



Fig. 1 — Japanese disc mirror, back and cross section (No. 3)

FURTHER ANTIQUE MIRRORS FROM CHESHIRE COLLECTIONS

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A series of Roman mirrors from Chester, now housed in the Grosvenor Museum, was published recently (Lloyd-Morgan, 1977, 49-55). Since then, several other pieces have come to the writer's attention and are discussed below.

1 Fragment of a Roman rectangular mirror.

3.25 x 2.7 cm; 0.1 cm thick.

Found in a skip at 23 Castle Street, Chester, during building operations, and brought into the Museum by a workman on 19 January 1978. The piece is heavily encrusted with light green powdery corrosion products, but a fine black patina shows through in places. The edge has a sharp, well defined bevel. It is a generally finer piece than the other two fragments of rectangular mirror from Chester, Acc. Nos. 219.R.1976 and 220.R.1976 (Lloyd-Morgan, 1977, 51, Nos. 1 and 2). It was probably made during the first half of the 1st century A.D.

Acc. No. 46.R.1978.

2 Bronze hand mirror cast in one piece with a plain tang. Width of disc 10.5 cm; height, with tang, 15.6 cm. Thickness of disc 0.4 cm.

The mirror has a dark olive green/brown patina, with some raised patches of 'oyster shell' pitting. The disc section is rather lopsided and irregular. The tang is slight, with a rectangular cross section. The lack of any decoration, and the stark simplicity of the piece, make it difficult to identify with any certainty, as mirrors of this type are known from both Egyptian and Greek contexts. In the latter case, they are pre 7th or 6th century B.C. Some decorated examples of Greek tanged hand mirrors from the 6th century onwards are noted by Oberländer, 1967, especially pp. 128-49. For the simplest form of Egyptian mirrors, cf. Bénédite, 1901, and Petrie, 1927, 28-32, Pl. XXIV-XXVIII.

Unprovenanced, ex collection Professor Robert Newstead.

Acc. No. 492.F.1977 (Plate 1).

3 Bronze disc mirror.

Diameter of disc 11.7 cm; depth 1.15 cm.

The reflecting side is plain and slightly convex, the edge plain and sloping inwards towards the back, which is deeply recessed. The back is decorated with a low relief, showing to the left two cranes with bills touching, by a stream or pool. Round about are bamboo shoots and pine trees, framing and filling the scene. In the centre is an outspread tortoise, whose bill touches those of the two cranes. His body is pierced laterally, to take a fine cord, which would have served as a handle, as, for example, in the Chinese mirror from the Pazyryk burials in Siberia (Rudenko, 1970, 114-16, 304-05, Pl. 70). Two concentric circles, just inside the rim, cut through the scene. A mirror whose form closely parallels this piece, is now in the Gulbenkian Museum, Durham, No. 1968-84. Similar scenes and motifs are found on several examples in the excellent collection of mirrors in the Horniman Museum, London. One unnumbered hand mirror, diameter 17.5 cm, has a tortoise and a crane on either side of a pine tree. Another crane flies down towards its mate (**Plate 2**).

Japanese, 18th century; from the old collections of the Chester Archaeological Society.

Acc. No. 551.F.1976 (**Plate 3; Fig. 1**).

4 Lid of a 'lid mirror', bronze with silvering on the inner side.

Diameter 8.82 cm; depth 0.57 cm.

The piece is rather encrusted with traces of soil, and green to light brown corrosion products. The top is turned with three sets of concentric circles; at the edge, at a distance roughly half way along the radius, and around the centre. The irregular blobs of a lead based solder mark the position of a handle, which may have been similar to the example from Egypt, from the collection of G. J. Chester, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, No. 1892.1182. Two light engraved rings are drawn round the edge. The underside is recessed with a narrow convex-concavo moulding between the rim and the silvered inner section. The hinge, and mirror section which would have fitted snugly into the lid, have been lost. When in use, the mirror would have opened out much in the same way as a modern lady's powder compact, giving a characteristic figure of eight outline. A number of statuettes showing Venus or Cupid holding such a mirror are well known, for example the Venus in the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, No. I 1951/8.2, and the seated bronze Cupid in the Museum Calvet, Avignon, No. J 133 (*see also* Lloyd-Morgan, 1974, 85-86, Pl. XXII).

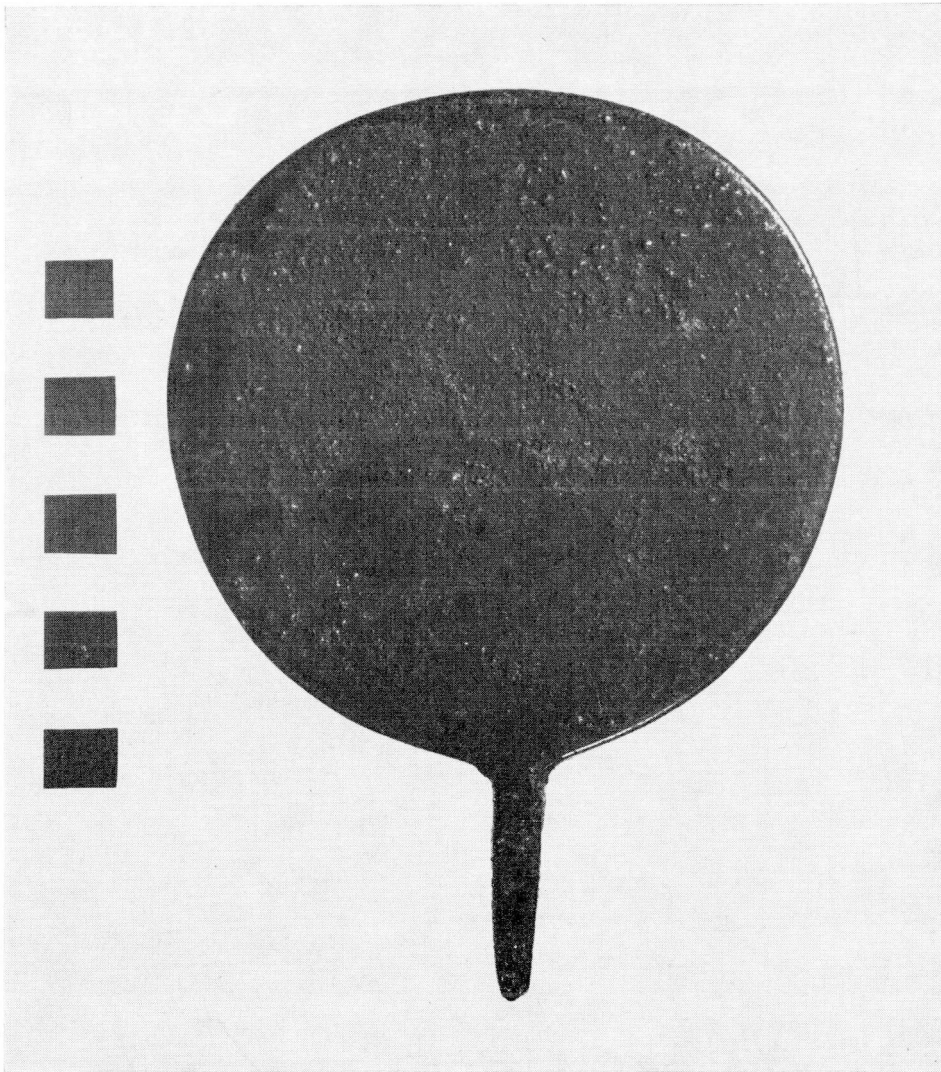


Plate 1 — Bronze hand mirror, ex collection Professor Newstead (No. 2)

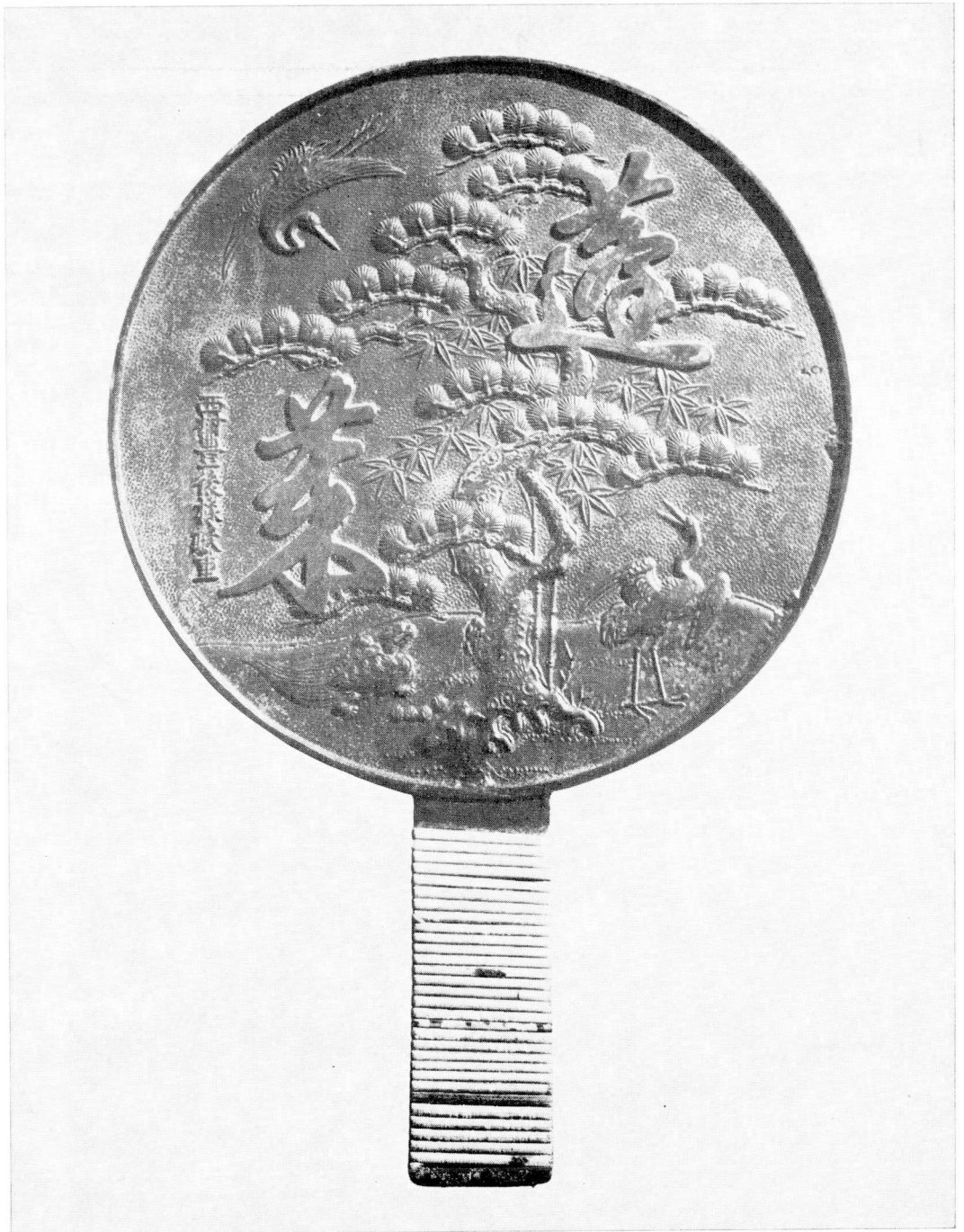


Plate 2 — Japanese hand mirror, Horniman Museum, London



Plate 3 — Japanese disc mirror, Chester Archaeological Society Collection (No. 3)

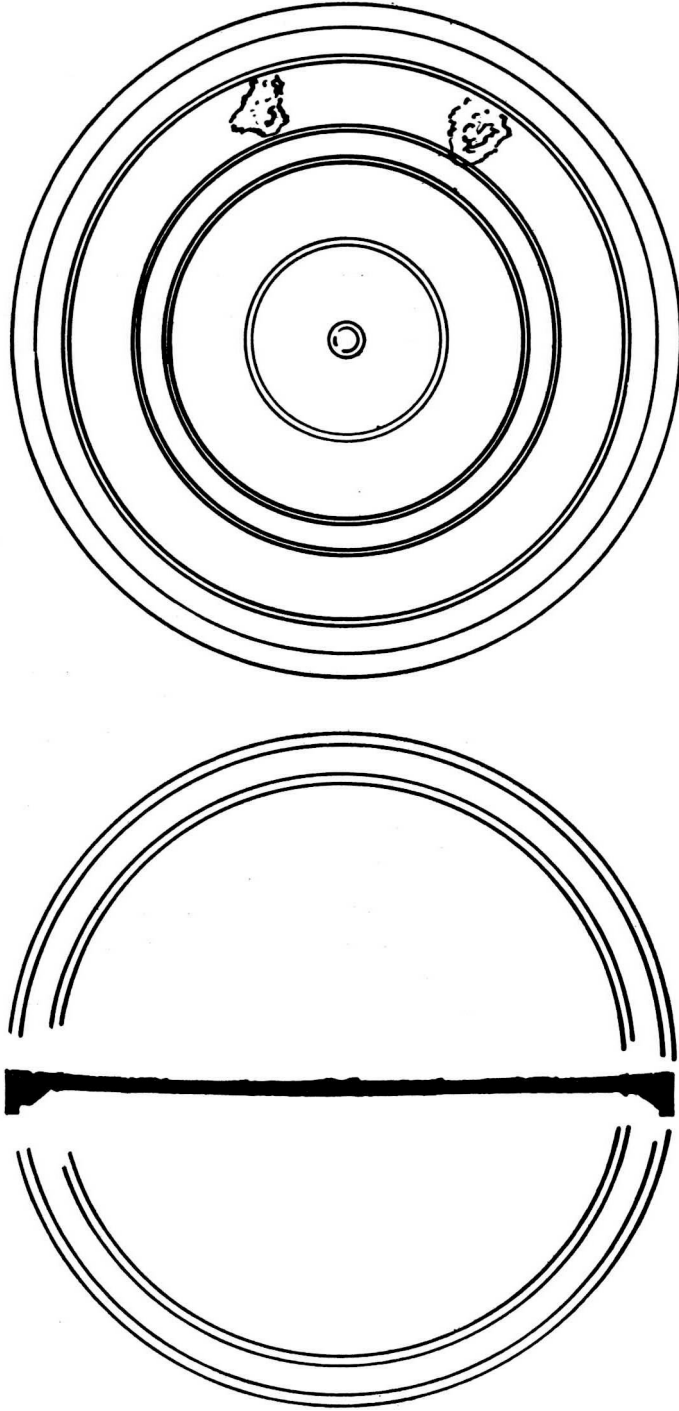


Fig. 2 — Lid of Hellenistic mirror, top and underside with cross section (No. 4)

The piece is a simple version of the Type C Mirror, described by Züchner (1942, Chapter III, 118-54), and is probably late Hellenistic in date.

From an antique dealer in Athens.

Private collection, Cheshire (Fig. 2).

Note

The drawings were prepared by P. Alebon; the photographs of the Newstead and Japanese mirrors were prepared by T. E. Ward of the Grosvenor Museum. The writer wishes to thank Mrs. V. E. Vowles and the Staff of the Horniman Museum for supplying the photograph of the Japanese hand mirror, and for their help and courtesy during visits made to the collections over a number of years.

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