

Mirror with leaf (*caoye*), TLV and continuous arc design

Catalogue no. 27 (M66)

Western Han dynasty

(206 BC-AD 9),

D. 13.5 cm, Th. of rim 0.25 cm,

H. of knob 1.0 cm,

Wt. 230.78 g (8.14 oz)

- Rim: Inclined (16 continuous arcs).
- Side: Slightly inclined inward.
- Inner section: Square and TLV pattern; leaves; cloud-head shape → 4 nipples; inscription '富貴無疆(極)長樂未央' → knob in the shape of an animal head.
- Material: Originally white metal, but now greyish black.

Both leaf and continuous arc designs appeared at the end of the Warring States period, while the TLV pattern was not used until the Western Han dynasty. In view of the fact that the continuous arc motif represents the rays of the sun, and the leaf design evolved from auspicious beasts ultimately derived from the *taotie* motif, it can be assumed that this mirror, like the later TLV pattern mirrors, also depicts a celestial map fashioned along the same conceptual lines as the *liubo* gaming board. This type can be regarded as an intermediary stage between early Western Han mirrors, which still show considerable Warring States influence, and TLV pattern mirrors that flourished in the second half of the Western Han dynasty.

The eight-character inscription reads, 'Grow rich and prosper without limit, and enjoy inexhaustible pleasure'.

Clearly cast, the back shows fine lines drawn on the pottery mould to facilitate the correct placement of design motifs.

The back is a dark grey after the patient removal of the patina, but the reflecting surface is slightly rough due to the forcible removal of persistent encrustation.

The mirror was once broken into three fragments, but later restored to its present condition.