

Beyond the Surface: Bronze Mirrors from the Lloyd Cotsen Collection in Context
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Symposium Titles and Abstracts

Zhou Ya– (Keynote lecture) *Methods of Using Bronze Mirrors Attested in Archaeological Evidence.*

Abstract: This paper scrutinizes archaeological materials for evidence on how Chinese bronze mirrors were used in ancient times. Mirrors were either held in hand or mounted on a stand. When unmounted, mirrors could be held in one hand with the fingers grasping the handle or with the help of a ribbon slung through the handle, or they could be held in both hands. Mirror stands emerged in the late Warring States period. During the period from the Han to the Sui, the stand was commonly in the form of a pillar, and a mirror was fixed either directly onto it with an arch-shaped support at the bottom, or tied to the top of the pillar with ribbons. From the Tang to the Song, mirrors used by men were fixed on a framed stand with folding legs, while women’s mirrors were fixed on a parallel-legged stand. After the Song dynasty, a greater variety of types of mirror-installation devices appeared, such as triangular stands, box-shaped mirror containers, and supporting posts to which mirrors were to be attached.

Lan-ying Tseng – *Positioning the Heavenly Horses: Cardinal Emblems and Mirror Decoration in Han China.*

Abstract: This paper investigates the inclusion of heavenly horses in decoration of bronze mirrors in Han China. It focuses on, but is not limited to, Mirror O-0226 in the Lloyd Cotsen Collection. I discuss the grouping of cardinal emblems in the Han period and how cardinality played a role in decoration. Moreover, I investigate the cult of heavenly horses in the Han dynasty and how this legendary animal figured in the given cardinal schemes. I further explore the juxtaposition of heavenly horses and the Queen Mother of the West as seen on the Cotsen mirror.

Charlotte Horlyck - *Questioning the Role(s) of Chinese Mirrors in Early Korea.*

Abstract: This paper explores the distribution and appropriation of Chinese bronze mirrors in early Korea. The introduction of Chinese mirrors to the Korean peninsula in the 1st century BC had a major impact on the local production and uses of mirrors. The paper discusses evidence of this and questions the function of these imported mirrors and their imitations. Comparative references will be made to the distribution of Han mirrors in early Japan.

David Scott - *The Cotsen Collection: Chinese Bronze Mirrors, Virtual and Real.*

Abstract: A technical examination of the Chinese bronze mirrors in the Cotsen Collection was carried out with a variety of scientific examination techniques. Binocular microscopy revealed details of manufacture, enabling some mirrors to be assigned to the category of reproductions. Microscopy also revealed the authentic, the mirrors made in high-tin bronze alloys, those patinated black, etched, polished, plated or inset. The range of techniques and alloys used for the mirrors in the Cotsen collection represent a comprehensive array of artistic production from the Shang Dynasty to the Tang. The nature of the alloys used by the ancient Chinese craftsmen are reviewed and the technical characteristics of the leaded tin bronzes most often used for mirror production are discussed, with reference to some outstanding examples from the

collection. Aspects of the corrosion of the bronzes are reviewed in the context of modern reproductions and ancient originals. Photomicrographs, electron microprobe maps, metallographic and compositional studies will be presented and discussed on selected examples from the collection.

Hanmo Zhang - *A Theatric Design on a Chinese Bronze Mirror in the Cotsen Collection.*

Abstract: Bronze mirror O-0186 in the Cotsen Collection is a rare piece not only because it is one among the few surviving pieces with silk backings, but also for its unique artistic design. Can we understand the design on the backing of this mirror by juxtaposition with provenienced archaeological finds? Can we find its literary source? What did the design mean in its social context and artistic tradition? This paper attempts to answer these questions and read this unique mirror design in its multilayered contexts.

Suzanne E. Cahill - *Vehicles and Clothing Depicted in Chinese Bronze Mirrors of the Han through Tang Dynasties.*

Abstract: The paper examines images and inscriptions on Chinese bronze mirrors of the Han through Tang dynasties, with special emphasis on mirrors in the Cotsen Collection, to derive the information they reveal about vehicles and clothing during that period. The paper compares information found on mirrors to that available in other contemporary arts as well as to textual sources in the historical and literary records.

Susanna Lam - *Persian Influences in Sui and Tang Bronze Mirrors.*

Abstract: Chinese bronze mirrors not only served everyday grooming needs, but the intricate and elaborate designs on their backs convey a sophisticated system of cosmological beliefs central to Chinese culture. While many symbolic motifs have a local origin, certain artistic elements found in the decoration of bronze mirrors dated to the Sui (581-618 CE) and Tang (618-907 CE) dynasties can be confidently attributed to Persian roots. They are a clear indication of cultural contacts between China and Central and Western Asia as a result of Silk Road trade. This paper examines the significance of such Persian motifs. The most important among them is the winged animal, which, in its original Persian context, carried important cosmological meanings that had evolved over the course of history. Were these meanings known to Chinese users of these motifs? How did these newly-adopted attributes fit in with the existing repertoire of symbolic elements in China?

Mimi Hall Yiangpruksawan - *A Cult of Mirrors at the Heian Court in Liao Perspective*

Abstract: The ritual deployment of mirrors in Japanese religions is well known. Of particular note are the small votive mirrors with meticulous engravings of Buddhist deities on the face. These came into use in the early eleventh century as promoted at the court of Fujiwara Michinaga as ritual objects often associated with sutra burials and relic deposits. What prompted this new cultic practice is not entirely known. I propose that its origins lay on the continent, specifically among the Khitan rulers of the Liao kingdom, and that it points to a level of cross-cultural exchange in Buddhist Northeast Asia with significant ramifications for our analysis of the cultural productions of the region.

Ma Jinhong – *Some Thoughts on Bronze Mirrors with wuyue (Five Mountains) Motif.*

Abstract: Bronze mirrors decorated with the *wuyue* (Five Mountains) motif are rarely seen. They first appeared in the Tang dynasty and lasted through the Ming and Qing dynasties. The theme of *wuyue* is closely related to Taoism. Taking three such mirrors in the Cotsen Collection (O-0425, O-0305, O-0135) as its point of departure, and adducing additional information from excavations as well as from other public and private collections, this paper explores the origin, connotation, usage, and variations of this motif.

Li Min - *Gifts to the Emperor: A Bronze Mirror as a Pedagogical Device in Tang and Song China*

Abstract: The so-called Hanxiang mirror was twice presented to emperors in Tang and Song China. Since the time of its creation, it has been used and reused as a visual device for advancing a certain notion of cosmological order and landscape configuration. This paper examines the circumstances of two presentations and explores ways that human agency, religion, and politics converged in the biography of the object.