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A DOUBLE-WALLED BRONZE BOWL OF THE PERSIAN PERIOD

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Double-walled metal bowls, or phialai, both in silver and in bronze, are fairly rare in the ancient world. The silver bowls, seven of which are noted by A. Oliver,¹ are largely Late Hellenistic or Early Roman. Those of bronze, only three or four in number, seem to come mainly from the area of the great Persian Empire and date from the sixth or fifth century B.C.

The usual scheme for such vessels is to have a decorative outer bowl covering all, or only the lower half, of the plain inner bowl.² An exception is the fragmentary vessel presented here (Figs. 1a-c & 2a-b).³ In this case, the inner bowl is decorated over its entire surface; the outer bowl, which is plain, completely envelopes the inner one. The lip of the inner bowl overlaps that of the outer bowl and is crimped over it; the two are apparently soldered together as well (Fig. 3). Unique, too, is the carinated shape of the outer bowl, as is its repoussé spool handle, placed just below the carination on one side (Figs. 1a & 2a).⁴ The wall of the bowl opposite this handle is missing, so the existence of a second handle cannot be proved, though it seems logical that there was one.

Very different from that of the other known bronze double-walled bowls is the decoration covering the entire inner surface of our bowl, done in repoussé from the back (Figs. 1b-c, 4a-b & the drawing Fig. 2b). Instead of lobes in high relief, the common decoration on most of the Persian bowls, this all-over pattern is in very low relief. The design centers on a large, six-petalled rosette within a circle, approximately 5.2 cm in diameter and engraved from the top. In the spaces between the petals are half-petals, with their tips touching the outer circle. In the smaller spaces between the whole and half-petals are quarter-petals, also with their tips at the enclosing circle; all of these are punched from the top. The background spaces thus defined are roughly triangles, filled with raised dots punched from the back.

Outside the central rosette, and reaching to the rim, are three bands, each 1.8 cm wide, similarly decorated with alternating half-petals and quarter-petals, against a background of dot-filled triangles, repeating the pattern in the outer half of the central rosette (Fig. 4a-b). The size of the half- and quarter-petals increases slightly in each successive band outside the central rosette.

Figure 1a. *Double-walled bronze bowl* (81.333). Gift of A. Momjian.
Side view.

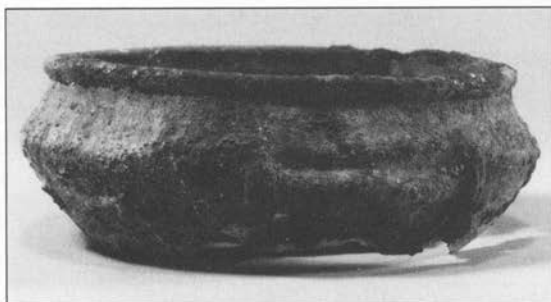


Figure 1b. *Double-walled bronze bowl*.
Top view.



Figure 1c. *Double-walled bronze bowl*.
Bottom view.



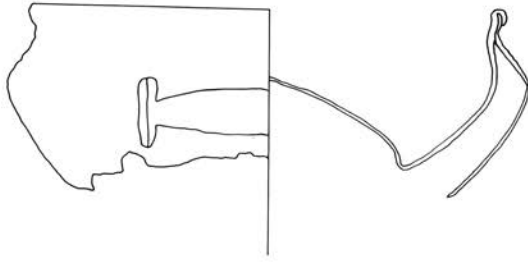


Figure 2a. Drawing of double-walled bronze bowl. Side view.



Figure 2b. Drawing of double-walled bronze bowl. Top view.

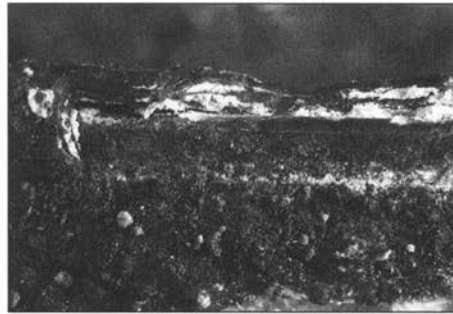


Figure 3. Joining of the inner and outer bowls.



Figure 4a. Detail of double-walled bronze bowl. Interior, near rim.



Figure 4b. Detail of double-walled bronze bowl.

While the elements of this decoration are of the simplest forms, half- and quarter-petals and dot-filled triangles, their use in an all-over pattern is unusual. The two design elements are found on the base of a gold cup from Marlik, Tomb 36, which is dated to the second half of the second millennium B.C. (Fig. 5).⁵ For this Negahban cites parallels on ivories from the northwest palace of Assurnasirpal at Nineveh, which date to the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.⁶ Both these parallels are centuries earlier than our bowl; they indicate that the design had a long life in the Near East.

The use of rows of small elements to cover the entire phiale is unusual; a single row of large lobes in high relief is the more common design. The one close parallel to our bowl is in the decoration on the exterior of a mesomphalic phiale that seems to be double-walled. Though it is nowhere described as such, it looks so in the illustration (Fig. 6); it was found at Til-Barsib (Tell Barsip) in Syria.⁷ It has two rows of lotus-flower decoration around the central omphalos, the outer row reaching to the rim. This phiale was found in Tomb B of the Achaemenid Tombs, which Thureau-Dangin and Dunand date to no earlier than the sixth century B.C., and most likely to the fifth century.

Although the Missouri bowl in its original condition was apparently a simple rounded shape, it has been badly damaged; the suggestion of the original shape indicated by a dotted line in the profile (Fig. 2a) is, however, not much in doubt. The form of the outer bowl, on the other hand, is well preserved except for the lower part. The carinated shape, with a high shoulder and a small, everted rim, is not very common. The nearest parallel



Figure 5. Drawing of base of a Gold Cup, after E. Negahban, *Metal Vessels from Marlik* (Munich 1983), fig. 10.



Figure 6. Bronze Bowl of Persian Period, from a tomb at Til-Barsib, after F. Thureau-Dangin et M. Dunand, *Til-Barsib* (Paris, 1936), pl. XIX, fig. 2.

I have found is a bronze bowl in the Godard Collection (Fig. 7),⁸ which is dated by de Waele to the end of the second or the beginning of the first millennium B.C.

The spool handle(s?) just below the carination on the outer bowl is an even rarer feature on Achaemenian bronze vessels. But such handles, related to earlier 'bolster' handles, have a long history going back to New Kingdom Egypt.⁹ They seem

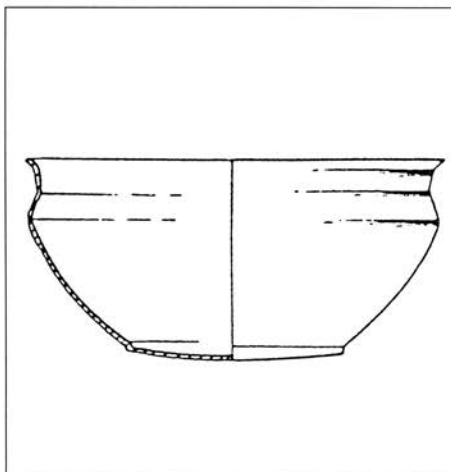


Fig. 7.
Drawing of
Bronze Bowl
from Luristan
in the
Godard
Collection.

to have been copied on Phrygian bronze bowls of the eighth to sixth centuries B.C. on Cyprus.¹⁰ Similar bolster handles occur frequently on Phrygian bronze bowls from the Great Tumulus at Gordion, as well as from other, smaller tumuli.¹¹

The vestigial spool handle on our bowl is a late reflection of the applied bolsters with swing handles, now reduced to no more than a lug. I know of no others created by repoussé technique, rather than cast separately and applied. However, spool handles applied to pottery vessels of utilitarian fabric abound in the Corinthia in the sixth to fourth centuries B.C., mainly on mortaria and other large bowls and basins, as well as on the shoulders of large storage jars.¹² On such heavy vessels, the rather shallow clay lugs served only to give a better grip in lifting or moving the vessels, not as real handles. In this way, they are closely similar to the spool handle(s) on our bowl.

The wide geographical spread of the various features cited for our double-walled bowl and its several unusual features bespeak the Achaemenid influence that pervaded the Near East, as well as the whole of the eastern Mediterranean area, in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Thus, while our bowl, or the battered remains of it, has no known provenience, it could well have been found in Israel, where it was acquired. Here there was a period of strong Persian influence, beginning in the last third of the sixth century B.C. and ending with the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.¹³

SAUL S. WEINBERG was the founder of the Museum of Art and Archaeology and its director until 1977. He was also Professor of Classical Archaeology in the Department of Art History and Archaeology, which was re-established in 1960. Dr. Weinberg is best known for his fundamental work on the connections between the Aegean and the Near East in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages.

Editor's Note: I am greatly indebted to Leslie Hammond, a doctoral student in the Department of Art History and Archaeology for executing the final drawings in this article.

NOTES

¹ A. Oliver, *Silver for the Gods: 800 Years of Greek and Roman Silver*, (Toledo Museum of Art, 1977), pp. 78-79, no. 43. Seven silver double bowls are listed.

² The first such bowl was discovered in 1913 by Woolley in a tomb at Deve Hüyük, near Carchemish in North Syria, and published in LAAA VII (1914-16), p. 119, no. 15. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum and has been republished by P.R.S. Moorey in *Cemeteries of the First Millennium B.C. at Deve Hüyük, near Carchemish, salvaged by T.E. Lawrence and C.L. Woolley in 1913* (BAR International Series 87, 1980), pp. 37-38, no. 111. Moorey writes: "A vessel made in exactly the same way as No. 111 was found in levels of the Achaemenid Period at Tell Farah in Israel." In both of these, the decorated outer bowl fits over only the lower half of the plain inner bowl.

³ Acc. no. 81.333. Max.P.D. 14.1 cm, P.H. 5.4 cm, D.rim 13.2 cm. The lip of each bowl is completely preserved; the inner bowl is about three-quarters preserved, the outer only about one-quarter. Some twenty-five fragments, large and small, cannot be fitted onto the vessel. Three of these show relief and so must be from the inner bowl.

In the research on, and the writing of, this article, I have been greatly assisted by members of the museum's staff: to Dr. Jane C. Biers, Curator of Ancient Art, I owe the permission to publish the bowl and many helpful discussions along the way; to Jeffrey B. Wilcox, Registrar, the photographs of the bowl and many of its intricate details; to Greg Olson, Chief Preparator, the preliminary drawing for fig.2.

The bowl was the gift of the late A. Momjian, for decades one of the leading dealers in antiquities in Old Jerusalem and a good friend, from whom I learned much. Unfortunately, he knew of no meaningful provenience for this vessel.

⁴ While the inner bowl was most likely hemispherical, though now much out of shape, there is little certainty about the shape of the lower part of the outer bowl; it may have been hemispherical as well, but more likely had a flattened or concave bottom on which to stand.

⁵ E.O. Negahban, *Metal Vessels from Marlik. Prähistorische Bronzefunde*, Abt. II, 3.Band (Munich, 1983), pp. 19-21, no. 10, fig. on p. 20. A similar pattern is also found on the base of a bronze goblet from Luristan dated to ninth-eighth centuries. B.C., see E. de Waele, *Bronzes de Luristan et d'Amlash. Ancienne Collection Godard (Publication d'histoire et de l'art de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, XXXIV)*, (Louvain-le-Neuve, 1982), p. 226, fig. 203.

⁶ R.D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with other examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum*, second edition (London, 1975), pl. 15, K2; pl. 29, S36q, S35; pl. 31, S38a-c; pl. 110, S403a-c.

⁷ F. Thureau-Dangin et M. Dunand, *Til-Barsib* (Paris, 1936), p. 76, pl. XIX, 2. See also E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period* (Warminster, 1982), p. 86, fig. 100.

⁸ E. de Waele, *Bronzes du Luristan et d'Amlash. Ancienne Collection Godard (Publication d'histoire et de l'art de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, XXXIV)*, (Louvain-le-Neuve, 1982), pp. 220-221, no. 373, fig. 194.

⁹ A. Radwan, *Die Kupfer- und Bronzegefäße Ägyptens. Prähistorische Bronzefunde*, Abt. II, Band 2 (Munich, 1983), p. 109, nos. 316 A-B, 317-322; pl. 57, all dated to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. These are all large, hemispherical bowls, which have heavy attached bolsters with swing handles. For shallower bowls of the Nineteenth Dynasty, see pl. 56, nos. 314-315.

¹⁰ H. Matthäus, *Metalgefäße und Gefäßuntersätze der Bronzezeit, der geometrischen und archaischen Periode auf Cypern. Prähistorische Bronzefunde*, Abt. 2, Band 8 (Munich, 1985), pp. 134-136, nos. 373-374, pl. 26.

¹¹ R.S. Young, *Three Great Early Tumuli. (The Gordion Excavations. Final Reports. Vol. I, University Museum Monographs 43)*, p. 126, fig. 80, entitled "Forms of bolsters on bowls with ring handles (from Tumulus MM), late 8th-early 7th c. B.C."

¹² S.S. Weinberg, "Corinthian Relief Ware: Pre-Hellenistic Period," *Hesperia* 23 (1954), pp. 133-134, pl. 30; M.Z. Pease, "A Well of the Fifth Century at Corinth," *Hesperia* 6 (1937), p. 301, fig. 33, no. 198; A.N. Stillwell and J.L. Benson, *The Potters' Quarter. The Pottery* (Corinth XV, 3, Princeton, 1984), p. 349, no. 2173; E. Pemberton, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. The Greek Pottery* (Corinth XVIII, 1, Princeton, 198*), p. 185, no. 640; p. 190, no. 674; B. Adamsheck, *Kenchraei—Eastern Port of Corinth, IV, The Pottery* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 43-44, no. Gr. 43.

¹³ E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*, passim.