Supplementary notes to the cognition of silver vessels in the territory of the Czech and Slovak Republics

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with Pl. II-III (= Figs. 4-5)

Introduction

During the last ten years it is possible to note a more intense study of Roman silver toreutics in Central Europe (Bouzek 2000a; id. 2000b; id. 2002; Holčík – Turčan 1998; Holčík 2003; Igl 2002; Klčo – Krupa 2003; Künzl 1997; id. 2000a; id. 2000b; Peška – Tejral 2002; Procházková 2004; Simon 2001; Stupperich 1997; Turčan 2000; Wölfel 1997). The last detailed elaboration was carried out by S. Künzl (2002, 329-355). The aim of this contribution paper is to point out other possible interpretations of selected silver vessels and to open a discussion. Our interest will be focused on fragments of vessels from a rich cremation grave in Holubice (Berger 1884, XC; Sakař 1970, 29; Karasová 1998, 70) and a cylindrical strainer from tomb No. II in Krakovany-Stráže (Svoboda 1972).

Holubice

Horizontal grip (Fig. 1:1)

The only part of the entire drinking cup that has preserved until the present day is the horizontal grip. The horizontal handle has an oval shape and a decor of an engraved, largely simplified lotus leaf. The arms are decorated with stylized duck heads above which there are two S-shaped frilled bines. The duck heads are of quadratic shape and are also decorated by engraved hatching. The head beaks are eminently long.

Since its discovery the handle has been classified as E 170 type several times (Sakař 1970, 29, 65; Karasová 1998, 70; Lichardus 1984, 129); E. Droberjär (1999a, 128) and S. Künzl (2002, 336, 342) have proposed to classify the fragment as E 170/171/175 type. According to our assumptions it is also possible to consider another variant, and we will try to reveal this further on in the text.

The Holubice handle, however, presents a problem from the perspective of determination of its origin as well. The thing is that the piece under description has been classified as belonging to barbarian imitations of Roman products (Droberjär 1999a, 128; Künzl 2002, 336). The authors holding this opinion refer to the „artlessness“ and abstractness of the horizontal grip decor. According to E. Droberjär and S. Künzl this manner of rendering is strange to Roman handicraft. We will try to question this opinion as well.

The Holubice exemplar is quite akin to the handles of a Roman drinking cup from a rich grave in Byrstedi (Fig. 1:2; 2:1); in our opinion these only differ from the Holubice handle in several details (oval heads of water birds, a limited use of hatching). Therefore it is impossible to totally exclude the classification of the Holubice handle as Eggers type 173 (Eggers 1951, Taf. 14).

The following examples will provide us with a point of departure to reflections on origin. A handle that is very similar to the Holubice exemplar may also be seen on a skyphos from a

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kurgan in Hokhlach (Raev 1986, 15-16, 53, Pl. 11). This example only differs by the shape of the grip but the heads of the water birds are shaped similarly to the Holubice piece. Similarly shaped heads of water birds may also be found on the handles of skyphos from Oktabrskij (Kropotkin 1970, 83, Ric. 45: 6). A certain degree of parity is also shown by the handles of a small pan and an oval plate from Hildesheim (Fig. 4:1) (Gehrig 1980, 21, 39, 34), and a handle of a small bronze bowl with a fixed handle H3100 from Pompeii (Fig. 1:3) (Tassinari 1993, 60, 141). Similarities in the shaping of bird heads and the structuring of the handles may be seen as a certain display of fashion, typical for the late Republican and Augusteian period, that was reflected on vessels of various types. A phenomenon thus spread may then be identified with the Roman ambience without hesitation.

On the contrary, the Holubice handle is not in accordance with other known examples of Germanic toretics,\(^2\) like e.g. the handle of a barbarian drinking cup from Dollerupgård (Fig. 1:4: 2:2). On this – as opposed to the piece under description – we may see a more distinctly abstracted decor (Wielowiejski 1989, 98, Ryc. 5; Belkowska 1984, Tabl. 1:4b) that is typical for barbarian imitations.

On the basis of the above mentioned facts the handle from Holubice may be included among Roman products, and according to early analogies dated back to the late Republican and Augusteian period. We may also consider not only its classification as type 171/175 but as 173, too.

Handle ring and finger rest (Fig. 3:1)

In the rich grave of Holubice a today missing lower part (a ring, a finger rest, a handle attachment) of the skyphoid type handle (Berger 1884, XC, Fig. 17) has been found as well. The ring is made of an undecorated strip. The handle attachment has a semilunar shape and its perimeter is decorated by small nodules.

The lower part of the handle differs from the early examples from the late Republican or Augusteian period by a distinctly simpler workmanship. A certain parallel may be a skyphoid handle from a rich grave No. 430 in Czarnówko (Fig. 1:5) (Rudnicka – Maćzyńska 2002, 15, Ryc. 3:6), which according to its decor belongs to barbarian imitations (Maćzyńska – Rudnicka 2004, 413; Tejrø 2004, 341). Similarly to the example from Holubice the lower part of the handle from Czarnówko consists of a simple stripe-like ring and a finger rest. On the grounds of these similarities it is possible to confirm a barbarian origin of the lower part of the handle as it has been suggested by S. Künzl (2002, 342).

Nowadays it cannot be verified whether the above grip and the lower part of the handle have ever formed one piece. However the attachment of the horizontal grips as known to us from Byrsted, Lübsow I, with finger rests and stripe-like rings would be unusual.

Fragments of a drinking cup-kantharos (?) (Fig. 3:2,3)

These fragments from Holubice are only preserved in a drawing. The foot consists of a bell-shaped lower part and a „stalk-like“, profiled upper part. A broad rib winds around the upper part of the foot. Another depicted fragment represents a piece of the vessel wall with a dished mouth that has a thickened edge. S. Künzl has found the counterparts to these fragments in the late Hellenistic period\(^3\).

Because of its careless workmanship (there is only a drawing available to us!) the foot

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\(^2\) Moreover it is appropriate to add that the decor of the Holubice handle lacks the typical features of Germanic toretics. These motives were studied in detail by W. Holmqvist (1954, 275-276).

\(^3\) See the drinking cups from the treasures of Sîncrăieni (Popescu 1958, 157-206) and from Ancona/I (Künzl 2002, Abb. 7a, 7b).
was labelled a Germanic imitation (Künzl 2002, 342, 343). We consider the ascription of the foot to Germanic imitations unsubstantiated as higher bell-shaped feet existed as early as in the late Hellenistic period (Fig. 2:3; 5:1,2) (Gabelmann 1982, 252, Abb. 10; Miličev 1986, 47, Abb. 5a). Bell-shaped feet may be primarily seen on drinking cups from late Hellenistic period; a popularity of them during this period is attested in various parts of the ancient world (Hispania, Thracia, Dacia, Italia) (Raddatz 1969, 89-90, Abb. 21). Pieces with a central rib (and thus also the fragment of the foot from Holubice) may be dated back to the late Republican period (Gabelmann 1982, 255).

The second fragment probably comes from a hemispherical vessel with a dished mouth. The Holubice fragment might have a distant relation to an undecorated vessel similar to the kantharos from Stevensweet (Fig. 4:2) (Künzl 1971, Taf. 15). S. Künzl has mentioned other possible examples4 (2002, 343).

It is necessary to remark that both fragments might have originated from a single vessel but up to now similarly constructed pieces are unknown (drinking cups with which a bell-shaped foot and cup body combined with a dished mouth). If both fragments formed one drinking cup it would mean that the Holubice vessel has been pieced together from heterogenous components. This would make its dating much more complicated. In general it could be possibly dated into the late Republican period, or in the Augusteau period at the latest. The vessel would have been put into the grave within the B1a Marobud empire horizon (Droberjar 1999b, 2, 3).

Krakovany-Stráže II

Strainer (Fig. 3:4)

The strainer is of cylindrical shape with a flat, outwardly inclined edge. 1.5 cm beneath the edge there is a three-arm lamina with a little, onion-shaped ball in the centre (Ondrouch 1957, 148; Klčo – Krupa 2003, 18).

V. Ondrouch (1957, 148) has dated the strainer to the 3rd century A.D. The author has based his dating on the shape resemblance to cylindrical cauldrons that are often found in deposits dated between 233 and 275 A.D. Ondrouch’s conclusions were also accepted by B. Svoboda (1972, 110) who noted that the Stráže strainer could have been a miniature of artless kitchen utensils.

Today it is no longer possible to follow the argument by V. Ondrouch and taken over by B. Svoboda at a later date, as both authors have compared different shapes. The artless bronze kitchen utensils have very little in common with the exquisite strainer that might have been a part of a drinking set.

Moreover, if we study the material from deposits from the 3rd century, we will find totally different types of bronze strainers in their inventories. Strainers of E 161 type (Werner 1938, 263, Taf. 107-113, 115-117, 119; Nuber – Radnoti 1969, 43; Sedlmayer 1999, 93; Noll 1980, 83-85, Abb. 14, Taf. 31; Künzl 1996, 463; Miglbauer 1994, 286; Schulz 1953, 60, Taf. VI, XXIII:2, XXXI:2) ranking among the third generation of bronze vessels (Petrovszky 1993, 123, 124) belong to amply represented pieces. This fact underlines the weaknesses of Svoboda’s hypothesis: in case the Stráže strainer should be an imitation of those commonly used in the 3rd century it should more probably have been shaped similarly to the E 161 type. A unique E 161 set made of silver has been discovered in the princely tomb of Gommern (Becker 1993, 406, Abb. 2; id. 2001, 151-152).

How should we date the Stráže strainer? The only analogy to the described shape we find

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4 See the drinking cups from Artiuchow kurgan and the drinking cups from the treasure of Palmi/I.
is the strainer\textsuperscript{5} from a mithreum in London. The London strainer is of the same construction, and it was discovered together with a silver pyxis. However the described analogy comes from the late 3rd and early 4th century (Wheeler 1996, 86, fig. 64). The discovery of the London strainer was related to the cult of Mithra. In the case of the Stráže strainer a similar function cannot be confirmed as yet. Owing to the fact that this type of strainer is not found in the material from Pompeii we may accept the ruin of Pompeii as a post quem date for the use of this object. Thus the Stráže strainer could have been manufactured as early as in the 2nd rather than the 3rd century.

**Conclusion**

The submitted supplementary notes present alternative interpretations to the studied material, thus extending the possible approach. Nowadays the four fragments from Holubice may only be combined hypothetically. It seems possible that the bell-shaped foot and the wall fragment with everted rim and thickened edge could have belonged to one vessel. A combination of the Roman horizontal handle with the ring and finger rest of a Germanic origin, albeit imaginable, has no parallel.

The strainer from tomb II in Krakovany-Stráže certainly does not copy artless kitchen shapes as has been assumed earlier; it belongs to the group of strainers that were inserted into the mouths of utensils.

It will certainly be possible to improve and further amend the presented hypotheses later, with the enlargement of knowledge and study of the problems of Roman silverware.

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\textsuperscript{5} The strainer has been classified as an unstratified find (Chinelli 2001, 36).
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Illustrations

Fig. 1. (1) Horizontal handle of the drinking cup from Holubice (Berger 1884), (2) horizontal handle of the drinking cup from Byrsted (Belkowska 1984), (3) handle of the bowl with fixed handle from Pompeii (Tassinari 1993), (4) horizontal handle of the drinking cup from Dollerusgard (Belkowska 1984), (5) handle of the drinking cup from grave No. 430 in Czarnówko (Mačzyńska – Rudnicka 2004).

Fig. 2. (1) Drinking cup from Byrsted (Belkowska 1984), (2) drinking cup from Dollerusgard (Belkowska 1984), (3) a late Hellenistic drinking cup from the deposit I. in Santistebar del Puerto (Raddatz 1969).

Fig. 3. (1) Handle ring and finger rest of the drinking cup from Holubice (Berger 1884), (2) a bell-shaped foot of the drinking cup-kantharos (?) from Holubice (Berger 1884), (3) a fragment of the side of a drinking cup-kantharos (?) with a dished mouth that has a thickened edge from Holubice (Berger 1884), (4) a strainer from tomb II in Krakovian-Stráže (Ondrouch 1957).

Fig. 4. (1) Handles of the bowls with fixed handles from Hildesheim (Erdrich 2002), (2) kantharos from Stevensweert (Künzl 1971).

Fig. 5. (1) Drinking cup with a bell-shaped foot and skyloid handles from Benaki-Museum in Athens (Gabelmann 1982), (2) Drinking cup from grave No.35 from Ancona (Gabelmann 1982).
Fig. 1. (1) Plate of handle of the Holubice cup (Berger 1884), (2) plate of handle of the Byrsted dup (Belkowska 1984), (3) handle of a bowl from Pompei (Tassinari 1993), (4) plate of handle of the Dollerupgård cup (Belkowska 1984), (5) handle of the cup from Czarnówka grave no. 430 v (Mażyńska – Rudnicka 2004).
Fig. 2. (1) Cup from Byrsted (Belkowska 1984), (2) cup from Dollerupgård (Belkowska 1984), (3) Late Hellenistic cup from Hoard I at Santisteban del Puerto (Raddatz 1969).
Fig. 3. (1) Ring and finger support of a cup from Holubice (Berger 1884), (2) bell-shaped foot of a cup-kantharos (?) from Holubice (Berger 1884), (3) wall fragment of a cup-kantharos (?) with concave neck and thickened rim from Holubice (Berger 1884), (4) strainer from grave II at Krakovany-Stráže (Ondrouch 1957).
Fig. 4: 1. Handles of bowls from Hildesheim

Fig. 4: 2. Kantharos from Stevensweert
Fig. 5: 1. Drinking cup in the Benaki museum

Fig. 5: 2. Drinking cup from Ancona