**AM000-Asia-China-Yuan-Plain-1227-1368**

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**Chinese Yuan Dynasty (1227-1368) plain bronze circular mirror with outer rim, handle and flat central knob.**

**The Yuan Dynasty (**[**Chinese**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_language)**:** [**元**](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/元)[**朝**](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/朝)**;** [**Mongolian**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolian_language)**: Их Юань улс) was the** [**Mongol**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongol_Empire)[**Borjigin**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borjigin) **dynasty established by** [**Kublai Khan**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kublai_Khan)**. Although the Mongols had ruled northern China for decades, it was not until 1271 that Kublai Khan officially proclaimed the dynasty in the traditional Chinese style as the Great Yuan Empire** [**大**](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/大)[**元**](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/元)[**帝國**](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/帝國)**, but it was isolated from the other khanates and controlled only most of modern** [**China**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China) **and** [**Mongolia**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolia)**. It was the first foreign dynasty to rule all of China, lasting until 1368, after which its remnants in Mongolia were known as the** [**Northern Yuan**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Yuan_Dynasty)**.**

**The Yuan is considered both a successor to the** [**Mongol Empire**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongol_Empire) **and an imperial** [**Chinese dynasty**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynasties_in_Chinese_history)**. In** [**official Chinese histories**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_historiography)**, the Yuan Dynasty bore the** [**Mandate of Heaven**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandate_of_Heaven)**, following the** [**Song Dynasty**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_Dynasty_(960-1279)) **and preceding the** [**Ming Dynasty**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ming_Dynasty)**. Although the dynasty was established by** [**Kublai Khan**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kublai_Khan)**, he placed his grandfather** [**Genghis Khan**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genghis_Khan) **on the imperial records as the official founder of the dynasty as** [**Taizu**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emperors_of_the_Yuan_Dynasty)**.**

**In the Yuan Dynasty artistic expression avoided Sinicizing motifs in favor of Mongolian indigenous images and styles. In the case of this mirror we have an example of this impulse. This still retains a now vestigial flat central knob that had been meant to be the device through which a braided cord was held by the viewer. However, the handle makes this cord-holding knob superfluous. The mirror's reflective surface on both sides recalls how mirrors of Mongolian shamans were attached to their clothing and would reflect the sun's rays on both sides as the shaman danced. Indeed, this mirror minus its handle is analogous to those of the Mongolian shaman. Therefore, in the tautologous construction of this mirror's holding devices we can see the continuing influence of ancient traditions being expressed in the court of Kublai Khan in a transitional style.**

**REFERENCES:**

**Similar Yuan mirrors but without handles are published in   
Kerr, Rose. 1990. *Later Chinese Bronzes*. London : Bamboo Pub. in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum.**[**Chou, Ju-hsi.**](javascript:open_window("http://lms01.harvard.edu:80/F/GXLBA2TI2HMF8U3S2BYDKK2D7I5ITDT8EYYSDS12GHAXSG7C6Y-19249?func=service&doc_number=008667461&line_number=0014&service_type=TAG");)**. 2000. *Circles of Reflection, The Carter Collection of Chinese Bronze Mirrors*. Cleveland, Ohio : Cleveland Museum of Art.**