of Nara period Japan, a Chinese provenance of an object like this seems still to be the more probable alternative. Neither case, though, can be made out with certainty on the basis of now available evidence, and there is always a chance that all or most eighth century objects found in Japan and showing the universally accepted T'ang style were produced in Japan by or under the supervision of Chinese or Korean artists.

Still, there are some pieces of evidence pointing to Korea as a possible place of origin of the mirror itself or of the artistic tradition it represents. This Korean tradition, to be sure, was closely linked to China: the culture of Unified Silla (668–935) reflected the mature T'ang culture to almost the same extent as did that of Nara Japan. Although we have seen many parallels to the Shōsōin mirror among original T'ang metal work, ceramics, and other ornamental design, some especially relevant items have been found in Korea. This may be due to sheer archaeological accident; anyhow, by good chance there happen to be more T'ang style roof- and floor-tiles preserved from Silla (and Japan) than from China, but it is perhaps not by mere chance that the designs of just these Silla tiles are so extremely similar to that of the mirror. The ones that resemble it most closely are from the Kam-(e)un-sa<sup>60</sup> and Sa-chōng-wang-sa sites (fig. 15) and from the Kyōngju outskirts<sup>61</sup>; several square floor-tiles, decorated with rich lotus rosettes in relief, show an even greater affinity to the mirror, especially the piece in the Ono collection<sup>62</sup> (fig. 16) and the famous tile (fig. 17) from the Im-hae-jōn<sup>63</sup>, a ruined hall of the Kyōngju Palace, built in 679. In Japan, we see close imitations of certain Silla or T'ang designs on tiles from the Shimotsuke-Kokubunji (Tochigi Prefecture; fig. 18, cf. fig. 19)<sup>64</sup>, one of the government-sponsored official branch temples of the Tōdaiji (the Shōsōin temple, to wit) such as were established in each province for securing spiritual protection and welfare of the country.

Perhaps it is no mere accident either that the wooden railing encircling the dais of the Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon statue in the Hokkedō of Tōdaiji—the figure whose lotus pedestal exhibits in its design a close affinity to the Shōsōin mirror (see above)—shows a characteristic motif of bars arranged in an asymmetrical sequence of right angles. The motif seems to have been popular in Silla although its ultimate origin lay in Chinese Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties (Yünkang, for instance) and continued to be popular in China down to the Sung and even later

<sup>60</sup> Chewon Kim and Moo-byong Youn: *Kam-eun-sa—A Temple Site of the Silla Dynasty* (*Special Report of the National Museum of Korea*, vol. 2), Seoul, 1961, pl. 56/1; plan 23 fig. I.

<sup>61</sup> Hamada Kōsaku and Umehara Sueji: *Shiragi koga no kenkyū* (*Study on the Ancient Tiles of the Silla Dynasty, Korea*), Report upon Archaeological Research in the Department of Literature, Kyōto Imperial University, vol. 13, 1933–1934, Tōkyō, 1934, pl. XIII no. 206; pl. LXX no. 1031. Beyond these few examples the volume contains a corpus of Silla tiles showing rich variations of the same theme. The authors expressly point out the similarity of some specimens to the Shōsōin mirror pattern (p. 6 and 10 of the English résumé).

<sup>62</sup> Sekino Tadashi ed.: *Chōsen koseki zufu*, vol. 5, Tōkyō, 1917, pl. 640, no. 2160.

<sup>63</sup> William B. Honey: *Corean Pottery*, London, 1947, pl. 11; *Meisterwerke koreanischer Kunst* [Exhibition Catalogue], Frankfurt, 1962, no. 15/16, pl. 26; drawing: Blair, *op. cit.*, fig. 5; Chewon Kim and Won-yong Kim: *The Arts of Korea*, London, 1966, pl. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ishida Mosaku: *Nara-jidai bunka zakkō*, Tōkyō, 1944, pl. 6, no. 5; Sekino Tadashi: *Nihon no kenchiku to geijutsu*, vol. 1, Tōkyō, 1941, fig. 349 no. 477; a particularly similar tile (fig. 19) from the Kibi-dera (Bitchū, Okayama Prefecture), founded in 735: *ibid.*, fig. 349 no. 478.

periods. Japan had received it by the Asuka-Hakuhō period—more precisely, the late seventh century—as is evidenced by the railings of the Hōryūji Chūmon, Kondō, and Pagoda. Among Silla works it occurs in the railing of the eighth century relic shrine made of gilt-bronze sheet that was found in the pagoda of the Song-yim-sa near Taegu<sup>65</sup>; this is the very shrine which contains a glass cup of green colour (see above) decorated with glass rings exactly resembling the famous blue glass cup in the Shōsōin (of possibly Iranian provenance)<sup>66</sup>. Thus a whole group of works in Silla, in the Tōdaiji, and in the Shōsōin are linked by a common context on the background of T'ang art.

In this context it is important to remember that the enamel technique, including cloisonné, was known in Korea, as is testified to by the silver needle-case covered with grass-green enamel (see above) and by a plaque<sup>67</sup> (fig. 20) decorated with a flower rosette composed of five petals in its inner and six in its outer circle and filled with coloured enamels between “raised contours”. This was unearthed from a ruined temple at Chōng-am-ni near P'yōng-yang, a Koguryō site far away from Silla but in an area where an old tradition of metal work may have survived since the time when it was part of Lolang province under Chinese rule and when a masterpiece of the highest order like the famous golden belt-buckle with seven dragons was used, if not produced, there. It has yet to be explained how Silla, as early as in its “Old Silla” days (prior to 668), received a very advanced technique of gold work, including a sophisticated feature like granulation, as is represented by the ear-rings and other personal ornaments found in Kyōngju tombs. We mention this merely to point out the high level of metal work that was reached in Silla—under Chinese influence, to be sure, but perhaps with some peculiar Korean touch which we are not yet able to judge accurately.

One curious point of technical similarity linking the Shōsōin mirror with a Korean piece of metal work may be mentioned without over-emphasizing it: the relief figures of the Four Lokapālas on the walls of the reliquary casket found in the Kam-(e)un-sa Pagoda near Kyōngju (682) seem to have been pasted onto the casket by means of some sort of lacquer glue as were the enamel-filled “pans” on the mirror<sup>68</sup>.

All these isolated and scattered bits of evidence, however, though fitting nicely into the chronological framework, do not carry weight enough to tip the scales in clear favour of a Korean provenance of the Shōsōin mirror. It may very well be that this early and simple type

<sup>65</sup> Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon (the dais is datable around 741 but continues an older style; Kuno Takeshi: *A Guide to Japanese Sculpture*, Tōkyo, 1963, p. XXIX): *Nara roku-daiji taikan* (see note 44), pl. 51.—Yünkang, Cave 9: S. Mizuno/T. Nagahiro: *Yünkang*, vol. 6, Kyōto, 1951, pl. 8/9, 13/14, 27, 29, 33f., 68; Cave 13: *ibid.*, vol. 10, Kyōto, 1953, pl. 8ff., 27ff.—Hōryūji: *Kokubō* (see note 41), vol. 1, pl. 14, 15.—Song-yim-sa: see note 40; cf. Buddhist stela (689?) from the Pi-am-sa: Ch. Kim: *National Museum of Korea* (see note 40), pl. 149.—Further examples: pedestal of standing bronze Buddha, dated 529, Berenson Collection, Settignano: L. Sickman and A.C. Soper: *The Art and Architecture of China* (Pelican History of Art), Harmondsworth etc., 1956, pl. 37.—Ch'ien-fo-t'a, I-hsien (Liao Dynasty), reproduced in: Liu Chih-p'ing: *Chung-kuo chien-chu lui-hsing chi chieh-kou*, Peking, 1957, fig. 349.—Mampuku-ji near Kyōto, Butsu-den (main hall, Ming type): *Nihon bijutsu taikei*, vol. 1, Tōkyō, 1960, pl. 101.—Sung(?) painting, attr. to Hui-tsung: “Literary Gathering”, National Palace Museum, Taipei: *Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting in the Palace Museum*, Taichung, 1959, vol. 2, pl. 92.—Some of the specimens are discussed in Moo-byong Youn: “Designs of Railings of the Silla Dynasty”, *Misul Charyo* (*National Museum of Korea Art Magazine*), no. 2, Dec. 1960.

<sup>66</sup> Shōsōin hōmotsu, Chūsō (see note 48), pl. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Chōsen ko-bunka sōkan, ed. Umehara Sueji and Fujita Ryōsaku, vol. 4, Nara, 1966, No. 115; text p. 22f.

<sup>68</sup> Ch. Kim and W.Y. Kim: *The Arts of Korea* (see note 63), p. 191, 234; Ch. Kim in: J. Fontein and R. Hempel (see note 6), p. 229. In the earlier archaeological report (see note 60), however, it was stated that they were fastened by nails (p. 11 of the English résumé); after all, both methods do not exclude each other.

of cloisonné was introduced directly from T'ang China to Japan, having disappeared in its homeland from the archaeological record.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We owe a debt of gratitude to Sir Harry Garner for his thought-provoking, if ill-founded and hardly tenable theory concerning the date and provenance of the Shōsōin cloisonné mirror, because he has stimulated us to reconsider the various aspects of this unique and by its very uniqueness problematical piece, instead of just taking the conventional opinion for granted. Perhaps the Japanese specialists and officials in charge of the Shōsōin may now feel induced to look for more documentary evidence. What we felt to be most imperative was to place the mirror within its art-historical setting as to its technique, the motifs of its design, and their stylistic formulation, taking into account the general historical circumstances under which it may or may not have been produced. Within the framework of what may be called the Shōsōin era—and that is where we have to start from—there exists a wealth of closely related material in China, in Korea, and in Chinese- or Korean-taught Japan, assembling itself into a kind of syndrome. If dated or datable, this material fits precisely into the very span of time in which we imagine the mirror to have been made: around 700 or in the first decades of the eighth century. While, in our opinion, no doubt is possible concerning the date, the area of provenance is much less easy to determine. All available evidence does not permit us to say more than that the mirror, like so many other pieces preserved from eighth century Japan, may have been imported from T'ang China or from Unified Silla (possibly brought there from T'ang China) or that it may have been made in Japan by Chinese or Korean artists or by their Japanese pupils. In making this vague and not very satisfactory statement, however, we find some consolation in realizing that precisely this may be called a positive result of our discussion: to see the Shōsōin cloisonné mirror so intimately and inseparably interwoven in the fabric of the international T'ang style and its cultural background that it seems hardly possible to break it loose and transfer it to some other art-historical context.

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## CHINESE-JAPANESE CHARACTERS

### General

Ch'ien-fo-t'a 千佛塔	Jin-ai komonjo 塘埃古文書	Sa-chōn-wang-sa 四天王寺
Chokufūzō 勅封藏	Kam-(e)un-sa 感恩寺	Shimotsuke-Kokubunji 下野國分寺
Chong-am-ni 清岩里	Kemmotsu-chō 獻物帳	shippō (-yaki, -kazari) 七寶(燒, 飾)
Chūsō 中倉	Kengoshi-zuka-kofun 牽牛子塚古墳	Song-yim-sa 松林寺
Fukū-Kensaku-Kannon 不空羈索觀音	Kensaku-in 獻索院	Sōn-tōk 善德
<i>hikite</i> 引手	Kōfūzō 紗封藏	Sūfukuji 崇福寺
Hirata 平田	<i>kugi-kakushi</i> 钉隱	Sugimoto-jinja 杉本神社
Hōbodai-in 實菩提院	ling-hua 菱花	Taihō-ritsuryō 大寶律令
Hokkedō 法華堂	Mampuku-ji 萬福寺	T'ang san-ts'ai (Tō san-sai) 唐三彩
Hokusō 北倉	Nansō 南倉	tsuba 鍔
Hōōdō (Byōdō-in) 凤凰堂(平等院)	Pun-hwang-sa (Funkō-ji) 芬墓寺	Wei-tung mu 章洞墓
Imhae-jōn 臨海殿		Yamato Rekishi-kan 大和歷史館
Imono-no-tsukasa (tenchū-shi) 典鑄司		yao 窯
		Yung-t'ai kung-chu mu 永泰公主墓

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<i>Chōsen koseki zufu</i> 朝鮮古蹟圖譜	<i>Nihon bijutsu taikei—Kinkō</i> 日本美術大系—金工
<i>Chūgoku bijutsu</i> 中國美術	<i>Nihon chōkokku-shi kiso-shiryō shūsei—Heian jidai: Zō-zō meiki-hen</i> 日本彫刻史基礎資料集成—平安時代：像銘記篇
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<i>Chūgoku—Zui Tō hen</i> 中國・隋唐篇	<i>Nihon no kenchiku to geijutsu</i> 日本の建築と藝術
<i>Chung-kuo chien-chu lui-hsing chi chieh-kou</i> 中國建築 類型及結構	<i>Nihon no kōgei</i> 日本の工藝
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